

**The Holy Spirit, the Church and Daily Life:
A Theological Search for an Integrated Pneumatology in the Light of Chewa
Views of the Spirit**

by

Julius Chikhutu Siwinda

**Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Theology
at the University of Stellenbosch**



Supervisor: Professor Robert Vosloo

December 2017

DECLARATION

I, Julius Chikhutu Siwinda, declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the need to re-articulate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) Nkhoma Synod by incorporating certain traditional concepts. The research seeks to integrate certain traditional concepts (e.g. belief in spirits) with the biblical view of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of constructing a holistic pneumatology. It is argued that the Spirit is mostly viewed among Chewa people as being active and present in church related matters, and not in ordinary daily activities outside of church life. For this reason, the proposed pneumatology (apart from the conception of the traditional view of the spirits) will be approached from an African perspective, based on the views of John Mbiti and Jürgen Moltmann. Included in this process, are some important traditional concepts, i.e. the rite of birth and the rite of initiation held by Chewa people to establish the central role of spirits. This was then related to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life as a way of enculturation, i.e. regeneration and sanctification, and how this relates to the doctrine of Holy Spirit. It is envisaged that the outcome of this research will positively contribute to the ongoing debate and articulate a relevant pneumatology in the African context. The following pertinent observations are also made: Firstly, the traditional belief in the spirits still has a significant influence on Chewa Christians. Secondly, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit taught by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is in need of a fuller expression that is more holistic. Thirdly, for the proposed holistic pneumatology to be relevant to the local context it needs to include various traditional concepts on the integral role of spirits and relate these to the biblical notion of the cosmic spirit. In conclusion, the research established that the mainline traditions, to which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod belongs, should be more open to a holistic pneumatology, yet sensitive to the local context by incorporating certain traditional concepts.

KEY TERMS: Holistic, integrated, pneumatology, CCAP Nkhoma Synod, worldview, Chewa people, John Mbiti, Jürgen Moltmann.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek die noodsaaklikheid om die leerstuk oor die Heilige Gees soos wat dit in die Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) Nkhoma Synod neerslag gevind het, te herbesoek en te herartikuleer, met inagneming van sekere tradisionale konsepte. Die doel is om 'n meer holisties en effektiewe bediening aan Chewa Christene te help vestig. Die ondersoek kyk na die redes waarom Chewa Christene skynbaar meer sensitief vir die geeste as vir die Heilige Gees is. Daarom dat hulle eerder raad by die tradisionele helers soek wanneer hulle sekere lewenskrisisse beleef. Die navorsing ondersoek verder die vraag hoe die leerstuk aangaande die Heilige Gees relevant kan wees om die geestelike en liggaamlike beoeftes van die Chewas aan te spreek. Die aanname is dat die tradisionele geloof in die geeste steeds 'n betekenisvolle invloed op hulle lewens het. Dit kan tot sinkretisme en 'n ongesonde vrees vir die geeste lei, ondermeer as gevolg van 'n onvoldoende Bybelse pneumatologie. Die navorsing pog in die studie om sekere tradisionale konsepte (sieninge aangaande die geeste) met Bybelse sieninge aangaande die Gees in verband te bring, met die doel om 'n holistiese pneumatologie daar te stel. Die benadering sluit aan by wat Michael Welker realistiese teologie noem. Die tesis argumenteer verder dat die gebruikelike manier waarop die leer aangaande die Heilige Gees funksioneer reduksionisties van aard is, aangesien die Gees meestal as bloot aktief in kerk-verwante sake gesien word, en nie juis in die gewone en elkedagse lewens van gelowige betrokke is nie. Met hierdie aspek in die oog, fokus die ondersoek op die sieninge van John Mbiti en Jürgen Moltmann. Belangrike tradisionale konsepte, soos geboorte-rituele en inwysingsrituele, word in die proses verreken, en in met die rol van die Gees ten opsigte van inkulturasie in gesprek gebring. Die hoop is dat die uitkoms van hierdie navorsing sal bydrae tot die poging om 'n adekwate pneumatologie daar te stel wat relevant vir die Afrika konteks is. 'n Aantal waarnemings word in die proses gemaak: Eerstens, die tradisionele geloof in die geeste het steeds 'n groot impak onder Chewa Christene. Tweedens, die operatiewe pneumatologie in die kerk is reduksionisties en beperkend, aangesien dit neig om op geestelike aspekte te fokus, en in die proses materiële en fisiese behoefte rakend die elkedagse lewe nie genoegsaam verdiskonteer nie. Derdens, vir die voorgestelde pneumatologie om relevant vir die plaaslike konteks te wees moet dit bepaalde tradisionale konsepte integreer en dit met die teologiese gedagte van die kosmiese Gees in verband bring. Die navorsing dui dus in die rigting

van die noodsaaklikheid van 'n meer holistiese pneumatologie wat sensitief is vir die plaaslike sieninge en konteks en insigte vanuit die Bybelse getuienis aangaande die Gees.

SLEUTELTERME: Holisties, pneumatologie, CCAP Nkhoma Synod, Chewa Christene, John Mbiti, Jürgen Moltmann.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my loving wife Julia, and to our four beloved children:
Akuzike, Alinafe, Atikonda and Atisunge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- First of all, I would like to give glory to God for His goodness and grace. God provided me with the opportunity to carry out this study, for this I will be forever grateful. I too sincerely express my gratitude for His provision, guidance and wisdom during my studies.
- I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my promoter, Prof Robert Vosloo. I would like to record my gratitude to him for his guidance, encouragement and moral support; it was a privilege to be supervised by him.

I would also like to express my thanks to the following people and institutions:

- I would like to extend my gratitude to Rev Dr Johannes Du Plessis from the Kenridge DRC congregation, and the entire congregation for their financial, moral and spiritual support. Your fatherly care and generosity greatly strengthened me during my studies at Stellenbosch University.
- I wish to extend my gratitude to Neels and Denis Hubinger for their hospitality and encouragement.
- A heartfelt thanks to Maralise Potgieter for her spiritual, moral and financial support. You were greatly used by God to provide me with a much-needed laptop when I lost mine at a critical point in my studies; may God greatly honor you for your generosity.
- My sincere thanks to the lecturers at Josophat Mwale Theological Institute: Rev Arnold Nthara, Rev Matalius Likhoozi, Rev Bossman Chitheka, Rev Brian Kamwendo and Rev Allan Jere, for all your encouragement.
- My gratitude must also be given to Chileka CCAP where I pastored when starting my studies, and all those who prayed for me whenever I was away from my family; may you be richly blessed.

- I would also like to thank Rev Dr Davidson Chifungo, the former General Secretary of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, and Dr Phoebe Chifungo, for your encouragement. Rev Vasco Kachipapa, the current General Secretary of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, Rev Dr Msangambe, the Moderator during the years of my studies, Rev Dr Archwells Katani, and Rev Dr Willie Zeze for your untiring support and guidance during my academic journey.
- Lastly, a special thanks to my family, especially my wife, Julia, and our children, Akuzike, Alinafe, and twin girls, Atikonda and Atisunge, for bearing with me during this time. I missed you during my studies. You always prayed, encouraged and supported me with your kind words, for this I will always be thankful. God bless you!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The scope of the study

This thesis is titled, ‘The Holy Spirit, the church and daily life: A theological search for an integrated pneumatology in the light of Chewa views of the Spirit’. Among the Chewa people living in Malawi there are some important aspects that, if explored in depth, may help shed light on the experience of the Holy Spirit in the daily life of believers and the church. This study seeks to explore and integrate the belief in spirits held by the Chewa people and how it relates to the biblical notion that the Holy Spirit influences or guides our daily life. The general impression though is often that the Holy Spirit is mainly active in work pertaining to the salvation of humanity, and in miraculous and spectacular activities related to the church. The activities of their daily lives are most often not associated with the work of the Holy Spirit. This understanding has led to what Moltmann (1992, 8) refers to as “a tendency to view the Holy Spirit solely as the Spirit of redemption.” This understanding leads, so this thesis argues, to a theologically reductive view of the work of the Holy Spirit.

According to such a view, the Holy Spirit is often acknowledged as being active in church related activities, but not in activities outside the church or in ordinary everyday life. It is this understanding, which partly describes the Western traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit and that of the mainline traditions, which Moltmann views as restricting a more open fellowship of the Holy Spirit, making it impossible for the church to communicate its experience of the Spirit to the world (Moltmann 1992, 8). Moltmann argues for a paradigm shift regarding the doctrine of Holy Spirit. He calls for a new understanding, one that acknowledges the cosmic dimension of God’s Spirit who permeates every aspect of creation; thus acknowledging the active presence of God’s spirit in all of creation. In other words, Moltmann calls for the need to understand the doctrine of Holy Spirit in a holistic way (Moltmann 1992, 37). This thesis, moreover, intends to explore and articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology, one that is sensitive to the presence of God’s Spirit in our daily life, using traditional Chewa concepts and their view of the spirits as a point of departure. To be sensitive to the Holy Spirit is to be sharply aware of God’s presence in the whole of creation, not limited merely to a particular place.

Through his Spirit, God is actively present in his creation. The Spirit's presence in our daily life means the Spirit is present and empowers us even in our ordinary everyday activities. According to Gaybba (1987, 26), this is a change from the Old Testament's idea that the Spirit's actions are spectacular. It is important to note that God's Spirit is not or should not only be associated with the spectacular but also with ordinary acts of love. In the New Testament everything that builds up the community of God, no matter how ordinary it may be, can be seen as a gift or the work of the Spirit (Gaybba 1987, 27). It is identified with the workings of Holy Spirit or the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21-23).

This thesis attempts to articulate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in light of the Chewa traditional belief in spirits. It seeks to articulate the doctrine of Holy Spirit based on the views of Chewa people in central Malawi, considering that their worldview, as is the case with most African ethnic groups, are deeply religious and sensitive to the spirits. They have a strong belief in a Supreme Being and ancestral spirits. The spirits heavily dictate what takes place in their daily life; this is reflected in their behaviour. According to Katani (2008, 69), the Chewa people share the following three basic religious beliefs: Firstly, they believe in the existence of witches, people who manipulate the spiritual powers and harm their enemies are held responsible for otherwise unexplained misfortunes. Secondly, they believe in the spirits of the dead, who function as intermediaries between the living and the dead. Lastly, they believe in a High God, the creator of all things, worshiped by a large number of influential territorial cults. Van Breugel describes the Chewa cosmology as being permeated by the hosts of spirits wielding mysterious spiritual forces for either good or bad (Van Bruegel 2001, 270). The challenge is that there is no clear dividing line between these mysterious spiritual powers and God's spiritual powers.

It is important to note that the above context causes the people to persistently fear the spirits. Interestingly, even those converted to the Christian faith are overcome with a feeling of trepidation, fearing the spirits, and in particular, witchcraft. As a result, many seek protection from the traditional sources. Ngong (2010, 25) points out that "...in traditional Africa, people usually consult medicine people so that they could be protected from the activities of witches and other malevolent spirits that may impair their attainment of fullness of life". Many often wonder why a large number of African Christians revert back to their traditional beliefs during

a time of crisis, but continue living as Christians in normal circumstances. On the one hand, this fluctuation in behaviour has caused many to question the impact of the Christian faith on African people, with some even considering it to be superficial. But on the other hand, it challenges one to reflect on whether African theology has been sufficiently articulated to effectively minister to African people in their totality. African theology is prepared to accept and value the cultural and religious experiences of the African people, and attempts to answer new questions that arise (Mushete 1979, 23-33). However, Ngong thinks that through African theology which “lauded the endeavour to valorise African thought and practices so to make the Christian faith speak to Africans unfortunately resulted in an uncritical appropriation of the African worldview, leading to the limiting of the understanding of the Holy Spirit and salvation in contemporary African Christianity” (Ngong 2010, 20). Based on this, Ngong (2010, 20-21), instead insists, “Christians need to be encouraged to think beyond the familiar framework, for the work of theology is not simply to embrace what people already believe but also, and more especially to critically reflect on what people believe”.

One possible solution to address the above issue is thus deeper theological reflection. Failure to articulate this type of theology has contributed to superficiality regarding Christianity among the Chewa people, as is the case among many African Christians, who theoretically confess their belief in the Holy Spirit but in practice, their daily lives are controlled by their belief in the spirits. Anderson calls this a state of having “a split personality”. On the one side, one practices being a Christian, but on the other side, one also partly adheres to African Traditional Religious beliefs (ATR)¹. This demonstrates the need to articulate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in central Malawi by integrating it with the Chewa people’s belief in spirits. In this study, the articulation of such a pneumatology will be attained by engaging, among others, the approach which Mercy Oduyoye calls theologizing and incorporating (Oduyoye 1979, 109-116). In the context of this study, this means that some traditional concepts related to Chewa practices, i.e. rites of passage, birth, and the rite of initiation, will be discussed to explore the integral role of spirits. Furthermore, this process of articulation will also engage in dialogue (Ott 2000, 243) between the Chewa traditional views spirits and the Christian doctrine of the

¹ Allan Anderson (2001, 222) refers to this as African Traditional Religions (ATR).

Holy Spirit, and construct a functional relationship based on its conceptions that would contribute towards reformulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology.

Related to the nature and purpose of the church, and in an effort to clarify the concept of the church and how it relates to the Holy Spirit, this study will be limited to expounding the concept of the church as a community. Since the church is a multi-faceted concept and can be defined from various perspectives, the focus will be on the church as a community of believers and will be related to the central role of Holy Spirit in this community. This understanding is in line with that of several theologians, including Berkhof, who defined the church as the community of the elect. In addition, from the point of view of effectual calling, the church is the company of the elect called by the Spirit of God, as the body of those who are effectually called or as the community of the faithful or believers (Berkhof 1996, 567-568). For Kunhiyop (2012, 145) the church is the community of God's people characterized by both comprehensiveness and cohesiveness; which he says, must extend itself to include all kinds of people, while at the same time, maintaining a strong bond of unity by the power of Holy Spirit. For O'Donovan, the church is an eternal community, the body of Christ, spiritually joined to Christ as the head, and therefore, spiritually joined to each other as parts of his body. The church is the dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2:22) (O'Donovan 1996, 15). Similarly, Gaybba (1987, 162-164) says, the church is the people, a community. A community created by the Spirit pivots around Christ. He further defines the church as the community in which God's planned unity with humanity takes shape.

The concept of church as a community will be discussed again later in the study from an African perspective in order to gain insight and draw possible parallels so as to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology based on the local context. The integral role of spirits in the traditional community will be contrasted with the central role of Holy Spirit in the church as a community of believers. This will be used as the framework to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology, justifying the active presence of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of life for effective ministry among the Chewa people.

1.2 Motivation

Three things have motivated this research. Firstly, many African theologians have expressed the need for the articulation of a Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit within the African context (Oladipo 1994, 14). In his article, 'Where are we in African Theology?', Setiloane (1979, 59-65) echoes this call when he states: "Pneumatology, from an African perspective, needs to be prepared to look squarely at and even dismantle the western Trinitarian formula of divinity". Repeating the same sentiment, Anderson (1991, 25) notes, "The African Spirit world in all its vastness, as a subject to which Christian theology must relate, is either neglected or overlooked". He thinks there is a vacuum in African theology, particularly in the realm of pneumatology. He therefore in a way supports the initiatives of 'Spirit-type' churches making the gospel and Christian doctrines meaningful to their life situation. In other words, Anderson supports the call for the articulation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which would directly speak into the existential spiritual world of Africans and provide a solution to the inherent problems they experience.

Secondly, the call for the articulation of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit within the context of African traditional thought is further motivated by the significant influence these traditional beliefs have over African Christians. More specifically, within the context in which I live and minister, born among the Chewa ethnic people of central Malawi, there is a dire need to (re)articulate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For it remains evident among the Chewa people, even among those converted to the Christian faith, that the traditional belief in spirits still exerts a significant influence over the lives of the people. Moreover, it is noted that the Chewa people are religious and sensitive to the spirit world, like most African people, they are sharply aware that the spirit world is closely connected to the physical world (Ncozana 2002, 15). For the Chewa, their traditional religious beliefs are reflected in their worldview, where they view spirits, both malevolent and beneficent, as inhabiting the universe and determining people's circumstances (Van Breugel 2001, 83). Just like many African ethnic people, the animistic and dynamistic belief is deeply engrained in their worldview and it has a significant bearing on their everyday life, as it encompasses their entire existence; it also dictates their daily roles in

their community and society (Paris 1992, 34). In a similar vein, Ncozana (2002, 15) observes that to most African ethnic groups (this includes the Chewa people), religion was not simply a faith or worship system, it was a way of life a system of social control. “There appears to be an agreement that the reality of the spirit world in African experience is linked to everyday life,” says Ncozana. This illustrates the great need for a theological articulation that engages with the functional relationship between the Chewa people’s view of spirits influencing the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit among those converted to the Christian faith. This implies that religion dictates every aspect of their lives. The assumption here is, when Chewa people have a background steeped in a religious belief in spirits, converts to the Christian faith could easily assimilate and appropriate the biblical belief of the Holy Spirit, which will control their everyday life. However, this does not seem to be the case among the Chewa Christians in Malawi.

Thirdly, as one of the ministers serving at various congregations of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod between 2007 and 2011, the researcher had an opportunity to minister to two of the rural congregations where he noted that church members including church elders and deacons barely understood the function of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the church. As a result, they tended to adopt a legalistic style when handling pastoral problems. This was evident in their preaching. They strictly applied the rules and instructions contained in the church order without analysing the situation and understanding the essence of such laws. Zeze has noted that the preamble to the Church order (*Zolamulira*²: *Zopangana ndi Zolangiza* rules and instructions used by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod) is silent on the role of the Holy Spirit in matters of church governance implying that *Zolamulira* and *Zopangana* (rules and instructions) minimizes or ignores the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, he has stressed that the preamble may have paved the way for other tendencies, such as paternalism, patronage, hierarchicalism, autocracy, clerocracy and legalism, as well as the problem of viewing church offices or ecclesiastical posts in terms of rank, status, and dignity (Zeze 2012, 180). These three points I have mentioned here, substantiate the reason why carrying out this research study is so important.

² *Zolamulira: Zopangana ndi Zolangiza* (Prescriptions: agreements and intentions). It refers to rules, regulations or advisory decisions.

1.3 Aims of the study

This study seeks to articulate the doctrine of Holy Spirit in the local Malawian context by integrating some local concepts. In order to achieve this aim, a thorough theological response that will help shed light on understanding the spirituality of the Chewa people will be employed. It is assumed that a greater understanding of Chewa spirituality will in turn assist in comprehending how they evaluate and interpret life, give meaning to everyday situations and thereby, establish more accurate stance regarding their belief in spirits in relation to the Holy Spirit for those converted to the Christian faith. It is assumed that the insights gained will be incorporated into the proposed holistic and integrated pneumatology, which will assist in ministering to the local Christians more effectively. The key point behind these aims is also in line with what one African theologian, David Tonghou Ngong said, “The theology of integration is so called because it aims at achieving some integration between the African pre-Christian religious experiences and Africa Christian commitment in ways that would ensure integrity of African Christian identity” (Ngong 2010, 5). In other words, this study seeks to articulate an integrated pneumatology based on the traditional beliefs and experiences of spirits with a holistic biblical pneumatology in view.

1.4 Research Questions and outline of thesis

As in many mainline churches, including the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, “it appears that the Holy Spirit is mainly viewed as confessional and abstract theological discourse and practice and only taught in the baptismal and catechetical classes” (cf. Michael 2011, 294). Moltmann (1992, 8) notes the same trend when he states that, “The Spirit usually is talked in connection to God, faith, the Christian life, the church and prayer, but seldom in connection with the body and nature”. In other words, the Holy Spirit is mostly confined within the worship moments and faith related activities and hardly associated with ordinary daily life and nature. In light hereof, the main question this research seeks to addresses is: “How can the doctrine of the Holy Spirit be articulated in such a way that it aids the effectively integration of the doctrine with the spirituality of the Chewa people, and the ministerial and organizational life of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, into everyday life?”

In addressing this main question, and in light of the main conversation partners chosen for this research project, the following sub-questions come to fore:

- a) Why is the work of the Holy Spirit most often associated with the worship services rather than as an active presence in the daily life of the people and of the Church?
- b) What is the role of the ancestral spirits (spirits) in the light of Chewa traditional beliefs and practices?
- c) How can the CCAP Nkhoma Synod integrate a holistic pneumatology in conversation with the Chewa views of community?
- d) Are John Mbiti's holistic views relevant for articulating an integrated pneumatology for an African life and African church?
- e) Is Jürgen Moltmann's cosmic pneumatology useful for the African context?
- f) How can a biblical pneumatology be holistically integrated in the daily life of believers and in the church?

The forthcoming chapters will explore these questions in greater depth. However, a few preliminary remarks should be made regarding these sub-questions. Describing the spirituality of the Chewa people, particularly how they interpret life and handle the challenges of everyday life, will help to establish a theological position regarding the belief of spirits and how they view the Holy Spirit. The introduction of the Christian faith exposed them to another Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit. They first heard about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by the missionaries under the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). It is a fact that the missionaries were greatly influenced by the Western worldview, as reflected in the catechism used by CCAP Nkhoma Synod. It seems the pneumatology articulated in the catechism and church order of the CCAP Nkhoma is more of a theoretical and abstract pronouncement suitable for the service of worship and catechetical lesson rather than practically applicable to the situations faced by its members in their everyday life (cf. Pauw 1980, 69) (Michael 2011). We may arguably understand them that in their time they did not fully understand the Chewa concept of Spirit to seriously undertake theological reflection as part of the effective missional approach. However, it is amusing that over a century, nothing has been done in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to seriously reflect on the issue of the belief on the spirits among its members.

In line with the research sub-questions, chapter two of this study will at some point critically examine the official teaching of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod on the role of the Holy Spirit, and will determine whether the church's pneumatology is adequate and relevant in the daily life of its members.

Though African theologians have recently expressed the need for an articulation of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit within the African context of African traditional thought, Teddy Sakupapa, a Zambian theologian now teaching at the University of the Western Cape, bemoans that pneumatology has been neglected in African theology. Instead, more attention has been given to other aspects of African theology, i.e. inculturation theology, liberation theology, black theology, and African women theology (Sakupapa 2012, 424). This demonstrates the urgent need to articulate a pneumatology applicable to the local African context. Anderson (1991, 68) agrees with this, saying: "Christianity, and particularly pneumatology, must respond fully to the culturally-based religious aspirations of the African". Chapter three will deal with this issue in more detail. It will specifically explore the views of John Mbiti on the concept of communal life (community) as the possible groundwork and framework for articulating a holistic pneumatology in relation to the church as community.

Chapter four will engage with Moltmann's view of a holistic pneumatology. Incorporating his view in this study may be questionable considering that this study focuses on the African context, while Moltmann's work is rooted in a Western context. However, the deliberate incorporation of his work is based on the fact that:

- Moltmann's view of pneumatology is recognized as being relevant to modern life, as well as the African context because it acknowledges the creative and interfering presence of God's Spirit in aspects of life and the world.
- It is open and contextual. It is thus sensitive to the activities of the Holy Spirit in the community of humans and non-humans, and it resonates well with an African worldview.
- It is the pneumatology that demands a sensitive awareness of God's Spirit in ordinary activities unrelated to the church. This fits the African conception of the role of spirits as being actively present in the whole universe.

Based on the above facts Moltmann's view of pneumatology is considered as potentially relevant and compatible with African thought. Therefore, his view is considered significant to this study. More details concerning his view of a holistic integrated pneumatology will be discussed further in chapter four. Special attention will be given to his work, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. In line with his thinking, it will be argued that the Holy Spirit should not only be experienced inwardly in our hearts and in the community of the church, but rather outwardly, in self-encounter as the experience of God's presence and love in everyday life and among the whole of creation.

Chapter five will focus on bringing into dialogue the traditional beliefs of the Chewa people on spirits and the traditional Western doctrine of Holy Spirit.

Chapter six will contain the conclusion, a summary of the chapters, and recommendations for further study.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

This study is based on the hypothesis that a more holistic pneumatology can challenge the reductive view that limits the work of the Holy Spirit in a way that does not integrate it with the daily lives of the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is not merely active during moments of worship or in other aspects of church life, but also practically in ordinary and everyday life. This biblical understanding will help the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to equip its members, the majority of whom are Chewas, to have and live with an integrated view of the presence and fellowship of the Holy Spirit in ecclesial and in other aspects of life.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

This research is set to discuss the subject of pneumatology regarding the cosmic presence of the Holy Spirit in ordinary daily life activities outside of the church, with a sensitivity to the local context. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to embark on an extensive discussion on the subject of pneumatology. Nevertheless, it will specifically focus on exploring a holistic pneumatology based on traditional concepts concerning the integral role of spirits

and biblical aspects of God's Spirit (like the cosmic dimension or the universality of the Holy Spirit) and its influence on ordinary activities of daily life, which is often ignored. I will therefore engage in the quest to understand the spirituality of the Chewa people, with a specific focus on understanding their view of the spirits and God's Spirit in an attempt to establish a possible functional relationship with a biblical pneumatology.

Furthermore, this study will further investigate John Mbiti's view of an African pneumatology, with the aim of using it as a framework to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology from an Africa perspective. Lastly, the study will reflect on the views of contemporary theologians on the topic of a contextual and integrated pneumatology. It will also investigate some possible challenges facing African Christianity when assimilating the integrated (contextual) pneumatology and propose a possible holistic pneumatology based on the biblical witness. The study will also seek to articulate a balanced view of the traditional Western Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit and traditional concepts of spirits among the Chewa people towards an effective ministry, while acknowledging the active presence of Holy Spirit in the daily life of believers, communities, and all of creation.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

This research will take the form of a literary study based on the systematic theological approach. In the process, I will engage the realistic theological approach³ employed by Welker (1994, 43-44). This approach realizes the reality of the Spirit and mediates God's presence in every context. It establishes the consequences of God's presence and articulates this in our theological reflection, on our life in the church, and in the world. It aspires to regain sensitivity to the saving power of God's presence as well as enjoyment of the wealth and abundance of his presence by renouncing a reductionism hungry for theological control. Furthermore, realistic theology inspires us to use new ways to examine the past, present and future experiences and expectation of God, testing them for interconnections and differences. It endeavours to understand the universality of the Spirit and of the Spirit's action from the perspectives of the various specifications of the Spirit and the Spirit's actions (Welker 1994,

³ Cf. Michael Welker (1994, 43-44), where he describes realistic theology in more detail.

43). To sum up, this study will employ realistic theology as a tool to help regain a sensitivity to the saving power of God's presence; it serves to guide the articulation of a holistic and integrated pneumatology from the traditional context of the Chewa people in central Malawi.

In a quest to understand the spirituality of the Chewa people with a specific focus on understanding their view of the role of ancestral spirits and God's Spirit, the work of Van Breugel titled *Chewa Traditional Religion* will be the most frequently consulted text in this study. To guide the discussion further, the viewpoints of John Mbiti and other African theologians will also be evaluated. The study will further reflect on Moltmann's view in an effort to establish a holistic pneumatology in light of a functional biblical pneumatology sensitive to the local context.

Since this study concerns the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, their viewpoints regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in the daily life of a believer and the church as articulated in the official documents will also be examined. Liturgical formularies, Christian initiation manuals (*chilangizo*), catechism and books of church order used for services of worship, training of new converts and church leaders represent the church's (official) pneumatology.

Furthermore, the researcher consulted the works of some contemporary African theologians who have written extensively on an integrated and contextual pneumatology integrated and contextual pneumatology. This involved a literary engagement with published and unpublished materials obtained from the libraries and archives of Stellenbosch University, Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (Malawi), Zomba Theological College (Malawi), and some websites. The theological sources consulted are particularly focused on the subject of pneumatology, with a few exceptions on the subject of anthropology and sociology.

1.8 Literature review

There has been renewed interest in the articulation of the role of the Holy Spirit in the daily life of believers and the church. However, it seems that the studies on this subject are not adequate enough and have not helped church members to be conversant with the function of

the Holy Spirit in their lives. Current research fails to resolve the contradiction between the function of the Holy Spirit and of ancestral spirits.

In 'Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of Nkhoma Synod of CCAP 1889-1962,' Martin Pauw (1980) explores and analyses the mission enterprise of the Dutch Reformed Church's missionaries in Malawi, from its infancy to the time of being a self-governing Church. However, no attempt to clarify doctrinal issues is clearly highlighted. No explanation is given concerning those converted from their traditional belief system to the Christian faith, particularly their belief in ancestral spirits. Thus, how they were taught to separate their old and new beliefs, or whether they combined both is not clear. Their old beliefs probably remained deeply ingrained in their subconscious mind. This is apart from the fact that new converts in the early days were taught and instructed from the Heidelberg Catechism, which has no clear exposition on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. One may assume that the traditional worldview of those reached by the gospel was not seriously attended to, thus forcing the new converts to live in two worlds.

In his doctoral thesis titled 'The spirituality of Rev Josophat Mwale,' Jonathan Kamwana (1997) mentions the conception of the Chewa spirit world and integrating it with the Christian life by using their rites of passage. He describes the Chewa spirituality as a strong belief in the Supreme Being God, spirit, life, witchcraft, including the position of the ancestral spirits in the spirit world. Kamwana (1997) also talks of integrating the Christian life by using the Chewa rites of passage. He cites birth, puberty initiation, pregnancy and death as some general concepts to integrate in the Christian life. Kamwana's analysis, however, does not take into account, nor does it examine the Chewa spirituality and possible relationship with the doctrine of Holy Spirit. Integrating the Christian life with Chewa rites of passage does not aim at articulating the doctrine of Holy Spirit.

In his thesis, 'Some theological and Hermeneutical problems in Chichewa Bible Translation with special reference to spirit world,' Winston Kawale (1987), a former general secretary of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and current lecturer at Mzuzu University, pointed out that the translation of the term 'Spirit of God' as "Mzimu wa Mulungu" creates a theological problem among the Chewa people because in Chichewa 'Mzimu' (spirit) is part of the human being

which has survived death. Therefore, ‘Mzimu wa Mulungu’ (the Spirit of God) would imply that God has died and his spirit survived Him (to the Chewas, this is an inconceivable idea as well as blasphemy, as God is immortal and eternal). For him, this has created a hermeneutical problem even when translating the term ‘the Holy Spirit’. It is true that the word ‘holy’ translated as ‘woyera’ in Chichewa literally means “white” or “pure”. In addition, to the Chewa, one cannot speak of “*Mzimu Woyera*” (White Spirit) because the Spirit is invisible and therefore one cannot speak of its colour (Kawale 1987,16). Kawale does not deal with practical roles of the Holy Spirit in the daily life and in the church. Based on the above observation, one may conclude that there is still a need for an articulation of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit in African traditional thought within the African context, more particularly in the Chewa context.

In a book ‘*The Chewa Girls Initiation process*’, Molly Longwe (2007), a theologian of the Baptist Church Convention in Malawi, discusses some beliefs and practices of the Chewa people, particularly the practice of the initiation of girls as one of the stages of the rites of passage among the Chewa people. It seems that a driving force behind the girls’ initiation is a belief that ancestral spirits are guardians of customs that must be passed from generation to generation through initiation rites (Longwe 2007, 19). Longwe neither elaborates on the role of the ancestral spirits in the girls’ initiation process, nor explains how this practice can help in the articulation of pneumatology from an African perspective.

In his doctoral research titled, ‘Christ the Head of the Church: Authority Leadership and Organisation within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod,’ Zeze (2012) noted that the preamble of “Zolamaira” explores and questions the understanding of the Nkhoma Synod on Christ’s rule through office bearers, where it omits in its church order that Christ exercises his reign and dominion through his Word and Spirit. Zeze noted this discrepancy, which he fears has resulted in a tendency to identify the power and authority of office bearers with that of Christ, consequently, the office bearers can boldly claim to have unchallengeable possession of Christ’s power and authority. As a result, the authority of Christ’s rule through his word and Spirit is excluded and transferred to the office-bearers, who constitute or represent the highest ecclesiastical authority. Such exposition is hardly satisfactory because the Holy Spirit has a role to play not only in matters of church governance or among church office bearers alone but

also in the whole church. It is envisaged that this research will aid to resolve the inadequacy in the previous research works.

In his thesis, 'Towards a Chewa Ecotheology with special Reference to the thought of Ernest M. Conradie,' Bosman Chitheka (2014) discusses some elements of the Chewa culture as the basis for formulating an eco-theology with special reference to the thoughts of Ernst Conradie. In this thesis, Chitheka highlights how some cultural concepts of the Chewa people are used as the basis of an eco-theology. Though not directly related to the study of the Holy Spirit, there are some aspects of theological articulation based on the local context that Chitheka highlights in his thesis. This is relevant to this study, especially where he mentions the concept of ownership of trees among the Chewas and their belief that the dwelling place of spirits need to be respected (Chitheka 2014, 82).

In short, it is my view that these valuable studies mentioned above did not fully engage in the theological articulation of an integrative pneumatology among the Chewa people (Christians) in relation to their traditional view of spirits. One may ask whether the failure or neglect to articulate the doctrine of Holy Spirit in relation to the traditional and religious contexts of the Chewa people has had any negative impact among Chewa converts. On the other hand, another question that comes to the fore is, "Has the CCAP Nkhoma Synod attempted to address the spiritual needs of Chewa Christians directly, or indirectly, regarding the doctrine of Holy Spirit?" Some scholars consider this neglect to have negatively contributed to a reductive understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as taught by the Western missionaries. In this regard, Rosato (1981, 160) explains that this reduction leads to a view that "restricts the presence of the Spirit in Church activities and has nothing to do with their daily engagements as propagated by traditional western theology". In line with this view, Moltmann in his work *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, has strongly and repeatedly challenged the traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit commonly known by its reductive expression to shift to a new understanding of the doctrine of Holy Spirit, where God's Spirit is acknowledged as being active and present in daily life and the whole universe.

1.9 Outline of chapters

The chapter outline of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter has introduced the topic of the study, as well as presented the research questions, stated the hypothesis, and outlined the delimitations of the study. Its aim is to guide the discussion and provide the framework for the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2: The private and public spirituality of the Chewa people

In order to orient the study, this chapter will examine the practical, private and public spirituality of the Chewa people, specifically focusing on the work of Van Breugel (*The Chewa Traditional Religion*). Special attention will also be given to the presentation of the person and work of Holy Spirit as presented in the Buku La Katekisma, church order, and liturgical formularies of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

Chapter 3: A holistic and integrated pneumatology in conversation with African views of community

This chapter deals with the work of contemporary African theologians, particularly that of John Mbiti, who writes from an African perspective. John Mbiti is a pioneer African theologian who attempted to articulate the Christian faith and how it relates to some traditional African beliefs. The focus of the chapter is to establish how, based on his view of communal life, we can integrate the doctrine of pneumatology in relation to the African traditional concepts of community and relate it to the biblical concept of church as a community. In other words, the chapter seeks to explore the framework of a holistic and integrated pneumatology from an African perspective, based on the concept of community by relating it to the church as a community of believers.

Chapter 4: Cosmological pneumatology: Exploring Moltmann's view

In this chapter I will endeavour to explore the cosmological pneumatology as highlighted by Moltmann, and establish the biblical basis of his pneumatology. The aim is to grasp a more holistic and integrated understanding of the Holy Spirit, and what the experience and fellowship of the Holy Spirit means in the daily life of Christians. Furthermore, it seeks to establish the relevance of Moltmann's pneumatology for the African context.

Chapter 5: Towards a holistic and integrated pneumatology

This chapter will attempt to integrate: the traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit as it is commonly known, the Chewa people's traditional belief in spirits, John Mbiti's viewpoints (from an African perspective), and the views of Moltmann. The aim is to move towards a holistic integrated pneumatology, and bring these various viewpoints into fruitful conversation. A few suggestions will be made as a way forward for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to articulate a more integrated pneumatology.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter will consider whether the aims of the study have been achieved. It will also contain the summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHEWA PEOPLE

2.1. Introduction

Providing a comprehensive description of the spirituality of the Chewa people is a complex undertaking and falls beyond the scope of this study. However, to briefly explain what is meant by spirituality, Kalilombe (1994, 115) explains that it refers to "...those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animates peoples' lives and help them to reach out toward the super-sensible realities". The relationship between humans and the invisible, is obtained from one's view of the world, in turn, this relationship affects the way we relate to the self, other people, and the universe. Therefore, in short, the scope of this study will be limited to an exploration of the Chewa people's belief in spirits, as one way of understanding their spirituality⁴. In this regard, special attention will be given to the following questions: "What is the viewpoint of the Chewa people regarding the role of ancestral spirits in their everyday life?" How can the CCAP Nkhoma Synod integrate its doctrine of the Holy Spirit in conversation with the Chewa people's spirituality on the role of ancestral spirits in all spheres of life?" In conclusion, the articulation of the role of the Holy Spirit should not be limited to church related activities, but should embrace the whole life context of people. To begin with, a brief overview will be given of the history of spirituality of the Chewa people. This is important to understand their spirituality because it is influenced by many factors that impact their lives, for instance, their history, life context, and various other factors that will be discussed later on. In the section below, I will now review the history of the Chewa people.

2.2. The origin of the Chewa people's spiritual discourse and practices

The early history of the spirituality of the Chewa people in Malawi can be traced back to the migration of Bantu people from Uluba in the present Congo Republic (formerly known as

⁴ Spirituality is defined in various ways in the literature. However, it is commonly referred to "as the inner dynamism that shapes people's lives especially in the innate quest for self-understanding, self-expression, identity and...in relation to God" (Chimhanda 2013, 1-17). Furthermore, see Patrick Kalilombe (1994, 115-135), 'The spirituality of African people'.

Zaire) between the 14th and 16th centuries (Phiri Elizabeth. 1997, 22). The first Chewa tribal group entered Malawi through Tanzania in the north and the second through Zambia in the west. These two groups settled in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique under the dual leadership of the Banda and the Phiri, reflecting the two main clans. The Banda clan, on the one hand, emphasized ritual authority associated with religion, rainmaking, and general fertility. On the other hand, the Phiri clan stressed the political role of their leaders known by the title of Kalonga.⁵ Though these two clans had different emphases, each represented a certain type of spirituality. As in many other African tribes, a Kalonga was both a spiritual and political leader executing political functions through representatives from the Phiri clan and religious duties through the Banda clan (Nthara, 1973).

According to Katani, the Chewa share three basic spiritual discourses and practices, namely, belief in the existence of witches, belief in the intermediary role of the spirits, and belief in the existence of a high God, worshiped by means of a number of large influential territorial cults (Katani 2008, 69-70). It is hoped that by describing each of these categories, more light will be shed on the practical and public spirituality of the Chewa people.

2.3. Supreme Being: Acknowledged but not worshiped

The Chewa people believe in the existence of a Supreme Being known to as the Great Spirit or the Creator called God. This God, according to Van Breugel, is believed to be the Supreme Spirit, “*Mzimu wa Ukulu*”. All other spirits are called lesser spirits, “*mizimu yaying’ono*”. Among the Chewa people, the proof that God exists is based on the story of creation, particularly his involvement in the daily life of people. God is credited with the creation of the world and everything in it. He causes rain to fall, giving life to vegetation, animals and human beings. Like other Africa tribes, God is called and known by many names and is often believed

⁵ Kalonga is the Chewa word for a person who enthrones or installs subordinate chiefs. By 1600, Kalonga ruled over a very large territory north of the Zambezi. Although the territory he had direct rule over was much smaller, he entrusted the rest of the territory to his matrilineal nephews who administered the adjacent regions as territorial chiefs. Political rivalries and succession disputes resulted in a breakaway and separation from the territorial chiefs. By the 17th century, the Portuguese explorers had penetrated the Zambezi basin and established relations with the Malawi confederacy that was headed by the Chewa King Kalonga, and by the late 19th century, Christian ideologies and European teachings and ideals were introduced into the Chewa society, eventually eclipsing most traditional customs.

to be the Spirit who surpasses all other spirits and belongs to the unseen spirit world (Van Breugel 2001, 32). Being transcendent, he is seldom acknowledged by the Chewa except during times of severe natural disasters, such as drought, famine, plagues, etc. He is known by various names that portray his being, character, and sovereignty (Phiri.D. 2004, 30).

a) The spirit of Chauta/Chiuta

Literally, the word Chiuta/Chauta simply refers to “a big bow” or “that which has a bow” (Phiri.D. 2004, 30). “Basically, God’s caring and protective work is likened to stretching a rainbow across the sky, presiding over the fecundity which the rain brings” (Van Breugel 2001, 29). The name *Chauta* denotes how God shows concern for all of creation by giving rain. The rainbow that appears after a downpour is likened to the bow of one who drives away the clouds to stop the rains when there has been enough, so that it does not spoil the crops (Van Breugel 2001, 30). In addition, God is understood as a provider and protector (Musopole, 1983).

b) The spirit of Namalenga/Mlengi

The Chewa people hold many myths about how God created human beings and how they lived together. According to the Chewa, God the Great Spirit created the world and all that is in it (Hara 2008,122). *Nammlenga*, translated as “Creator” or “Maker,” is a common name for God among the Chewa people. He is the Creator of humankind and the universe. The Chichewa⁶ verb *kulenga* is translated as “to make,” and presents the idea that God is the only one who made all that can be seen through the act of molding (Van Breugel 2001, 31). It is interesting to learn that Chewa don’t believe in idols or anything that symbolizes God. Though they do have amulets for protective purposes, they are not regarded as idols. There is no god-idol in the Chewa people’s arts and crafts. God is hardly identified with any form of image; He is associated with the powers of the ancestral spirits and they manifest differently through creation.

c) The spirit of Mulungu/Mlungu

⁶ *Chichewa* is the language of the Chewa people and was proclaimed the national language in Malawi alongside English in 1968. See Molly Longwe (2007, 17) for more details.

From the Swahili language, the Chewa borrowed the word *Mulungu* and uses it when referring to the Supreme Being, also known as God. This name appears to have been popularized by the advent of Islam and Christianity. In one sense, *Mlungu* refers to the biggest underground spring that gushes water out onto the surface of the earth. Here, God is the source of all good things. In another sense, *Mulungu* means the most perfect and blameless being. The use of the prefix *mu* anthropomorphically signifies that God is the most righteous and holy Being. Ott reports that *Mulungu* is a term used for a deity characterized by the possession of *mana*, a mysterious active power that generally belongs (although not exclusively), to the souls of the dead and to all spirits (Ott 2000, 349). He indicates that for this reason the word *Mulungu* has been associated with the spirits and ancestors of whom He is the primary exemplar and chief. Furthermore, Ott says, among the Chewa people God is invoked as *Mulungu* and is perceived as a distinct person, but cannot be identified with the powers of nature, nor confounded with the spirits in general, who as spirits are supposed to be with Him.

What one can deduce from this is that in the Chewa society, God is above all things. He is like the clouds in the sky, and like the wind that reaches everywhere. Because He is a Spirit who lives very far away, he cannot be approached or fully known. An interesting point is, according to the Chewa, through the intercessory function of the ancestral spirits, God listens to the prayers of people that directly affect their private and public lives.

2.4. Ancestral spirits in daily human affairs

As do many other African tribes, the Chewa people have a strong belief in the reality of spirits believing that ancestral spirits play a very important role in the life of an individual, the family, community and society (Maboea 1999:20). Consequently, ancestral spirits are highly respected and worshipped. Explicitly stated, they are frequently remembered, highly honoured and strictly obeyed. This is because failing to do so may result in people not receiving protection, losing property, or a family member suddenly dying. They are believed to actively monitor the affairs of the living, since they are the guardians of tradition. They are also known to be good spirits and believed to offer assistance, guidance, blessings, riches, children and other good things in life to those who court their favour (Michael 2011:295). Although more recently, for a number of reasons the practice is on the decline, i.e. owing to modernity. However, among

the Chewa people, especially the older generation, it is still strongly practiced, especially in rural settings. Commonly, the following three categories of spirits can be identified: The first category consists of the spirits of those who have just died, commonly called *mizimu* (spirits of the dead). Upon death, the spirits of the living join the spirits of other members of their household who have just preceded them in the spirit world (Kawale 1987:22). This status is only maintained if those still alive remember the name of the deceased, he or she remain “the living dead”. It is believed that the dead person’s character and personality traits are incarnated into a baby born into the family (Kawale 1987, 22). This gives rise to two questions: Firstly, “Is the spirit of the dead synonymously called the incarnated personality?” Secondly, “Does the spirit of the living dead empower the baby with gifts as does the Holy Spirit with believers and non-believers?”

The second category comprises the spirits of the ancestors, i.e. spirits from long ago, and are called the *mizimu ya makolo* (ancestral spirits). They are remembered but cannot be associated with any of the appearing spirits. Put another way, they are the guardians of rituals, traditions and customs (*miyambo*), as are the village headman and chiefs. So the spirits of kings are entrusted with more general matters (Van Breugel 2001, 74). They are also traditionally known as spirits that bring various forms of sickness, death and drought, and are sometimes regarded as messengers of anger. They deliver warnings through dreams and sometimes demand food, beer, and the construction of a tomb. At times they are called *troublesome spirits* because they disturb the peace (Van Breugel 2001, 75).

On a more positive note, it is strongly believed that ancestral spirits protect the living from danger. More importantly, they act as intercessors or mediators between the living and God (Van Breugel 2001, 77). They are considered masters of life and death, as well as of rains and fecundity. In all these cases the spirits speak for the living. In matters of worship, sacrifices are offered to the spirits, though they acknowledge the ultimate recipient to be God (Kawale 1987, 24). God does not need sacrifices but spirits because they are entrusted with roles to oversee the welfare of the people. Disobedience or breaking of traditional laws and customs offend the spirits. Sacrifices are made to appease them so that they in turn communicate with the Supreme Being. Here, it shows that there are some parallels between the interceding role of the Holy Spirit (Roman 8:26) and the pneumatology of the Chewa people.

The third category of spirits consists of evil spirits. These are believed to be the spirits of deceased witches or murderers who are refused entrance into the world of the spirits. Apparently, when a person is possessed by spirits, acts or behaves abnormally or becomes sick (Kawale 1987, 25). They cannot be appeased by offerings and the only defense against them is magical rites and medicine. These are the most feared spirits because they are unpredictable. Some people, especially witches, manipulate these spirits and cause them to harm their enemies and send illnesses and other misfortunes when they are annoyed. Like the Holy Spirit, it seems there is the belief that when these spirits are aggrieved and quenched they bring curses, calamities and suffering upon people. On the other hand, for Christians grieving the Holy Spirit has serious implications, including on their life (cf. Luke 12:10; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).

2.5. Functional hierarchy of spiritual beings

This section addresses another area of concern, the Chewa people's belief in a hierarchical relationship between spiritual beings. Here, the Supreme Being created the ancestors first and gave them the power to pass life on to their descendants; He also delegated them to look after these descendants and to chastise them if need be (Van Breugel 2001, 38). According to the Chewa, *Chauta* is not directly involved in people's daily affairs but instead, delegates this responsibility to the ancestral spirits. The above explanation illustrates why people are more preoccupied with the spirits of the dead and evil spirits, than God (Van Breugel 2001, 38). In Mbiti's words (1970, 18), God is absent, yet present. The Chewa people's normal daily life is characterized by strict respect for this hierarchy, which in turn is carried over into their relationship with God and the spirits. By comparison, Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5 writes, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which the testimony is given at the proper time."

When problems arise between the Chewa people, there is a particular hierarchical chain of authority that is executed. God exercises the highest authority. Following God are, the ancestral spirits, then the spirits, then kings, and finally with human beings comprising the lowest level. Due to this order, no one can approach God directly except they go through the lesser spirits (Van Breugel 2001, 39). Simply put, to have contact with the higher Spirit means that the lower

spirits first need to be consulted. In sum, one cannot approach God directly, except by means of intermediaries.

Basically, the spirits of the dead mediate between the living and the dead and become God's spokesperson, speaking to them on His behalf. Any wrongdoing is attributed to the evil spirits but not to the Supreme Being. In light of this, one sees that, for the Chewa people, God (*Chauta*) is good, and not the source of evil. In moments of crisis, people consult spirits; ironically it is believed that they possess the solution to all problems and can be consulted in every situation. Yet, everything that is evil is believed to come from the spirits; thus, they are evil spirits.

2.6. Communication in the spirit realm

Communication between the world of the living, and the living dead —the spirit world—is important in the Chewa people's spirituality. As is observed by Molly Longwe, the spirits communicate with the living in various ways. Since belief in these spirits is part of their daily life, this section will briefly discuss some of the ways communication takes place in the spirit world, as well as between the physical and spirit world. The following question will guide this discussion: "Through which practices and behaviour, does communication with the spirit world take place?"

a) Through sacrifices

Although the act of making an offering to the spirits or Supreme Being with the hope of obtaining favour or preventing something bad from happening is no longer practiced, it was in the past a means of communication with the spiritual realm. The most common form of communication is when the living makes sacrifices to the ancestral spirits. But the quality of the sacrifice, however, is in proportion to the dignity of the deceased relative. To the ancestral spirits, one ought to at least offer a goat, but to the lesser spirits, one can offer a chicken. This clearly indicates that the greater the desire for one's case to be attended to by the bigger spirits, the greater the sacrifice that needs to be offered. Interestingly enough, Pentecostal preachers closely and commonly use the same principle claiming that if one desires greater blessings one should be prepared to give more. In this way, traditional thought seems to have influenced

Pentecostals in terms of relating to the spirit world to obtain greater or more blessings. It is important to note that sacrificial matters during a time of need involved the whole community as a sign of solidarity. Traditionally, the whole community was involved in giving sacrifices for rain. When asking for rain, sacrifices were made to the *mizimu* (spirits) of former chiefs, who were deemed to have more power and were considered closer to the Supreme Being (Van Breugel 2001, 87). At other times, the spirits of the dead are appeased when they trouble the living because they do not have any peace and cannot rest until a sacrifice is made.

When there is a good harvest, people thank the spirits by offering the first cob of maize in a special place where provisions are kept. They do this, for the spirits saying, “You have given us”, so “you start to eat it”. The next day, when they find that the rats have eaten the food they are happy, as they see it as a sign that the *mizimu* (spirits) have accepted the offering. According to Van Breugel sacrifices to the spirits of the chiefs, are made at the shrine or near his grave but not inside the graveyard or at the foot of the tree under which he used to sit. If one dies abroad, the sacrifices are made at the house where his wife and children reside or at the house of his mother or sister, and in that case, the house is not demolished because the spirit is not supposed to come back and haunt the living. However, these rituals are no longer commonly practiced these days due to the influence of modernity and the Christian faith. Nevertheless, some of these beliefs still have a significant influence over the living.

b) Through offerings

An additional way they communicate with the spirits is through offering different foodstuffs, i.e. beer, meat and *nsima* (pap), or simply maize flour. Other offerings include: sweet potatoes, groundnuts, millet and pumpkin. These offerings may be for the family; the invocations are commonly made by the head of the family who can also sometimes appoint someone else in their place. For the public ceremony the village chief presides over the invocation (Van Breugel 2001, 91).

c) Through dreams and visions

The Chewa people strongly believe that ancestral spirits frequently communicate with the living through dreams. They usually appear to the living at night to share an important message. Dreams fall into two categories good and bad. If one has a bad dream, for instance, of death or

disaster, they need to share this with the elders in the morning so as to avert it from happening. In most cases, it is the leading figure of the family that would appear to the living either to warn or instruct them of impending danger or any misfortune. In this situation, one can reflect on what the biblical witness says regarding what the Spirit of Yahweh would do. From the Old Testament there is evidence (cf. Joel 2:28) showing that when the Spirit of Yahweh is poured out upon individuals, dreams and visions will be a common phenomenon. In this prophecy, dreams and visions are the manifestation of the active presence of Holy Spirit, and communicating through dreams and visions may not be strange, even among Christians. However, there is great need to discern whether the dreams are from the good or evil spirits. In a similar manner, sometimes spirits may possess someone and communicate an important message through the possessed individual.

d) Through difficult situations

A more common way the ancestral spirits interact with the living is through sickness, death, famine and trouble. The coming of plagues or certain misfortunes may be a signal from the living-dead that they seek to communicate with the living. When trouble comes, people seek answers from the 'medicine men to learn what the living dead want. It is thought to be very wise obey the demands of the ancestral spirits (Gehman 1989, 242).

This section examined the concept of God and the spirits, as held by the Chewa people. The Supreme Being is known by several names reflecting the character of God who is acknowledged but not worshiped. The dominant hierarchical structure is the reflection of Chewa cosmology where lesser spirits are mediators to the greater spirits. God, the Supreme Being, cannot be directly approached; this needs to be done through the lesser spirits. God, the Supreme Being has delegated the ancestral spirits to attend to daily human affairs. The different categories of spirits and communication with the spirit realm were also discussed. Spirits communicate with the living for several reasons and in various ways. It was observed that the communication is a two-way process. The living sometimes initiates the communication to obtain favour, to appease the spirits of the dead, or to ask for rain in times of drought by means of sacrifices or offerings. The spirits sometimes initiate communication through dreams or difficult situations to obtain the attention of the living. From this, we may deduce that spirits

form an integral part of Chewa people's lives; therefore, the theological focus here should be on making the doctrine of the Holy Spirit relevant and meaningful in their everyday lives.

2.7 Dwelling place of the spirits

The Chewa people strongly believe that spirits dwell everywhere, but they are particularly found in unpopulated areas like bushes, forests, rivers, mountains, and in trees and other objects of nature (Van Breugel 2001, 49). Consequently, these places are highly respected and no one is allowed to cut the trees or perform any common activities there for it would be a sign of disrespect to the spirits. Furthermore, mistreating the trees, mountains, or any other natural part of the environment will bring misfortune to the entire community (Van Breugel 2001, 50). Of significance here, concerning this belief of respecting the dwelling place of the spirits, the Creator God has entrusted the care of the land and, forests to the ancestors. However, of recent, this has been devalued by the influence of modern and post-modern worldviews, which in turn has negatively affected the attitude of preserving the environment. The influence of the modern worldview has reduced the tendency to respect the environment, which is the case today. Instead, people have the attitude of viewing it as something to use for personal gain. Previously, the notion of spirits inhabiting the forests suffice to say helped in preserving the environment. For the Chewa, trees and the natural environment traditionally played a very important role for spiritual and social reasons. Some trees are used for traditional medicine, i.e. certain parts may be used by a professional medicine person, witchdoctor, or herbalist to prepare for *kukhwima* (protection). Other trees are used for gatherings; sometimes the whole village may gather under a big tree for food, fellowship and celebration. The same tree is used by the chief to meet with his village elders for deliberation, to judge disputes, or discuss other important issues (Longwe 2007, 43).

Due to modern influences, the environment is viewed as something for personal gain. As a result, trees are being destroyed at an alarming rate, even to the extent that many areas are left bare. One can say this is true in most places in Malawi; it is common nowadays that in many parts of the country one will see many trees in the graveyards, except in the urban areas and reserved forests. Graveyards are highly respected places because of the strong belief that they inhabit the spirits of dead who deserves more respect. The whole community with the chief as

the highest in authority owns the trees in the graveyard. No one, not even the chief, is allowed to cut and use the trees for their own purpose. The trees and grass in the graveyard is believed to be the dwelling place of the spirits of all the people buried there. Anyone found in the graveyard cutting trees or grass is seen as *mfiti* (witch), for they are suspected as collecting material to obtain magical powers. In general, environmental degradation is one of the greatest challenges facing the Malawian nation, and the current rate of deforestation is so alarming that if left unchecked in the next decade may lead the country into a self-created desert (Mike kamande, 10th Feb 2016⁷). This study argues that if the traditional notion of spirits inhabiting the trees (nature) is upheld, it will lead to respect for nature out of fear of being punished by spirits. In a sense, if this notion is contextually integrated into the doctrine of Holy Spirit, in relation to the African notion of a vital force inhabiting the creation, it may closely relate to what Calvin refers to as the Spirit of God, as the one who preserves the created order. Calvin further insists that God's Spirit is not only the power of God preserving life but also quickens and sustains life (vivification) (van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 153). As Calvin stated, the Holy Spirit as the source and sustainer of life applies to all of life in relation to the cosmos. The biblical awareness and acknowledgment of the indwelling Spirit of God over creation closely agrees with affirms this African notion, and the exploitation we see would not have reached this far. Sadly, the exploitation over our environment is highly attributed to Western theology, which is often more anthropocentric than pneumacentric.

To sum up the spirituality of the Chewa people, Kamwana (1997, 48-49) outlines the following five aspects:

- 1) The belief in ideas such as God, spirits, magic, witchcraft and ancestral spirits in the spirit world.
- 2) Practices of religious beliefs, i.e. ceremonies and rituals.
- 3) Religious objects and places, identified by a society and related to trees, rocks, mountains, forests ruins of temples (*kachisi*)
- 4) Values and morals; highly esteemed morals include truth, justice, love for people, promise, punishment, and integrity.

⁷ Mike Kamande wrote on Deforestation rate in *Malawi in Daily times*, on the rate of deforestation in Malawi

5) Leadership by chiefs and diviners/mediums and rainmakers, are believed to be representatives from the community.

To add to the above analysis, Molly Longwe describes six features of the Chewa spirituality following Harold Turner's analysis of the primal worldview, where there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual (Longwe 2007, 24). Longwe sums up the spirituality of the Chewa people in agreement with Turner's view that they are molded by its cultural heritage manifested in six features. These six features are as follows: 1). A profound sense that man is akin to nature. 2). The deep sense that man is finite, weak and sinful and stands in need of a power not his own. 3). The conviction that mankind is not alone in the universe but is surrounded by a transcendent spiritual world in which a hierarchy of both benevolent and malevolent spirits are found. 4). The belief that people can have a relationship with a benevolent spirit, and so share in its powers and blessings. 5). The belief that humankind's relationship with the spirit world is not only for this life but goes beyond death such that the "living dead" remain united in affection and in mutual obligations with the 'living living'. 6). The conviction that the 'physical' acts as the vehicle for 'spiritual' power, and that there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and spiritual (Longwe 2007, 24).

Having sketched the picture of the Chewa people's spirituality in relation to their belief in spirits, an attempt is made to trace how they first encountered the Christian faith, which might be significant in an effort to understand and reflect on the impact of the Christian faith when introduced to the biblical witness of another spirit, the Holy Spirit.

2.8. Encounter with the witness of Dutch Reformed missionaries

A brief account of the history of evangelism in Malawi cannot commence without recognizing the exceptional contribution made by David Livingstone in his famous Cambridge University address on the 5th of December 1857, where he stated, "I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity". The three "Cs:" commerce, Christianity and civilization become the chief means by which Livingstone hoped to liberate Africa. He did so by getting rid of the slave trade, which at that time was felt to be the "open wound" of Africa (Ott 2000, 205). It demonstrated that Africans had lost their morals, for the slave traders conspired with

the local leaders, mostly chiefs, agreeing to sell some of their subjects in exchange for valuable items brought by the slave traders. In that sense, David Livingstone thought Christianity would help restore their morals; he also provided an alternative to the slave trade by introducing the right trade or commerce that Africans needed to know, combining Christianity, commerce and education.

In 1874, the Free Church of Scotland responded to David Livingstone's plea under the guidance of E. D. Young, and the team included Dr Robert Laws, a medical missionary doctor. In 1875 they reached the Zambezi after a stopover in Cape Town, and were joined by four others. They later reached Lake Nyasa and stopped over at Cape Maclear when they started Livingstonia Mission in memory of David Livingstone. In 1881 the Livingstonia Mission later moved from Cape Maclear to Bandawe among the Tongas, under the leadership of Stewart and Robert Laws (Pauw 1980, 23).

The Church of Scotland responded to David Livingstone's plea by sending a group of missionaries led by Clement Scot and Henry Henderson who settled in the Shire Highlands and they chose to reside near Ndirande Mountain under the jurisdiction of Chief Kapeni. The mission centre was named Blantyre after Livingstone's birthplace (Pauw 1980, 26).

The Dutch Reformed Church Mission came to the country in 1888, pioneered by Rev. Andrew C. Murray, who was later joined by Rev. T.B. Vlok. A mission station was set up at Mvera in the highlands of central Angoniland (Pauw 1980, 29). Mvera was strategically situated on the central region of Malawi, with some pockets of Ngoni people; but the majority are the Chewa people found in the most central parts of Malawi, in the north the Livingstonia Mission settled mostly among the Ngonis and Tongas, and in the southern part, the Blantyre Mission, another Scottish led mission, settled among the Yaos and the Mang'anjas. Before settling at Mvera, Andrew Murray visited Blantyre Mission, which was hosted by Rev and Mrs Scott. He was dismayed to learn that the focus of his fellow missionaries was not to evangelize but to: "Civilize the natives in a Christian way by exercising influence on marriage, social, moral and political life" (Pauw 1980). Murray did not share the same view, as was convinced that they were sent to win souls for Christ, when he wrote:

We are not sent out, I think, to civilize peoples but to convert them. Not to give them a high secular education, but teach them to keep all things which our Lord and Master have commanded. Let those who will be our helpers as evangelists, catechists or teachers, learn what is necessary for their work, but as far as the people in general are concerned, let us impress the word of God upon them in all possible ways, and further teach them to read the Bible for themselves in their own languages (cited in Pauw 1980, 61).

This remark became the DRCM's benchmark and it reflected a kind of policy statement, which characterized its mission work during the years of its evangelization. Although the DRC missionaries did not favour the approach of civilizing people by means of introducing them to higher education possibly for fear of them to imbibe external life styles of Europeans however, later they encouraged many young people among the Chewa to abandon Nyau secret society and learn at School ironically part of civilization. Village schools were greatly used as the main tool to reach the local people with the gospel. This began when Andrew Murray visited Dr Robert Laws in the north. He was so impressed on how their missionary activities were conducted, and while there, he learnt two important lessons: Firstly, the importance of concentrating on children, and secondly, the importance of village schools as a tool for evangelism. Education through village schools became one of the main mission policies that characterized the work of the DRC. As the missionaries continued in their effort to evangelize the Chewa, the youth among them encountered a challenge, they were torn between two worlds: the one dominated by a Western lifestyle introduced through village mission schools, and the other rooted in traditional and cultural practices, which required them to be loyal and to be initiated into a secret society known as *Nyau*. Failing to do so meant they would not be accepted by their communities. On the other hand, most young people were in need of a higher education and this prompted DRCM missionaries to open high schools to train most of the youth from their village schools who later became important leaders in that society. One would perceive the motivation of the DRCM missionaries as a means of contextualizing the gospel among the local people when they introduced the young girls and boys to the Christian version of initiation. The introduction of Christian initiation was one step towards contextualization for the young girls and boys were equipped with Christian instructions, as they grew into adulthood. This initiative marked one great aspect of the missionary work by incorporating local concepts into the Christian life, thus Christianizing traditional practices. In this area, this was great and commendable; however, this approach was not carried out in other aspects of Christian life, i.e. like the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which required such attention (Pauw 1980, 64-69).

On the 28th of November 1889, Andrew Murray and T.B. Vlok settled at Mvera, an area of the Ngoni chief, Chiwere. They called the place Mvera, which means ‘obedience’ (Phiri D. 2004, 144). The name Mvera⁸ has several interpretations. For Pauw, he says it refers to the hill called a place of hearing (obedience) used by Chiwere to call his warriors to arm them for war. Another meaning, as indicated by Pauw, was given by some local people, said to be that of a certain type of excellent pottery clay found nearby, which was very obedient in the potters hands. Whatever the meaning of the name may have been, it has a theological implication for the task of evangelization, for it required a committed and obedient person to fulfil it. Years later, there is still the assurance that God directed these missionaries to start the mission work at this place. It was strategic in the sense that it was located centrally between Blantyre Mission in the south, Livingstonia in the north, near Lake Malawi in the east (known as Nyasa then), where most slave traders would pass by with many victims of the slave trade to board their boats. Numerous reports indicate how the missionaries engaged in dangerous rescue operations to rescue these victims of the slave trade. It is also along this geographical location where most of the Chewa people settled; as a result, most of the mission work carried out by the DRC missionaries was done among them.

It is worth noting that in the early days of mission work, the common message preached was that of salvation for all people. Emphasis on the law was deliberate to awaken the sense of sin and wrongdoing among the people (moral consciousness), which was assumed to be little among the local people. The Ten Commandments were read every Sunday, and expounded upon with the purpose of exposing individual sin as well as national sins, and from there, to bring the good news of forgiveness and salvation through the blood of Christ (Pauw 1980, 67). The proclamation of the biblical message had a significant impact among the Chewa people, and the number of those converted to the Christian faith continually increased. The great success was attributed to God’s grace, while other scholars observe that most Africans were attracted to this new religion for various reasons ranging from spiritual, social and political. Kalu (1979, 20-22) says some accepted the Christian faith due to the failure of their gods (ancestral spirits) during times of crises, thus opening them to accept the new God. Christianity,

⁸ Martin Pauw (1980, 66-67) provides a detailed description of the term ‘Mvera’.

according to Kalu, triumphed when the gods of the forefathers could no longer protect them (Kalu 1979, 13-22). Spiritually, they were seeking security from monovalent spirits believed to forever be haunting humanity, which they thought the Christian God would provide. Socially, others were converted after seeking refuge at the mission stations after fleeing from their villages and being threatened by slave traders and allegations of witchcraft. Furthermore, politically, there were many tribal conflicts among most ethnic groups and some sought security amongst the missionaries, at times running away from colonial rulers' cruelty. Unfortunately, for most of those who were converted, Christianity failed to wholly address all areas needing attention. This left some areas insecure, and hence they resorted to combine both in order to survive in such an environment. One such insecurity was how to deal with malevolent spirits, which the local people, like many other Africans, viewed as the source of all their troubles including sickness and death. This was so, as salvation for traditional Malawians meant security or freedom from troubles caused by spirits; salvation had no connection with sin and reconciliation with God (Hara 2008, 139). Salvation referred to a person's relationship with his/her fellow human beings and the ancestral spirits. A person at peace with his/her fellow people and with their ancestors lived a happy life. Salvation also meant living free from illness and the fear of witchcraft, magic and sorcery.⁹ Hara observes that much energy and time was spent on finding a means of being free from these evil forces that work in the dark. For traditional Malawians, including the Chewa, preservation of the present life and finding the solution to any problem that would lead to loss is the important thing desired (Hara 2008, 139).

Based on the above, one may observe that the early missionaries did not consider their fear of spirits as a serious need requiring a spiritual solution, even among those converted. This is reflected in the Catechesma used in teaching the converts during the early periods. Nothing about how to deal with the spirits was mentioned. Instead, they offered a physical solution by providing medical help, curing many of their illnesses. The Western medical facilities established by the missionaries became part of the missionary approach to evangelize the local people. However, the medical assistance did not fully offer a spiritual explanation for certain

⁹ For more on salvation for traditional Malawians see H.Y., Hara. (2008, 120-128.), *Reformed Soteriology and the Malawian Context*, Kachere Series, Zomba.

diseases or sicknesses not diagnosed in these medical centers. For example, in one of the early magazines called Mthenga Magazine (meaning, the messenger). It seems that the DRC missionaries realized the different perceptions among those converted to the Christian faith on how they perceived the cause of disease and sickness. Through the monthly magazine published by the Church (Mthenga Magazine, 1929, 8-9), the article emphasized that scientifically disease and sickness is caused by germs that enter the body, and not by evil spirits, as is perceived by the local people. This explanation sought to allay the fears and questions of the local people regarding forms of sicknesses that could not easily be medically diagnosed. In other words, although Western medical services provided a physical solution and opened a new chapter among the African people in treating diseases and sickness, but it failed to completely erase the fear of the spirits that constantly haunts them. While the message of salvation taught by the missionaries focused on the inner person and was more eschatological oriented, it failed to offer a full understanding of salvation for the local people who expected to experience freedom from physical and spiritual harm that could be accessed now and then. Above all, those converted to the Christian faith failed to fully grasp and comprehend the role of the Holy Spirit and it seems no clear contrast was made between the ancestral spirits, evil spirits, and God's Spirit. This is evident by the absence of this in the catechism used by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod Buku La Katekisma (BLK)¹⁰, which was used by the early missionaries to date. I will pay more attention to the doctrine of Holy Spirit in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod later again in the chapter. This study insists the doctrine of Holy Spirit needs to be reformulated to relevant doctrine of Holy Spirit, reflecting the reality of spirits and biblically based. While the doctrine of Holy Spirit is entwined in the doctrine of salvation, according to the catechism used by CCAP Nkhoma Synod, (Buku La Katekisma), it is significant therefore, to seriously address this in the light of the beliefs of spirits.

2.9. The DRC missionaries' encounter with the Nyau secret society

¹⁰ Buku La Katekisma (BLK) is the official catechism used by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. It contains the outline of the doctrines in the form of question- answer taught to all catechists before accepted into full members of Church and other important practices.

While the evangelism of the DRC missionaries made positive strides, as was evident by their many converts, establishment of several churches, and numerous village schools that were opened; (Pauw 1980, 86) they however faced various challenges such as the hut tax imposed on the local people by the colonial government, ill effects of migrant labour, death of some missionary workers, and opposition from traditional adherents. In particular, they faced stiff opposition, especially among the Chewa traditionalists who practiced the secret society known as Nyau, which according to Longwe is at the heart of Chewa traditional religion (Longwe 2007, 20). The Nyau¹¹ can be described as a secret society among the Chewa people. The Chewa worldviews, rituals, symbols, myths, religion and livelihood depend and revolve around this cult (Chifungo 2013, 54). Nyau has a deeper meaning among the Chewa people for it represents the spirits of commoners, and by extension, represents the community of all ancestors (Ott 2000, 181). Ott further reports that both the Catholic and Protestant missionaries faced a massive and effective resistance mounted by the members of Nyau. He also thinks it is the oldest institution among the Chewa and the missionaries identified it as one of the greatest dangers they encountered because the Nyau had a religious expression strongly opposing the conversion of its members to Christianity. Its richness is in its symbols and words, which are believed to be the symbolic representation of the invisible spirit world (Ott 2000, 235). The missionaries were not in favour of this secret society because the Nyau was violent and protected by secrecy; members were permitted to beat offenders even to the point of killing them.

Other significant aspects of this secret society included their usage of obscene language (*zolaula*), even in their songs, and the reversal of moral and social behaviour during the liminal period of rites of passage, the unbridled energy of the Nyau dancers, and their sometimes overtly sexual gestures. Ott says all these aspects of the Nyau stood in direct opposition to the Christian worldview and values held by the missionaries (Ott 2000, 235). The missionaries viewed Nyau also known as *gule wamkulu*, literally meaning the 'big dance', as an expression

¹¹ Martin Ott (2000, 162-163) explains that Nyau is a secret society and masked dancers. They play an important role in the transition rites of the Chewa. The dancing of the masks also known as *gule wamkulu* (big dance) introduces the young initiates to the world of the beliefs and values of the tribe. Nyau's involvement during a funeral, the songs and dances of the Nyau seek to provide a continuity and community between the living and the living dead, that is, the ancestral spirits.

of paganism par excellence. They branded the members of Nyau as “devil dancers of terror” and they sought government intervention to ban them (Ott 2000, 236).

Martin Pauw reports of a similar situation faced by the DRC missionaries and together with the local church leaders decided to take an uncompromised stand against this traditional Nyau cult (Pauw 1980, 331). They also requested the government to help suppress this cult on the basis that it was counteracting the Church’s work, especially education by refusing the children to attend Christian schools. The great fear among the traditionalists was losing its members to foreign religions and abandoning their ancestral spirits, this was something they could not let go of easily, they had to resist Christianity and anything associated with it.

Culturally, Nyau (*gule wamkulu*) plays a major role in the following: both male and female initiation ceremonies; funeral ceremonies of either a chief or any other important member of the community and members of the society; commemorative rites of the dead (*mpalo*); festive occasions such as an independence anniversary; and political rallies. Van Breugel indicates that on another level, Nyau is an integral part of the structure and life of the Chewa people in the sense that in the old days before the coming of the missionaries all the boys had to go through the Nyau initiation before marriage (Van Breugel 2001, 128-129). Not undergoing initiation meant that a young man would never have adult male status and he would never be considered a full member of the clan and would never have any influence in the village life. Just as the initiation of girls *chinamwali* was not an optional incorporation into society, so the initiation of boys into Nyau is understood in that sense. Furthermore, Nyau dancers’ claims to be spirits of the dead who have risen from the grave to visit and entertain the living, to encourage, educate, instruct rebuke, warn, and sometimes harass or even harm living relatives. After visiting and entertaining the living these “spirits” return to their various graves, awaiting the High God’s final day. This belief proves that the Chewa believe in “one final future day” of judgment. It also implies that they believed in a temporary resurrection of the dead between “the now” and “the day to come”. This is noted in the “coming to life of the dead people” in the form of Nyau spirits (*the masked persons-Gule wamkulu*). According to the Chewa people, the character of the dead person’s spirit will not change from when they were alive if the dead person was troublesome whilst on earth, his/her Nyau spirit would also be troublesome when

it visited the village. If the dead person was reserved and quiet while alive, his/her Nyau spirit would be the same when he/she temporarily rose from the dead.

From the above understanding, Nyau should be viewed from a deeper perspective, for it holds a strong belief in the continual relationship between the living and spirits of the dead. Nyau is a spirit driven secret society and cannot be divorced from the Chewa culture. Ott refers to it as, “The symbolic representation of the invisible world of the spirits” (Ott 2000, 449). Though early missionaries viewed the Nyau society negatively, there are a few positive aspects drawn from it.

Nyau is known for good norms such as respect to parents, being hardworking, commitment to unity and the cause of the community, and obedience. Ironically, the DRC missionaries integrated the initiation of puberty with instructions from Nyau into a Christian version, where its use of abusive language and harsh treatment of its members if one breaks the rules; some reports even indicate that at times they have been killed (Van Breugel 2001, 130). However, on the contrary, from its initiation, the Nyau initiates are taught norms ranging from the respect of the parents and elders, to being hardworking, commitment young people are also taught the norms of respecting God, parents, and all people, including being hardworking, obedience to God, parents and elders. The Christian version of initiation (*chinamwali*) has proved effective and has become an integral part of the life of the Church of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod (Pauw 1980, 333). The bond between the Nyau community is their strong belief in ancestral spirits, which they believe manifests through the Nyau dancers. The Chewa people are strongly associated with some of the practices of the Nyau people. One area common to all Chewa groups is their sense of living as a community. The Chewa people have a strong sense of and bond with the community. Like many African cultures, the Chewa culture is a communal, rather than individualistic. Communal activities, and marital and family ties are the main ways in which solidarity and unity is created, maintained and nurtured in traditional Chewa culture (Chitheka 2014, 85). The strong belief in ancestral spirits was the uniting bond between the strong communal societies; however, some scholars observed that the coming of the Christian faith created cracks in most Chewa communities for adopting and believing in another Spirit other than the ancestral spirits. Though their communal life was somehow disturbed by the coming of the Christian faith, there were still some aspects where their communal life was

strongly practiced, i.e. during a marriage celebration and death ceremonies. On the other hand, the cracks in the traditional communities have made the church in a sense a new community. This study hypothesizes that understanding the church as a community will help new converts to easily embrace the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Just as in the traditional community, the strong belief in the spirits was a unifying force. In the same way, the newly formed communities of Churches needed the Holy Spirit as the uniting force. Since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who brings all believers into one body and one family, together believers become the family of God and the community of God's people.

It should also be noted that even until today, Nyau still remains an unresolved issue and the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and other Christian denominations still face hostility from Nyau followers who strongly oppose the banning of this cult in the name of being the cultural heritage and identity of the Chewa people. From the early days of the missionaries, there still remains great antagonism between Christianity and the local people who refused to be converted. However, those converted still maintain the worldview of this society (Chifungo, 2013, 54-55). This does not any way completely deny that the proclamation of the biblical message by the early missionaries had no profound impact on the belief of the Chewa people, but in most cases the impact has been partial and incomplete (Nürnberg 2007, 40). The question that arises is, "Why do those converted to the Christian faith continue to be influenced by the older worldview than the new Christian worldview?" In response to this question, others have highlighted the irrelevant pneumatology presented by the Western missionaries, which failed to meet the spiritual needs of the local people.

This will lead us to investigate how the early missionaries presented the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to converts that come from a background steeped in a spirituality grounded in a strong belief in spirits believed to be present and active in the universe.

2.10. Evaluating the pneumatology of the Dutch Reformed missionaries

The official doctrine of the Holy Spirit of the Dutch Reformed missionaries can be sought from the Three Forms of Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dort (1618-19). In addition, the Westminster Confession and the

Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechism. Because these documents, except the Heidelberg Catechism, have not been translated into Chichewa, their content, especially the teaching of the Holy Spirit, has been withheld from the members of the CCAP Nkhoma. This section therefore seeks to evaluate the CCAP Nkhoma Synod's teaching of the Holy Spirit. The key argument is based on the following questions: "Did the doctrine of the Holy Spirit dislodge their older worldview in relation to their belief in the spirits?" Furthermore, "Did the doctrine of the Holy Spirit offer the converted Chewa a solution to or freedom from their constant fear of malevolent spirits?" Firstly, I will briefly evaluate what the Catechism of the CCAP Nkhoma (traditionally known as *Buku la Katekisma*) says on the Holy Spirit in light of what the Heidelberg Catechism¹² says.

a) The Daily work of the Holy Spirit: Heidelberg Catechism and Buku La Katekisma

When analysing the structure of the Heidelberg Catechisms (HC) and the Buku La Katekisma (BLK) one observes that it is divided into three main divisions, namely:

- Understanding sin (*Kudziwa zoipa*) questions 1-20
- Salvation (*Kupulumutsidwa*) questions 23-46
- Thankfulness to God (*Kuyamika Mulungu*) questions 47-52

It is alleged that the structure of both catechisms is patterned after Paul's letter to the Romans. In the introduction (questions 1-2) about the true believer's comfort and blessedness; questions 1-11 of HC and 1-20 of BLK cover the experience of sin and misery (Romans 1:1-3:20); questions 12-85 of HC and 21-46 of BLK address the subject of redemption in Christ (Romans 3:21-11:36); and questions 86-129 of HC and 47-52 of BLK deal with true gratitude for God's deliverance (Romans 12-16). For instance, in the letters to the Romans the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is covered in the second part.

From the above arrangement, it is clear that a person needs to understand his/her sinfulness in order to repent. Furthermore, one cannot understand the gravity of sinfulness by his/her own intellectual capability and wisdom. In that, it is only through the Holy Spirit's conviction that

¹² Olivianus, C.&Ursirus, Z. 2001(reprinted edition).*The Heidelberg Catechism*. Chang-Won: One Life Mission Publishers

one is able to acknowledge his/her sinfulness which comes through God's saving grace and by granting us the Holy Spirit and His word to lead and guide us in this way.

Article 34 of the BLK begins with the question: What does the Holy Spirit do to people?

This question may fit well with the Chewa worldview, which believes that the world is densely occupied with spirits (good and bad). The answer is twofold: firstly, the Holy Spirit prepares somebody's life for salvation. He convicts them of sin, so that they reconcile with God and fellow human beings. From a biblical perspective, sin breaks and disrupts one's relationship with God (Gen 3:8; Isaiah 59:2), with fellow human beings (Gen 3:12; 4:8, and with the entire creation (Gen 3:14-15). In short, sin affects the totality, connectivity, and wholeness of creations. The coming of the Holy Spirit to convict one of sin exposes the barrier of this relationship, in all respects. The Spirit works in the lives of people convicting (exposing) them of these barriers (sin); those who are convicted undergo a spiritual rebirth (regeneration) establishing a relationship with God (John 3:3ff). The Holy Spirit's work, therefore, should be viewed in a holistic way as exposing all barriers in these broken relationships so as to bring sanity and restore the communion between the physical and spiritual world. Sin, therefore, makes humankind miserable and to live life not as God intended (John 10:10), it makes one live in bondage and darkness (John 8:32-34). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, people experience freedom from the bondage. The Holy Spirit restores communion between God and his people. This restoration of communion is salvation mediated through the work of Holy Spirit. Salvation is central to the Christian faith and other religions like ATR. Proclamation of the gospel of salvation is the chief aim of the Church; this reflects why the doctrine of salvation is viewed so highly in the catechism used by CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

In certain respects, the biblical notion of sin resonates well with the African view of sin. In the African understanding, sin is anything that disturbs the welfare of the community and anything that makes life in the here and now miserable or causes pain (Hara 2008, 144).

Africans view life in a holistic way and is community centered: this includes human beings, nature and spiritual beings. Anderson (1991,104), referring to Mcveigh, remarked that, "The insight of Africa-that life is a totality, that there can be no ultimate separation between the sacred and secular, and that religion must be brought to bear on all of human's problems-is

Africa's great contribution to the west, a belief and faith that the west desperately needs". And life in an African society is only fully experienced through interrelation and interdependence of both natural and supernatural realities. Therefore, this conception of the Holy Spirit convicting sin and restoring relationships acknowledges that it is only through the working of the Holy Spirit that communities are restored and united to experience abundant life. The coming of the Holy Spirit should therefore, be understood as the coming of the powerful Spirit needed to overcome all other spirits threatening the stability and mutual fellowship of the community. Thus, in this regard, the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting sin has to be broadened in order to embrace the wider scope, vertically and horizontally. Vertically, indicates sin against God the Creator, and horizontally, indicates sin against fellow human beings, creation, and creatures under which the Spirit operates; this latter view is an integration of the African notion. In the African view, sin is a disturbance of the equilibrium in the community including the spiritual forces and nature (creation). In other words, the role and work of the Holy Spirit has to embrace the whole, as Kärkkäinen states, that the function of the Holy Spirit has to expand and widen the spirit (*operational*) horizon by even considering the Spirit presence in human spirit, in religion, culture and morality not to ignore the church (Kärkkäinen 2014, 1-9).

Based on this, the doctrine of Holy Spirit in the catechism used by CCAP Nkhoma Synod, needs to be expounded to be more holistic and to meet their needs holistically.

Next, the second part of Q34 of the Catechism, the works of continuation, explains how the Spirit of God helps in the work of sanctifying the life of the believer (Synod, Buku La Katekisma, 1966). The Buku La Katekisma briefly explains that through encouragement and guidance, the life of the believer is under continual assistance by the Spirit. Specifically, the catechism mentions *encouragement* and *guidance* as main elements in the sanctification process. It says that, the Spirit *encourages* the believer with power to do the work of God with confidence. In addition, on guidance, it says that the Holy Spirit guides us today as he guided the Israelites in the wilderness with the presence of a cloud during the day and pillar of fire at the night. The Spirit is to lead us in all things like when reading the Bible, when praying, even when on the journey and in any other work, however, he only leads those who are obedient. It is quite interesting here that the BLK catechism explains the guidance of the Holy Spirit even

in journey and any other work. However, what is observed regarding this aspect is that the guidance of the Holy Spirit in other works of daily life, has to be clearly emphasized and presented in holistic sense to grasp the everpresent reality of Holy Spirit to all obedient believers, and this leads us to move away from the understanding that the work of the Holy Spirit is limited and confined to certain aspects, as is reflected in the catechism. Practically, more emphasis is on the salvation and spirit related actions. This brief and unclear emphasis on the explanation of the Spirit's working in our ordinary daily life, is the basis of the claim that the BLK has used to portray the Holy Spirit's work as being more soteriological, and therefore, limited to spiritual aspects. On the contrary, this study insists that the Spirit of God should not be limited but rather broadened, for it encompasses the whole-the spiritual as well as the physical and should therefore be viewed holistically. For the Spirit of God is actively working and present in the whole of creation. Since sanctification is a lifelong process, this implies that Christians have to live a life, which is Spirit-centered (pneumacentric) as Paul presented in Gal 5:16, to always be led by the Spirit of God.

From the above expression, the concept of sanctification could be expounded further and integrated with some African fervour as it relates to African and local concepts, especially the rites of passage. The rites of passage from an African perspective accompany and explain the most important transitions in the lives of individual members of the society, just as sanctification does in the Christian's life. I believe that if some elements in the rites of passage are integrated, it would greatly help in expounding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit among the Chewa people, embracing it for practical living.

b) Theological deficiency of the pneumatology of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod

A number of contemporary researchers have noted that there is a theological deficiency in the BLK, particularly in matters of the work of the Holy Spirit. Zeze observed that the catechism has not reserved a separate question and answer for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is also no section dealing with ancestral spirits (spirits) in the BLK (Zeze 2012, 137). It is astonishing that since 1968 this catechism has not been revised in any way, and it appears that the Church has no current intentions of doing so. One wonders what the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is doing in addressing the issues related to the doctrine of Holy Spirit and the belief in ancestral spirits held by Chewa converts.

According to Pauw, the version of Buku La Katekisma differs from the Heidelberg Catechism in the way that the former has more emphasis on law and sin. Pauw cautions that this could be the fertile ground for a legalistic attitude and lack of ethical emphasis. Pauw noted that the legalistic emphasis of the Buku La Katekisma and the book of rules and instructions has indeed shaped the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and is commonly known by its legalistic way of doing things referred to as “*chilongosoko*” (orderliness). This orderliness, however, has on the other side sometimes failed to value the significance of using it as a vehicle to serve God better by discerning God’s will in all times. The legalistic attitude has had a great impact on the Church that sometimes it is not easy to see the need and implement the change of how things should be done. On the other hand, this attitude has shaped the Church to have a unique and different identity among fellow Presbyterians in Malawi. From a pneumatological point of view, the Catechism demonstrates that its presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is deficient in some areas. Deficient in the sense that it has not fully expounded the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a way to explain and equip Christians coming to the faith from a background rooted in a strong belief in spirits. It is important therefore to understand that when the Chewa people, like other African tribes, speak of salvation it means being free and safe from the problems that endanger their lives, e.g. malevolent spirits, magic, and witchcraft (Hara 2008,144). And when converted to the Christian faith they were seeking, above all, the protecting power of the Spirit of Jesus to shield them from these malevolent spirits and other fears. One question would be, “Why does the CCAP Nkhoma Synod seem comfortable in maintaining the status quo?” The common response points to the historical roots of the mainline tradition, which reflects more the traditional Western Christianity inherited by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

From the above picture, one perceives the strong influence of Western Christian thought in the catechism of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the Holy Spirit is mostly emphasized from a soteriological point of view. Some scholars, including Oladipo, observed that a distinct mark of the salvation experience during the Western missionary era was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Emphasis was on the role the Spirit played in personal salvation (Oladipo 1994, 112). From this understanding, one observes how the Holy Spirit was restricted to the salvific experience and Church related matters; hence leading to a deficiency in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This eventually led to an understanding that the Holy Spirit

as only needed in Church related activities, and more so, for soteriological issues. Moreover, this exposition on the pneumatology in the catechism has not fully addressed the fears emanating from the heart of the Chewa worldview—belief in the world of spirits around them and how to relate to it. One would assume that this was one challenge experienced by the early missionaries, who assumed that the belief in spirits, the uncanny forces, was simply superstition, and would easily be discarded by those who confess their faith in Christ. But this proscription only drove the phenomenon underground (Nürnberg 2007, 45).

Nürnberg thinks that the presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by the missionaries would have a greater impact if the worldview was dislodged and filled with a new understanding and experience of the cosmic Spirit of God among those converted to the Christian faith. In turn, the implication for those who are converted and profess their belief in the Holy Spirit would be a great transformation reflected in their daily lives. On the contrary, this has not been the case, especially among the Chewa ethnic group.

In short, from the above picture, one observes that there are some gaps in the way the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been expounded in the context of CCAP Nkhoma, which has been simplified. It should be noted that in response to this situation, many members in particular of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod have sought for the alternative, to fill the pneumatological vacuum. One such alternative is by embracing Pentecostal and charismatic practices. From the early 1990s, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod has experienced some Pentecostal and charismatic tendencies among its members within the congregations. The way the CCAP Nkhoma Synod handled the situation was that all the members involved in such practices the Synod resolved to discipline them for what they termed confusion in the church. Synodical minute 1997, S3337 and same issue was discussed during the synod assembly in 2001 synodical minute S3495¹³. However, the persistent practice of these tendencies could be understood differently and one

¹³ The S.3337, minute of the Synod biannual Assembly 1997, and S.3496 minute of the Synod biannual Assembly 2001 where the issue of Pentecostal and charismatic practices among the members was discussed—, where the decisions were made on the church's doctrine and polity related issues. The issue concerning Pentecostal and charismatic practices among the members was first discussed in 1997 (S.3337). The Synod agreed that all the members involved in such practices should be disciplined, however, ten years later, the Pentecostal and charismatic tendencies and practices have continued and the Synod still used the same approach to deal with the issue.

interprets it to be a sign of something missing in the church, though it would appear the Synod of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is satisfied with the current state of its doctrine of the Holy Spirit in spite of all that is happening among its members. It is bemusing that the church has not, in any way, critically questioned why her members have embraced these charismatic tendencies. The church, however, opted to maintain the status quo on the matter, and one assumes that the church lacked discernment. This is confirmed by the impact of the recent Pentecostal and charismatic practices, which has had a significant influence on the CCAP Nkhoma Synod in terms of its liturgy and doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is evident in the incorporation of praise teams in the liturgy and mushrooming of prayer groups in different congregations of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. One assumes that this would be a clear sign that members are yearning for something more than what is available; hence the call to integrate their understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with charismatic and Pentecostals practices and beliefs.

This study therefore insists on the need for an articulation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by integrating local concepts and contexts. This is necessary if the pneumatology is to be relevant, other than merely apportioning the work of the Holy Spirit to salvation and guiding people in church related activities. Also, in a broader sense to acknowledge and experience the Spirit of God actively working in, through, and around us. One may conclude that more on the Holy Spirit could have been integrated in the *Buku La Katekisma* (in the catechism) like on how the Holy Spirit is compared or related to other spirits, the integral role of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life, and in uniting those converted to the community of faith. For it is through this community of believers, that the church's understanding of the Holy Spirit is to be carried out into the world in a holistic way leading to a sensitivity of the Spirit's presence in every aspect of life.

2.11. Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the following questions: First, "What is the role of ancestral spirits in the light of Chewa traditional beliefs and practices?" The Chewa people understand God as a Creator and a Supreme Being who cannot be approached easily. They believe that God has delegated day-to-day affairs of caring for human beings to the spirits of the ancestors. They are always conscious of these spirits because they are precarious and need to be appeased if the

livings are to dwell in peace. The spirits are the guardians of the traditions and if these morals are transgressed, the spirits are easily angered, and would inflict trouble or any misfortune to gain the attention of the living.

Secondly, “How can the CCAP Nkhoma Synod articulate and integrate a pneumatology in conversation with the Chewa community’s view?” It was observed that the DRCM endeavoured to teach the early converts by using catechism, which was heavily influenced by Western theology when it came to pneumatology, mostly viewed under soteriology. It was observed that the common teaching used by the missionaries was sin and salvation, which focused on the inward condition of human beings (and not so much the negative influence of ancestral spirits), this was taught as is reflected in the catechism. In this chapter we observed that failure to address the phenomenon of spirits among the early converts partly contributed to the reductive view of understanding the Holy Spirit, and the persistent fear of evil forces, even among those converted to the Christian faith. Besides this, the spirits command much respect among the Chewa people, and influence their daily lives. The precariousness of the world haunts the Chewa Christians to have a divided loyalty, and at times leads them to be syncretistic. It may be preliminarily to suggest that the Buku La Katekisma used by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod needs to be revisited, especially the work of the Holy Spirit.

It has been suggested above that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit among the local people should be understood as encompassing the whole aspect of life and creation. This study seeks to achieve this goal by articulating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit holistically, integrating it with some local concepts and thereby making it practical and effective in their everyday lives

CHAPTER THREE:

A HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED PNEUMATOLOGY IN CONVERSATION WITH THE AFRICAN VIEW OF COMMUNITY

3.1 Introduction

The African worldview is holistic in nature; everything is at the same time given ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ meaning without being categorized (Anderson 1991, 5). According to Taylor (1963, 72) the African worldview is described as:

...the sense of cosmic oneness...fundamentally all things share the same nature, and the same interaction one upon another... a hierarchy of power but not of being, for all are one, all are here, all are now. No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community.

(Chimhanda 2013, 2-4) echoes a similar sentiment when referring to Pobee saying, “Homo Africanus experiences the *mysterium tremendum* in community”. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, quoted by Chimhanda aptly explains: “The African worldview rejects popular dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, the material and the spiritual. All life is religious, all life is sacred, and all of life is of a piece”. Similarly, Pato (1997, 55) accentuates this view saying, “The whole rhythm of daily life is a continuous liturgy that permeates such commonplace things as eating, drinking, ploughing, working etc.” (Chimhanda 2013, 4). Agreeing with this understanding, Kalilombe (1994, 118-119) says, “For Africa life is a totality; Culture is holistic ... the spirit dimension is embedded in the whole of the people’ way of living”.

Based on the above framework of an African holistic view of life, in this chapter I intend to lay the foundation for articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology, which will effectively minister to African Christians in their totality. This will be achieved by integrating and theologizing some relevant concepts that interpret their reality of life in a holistic manner. This is assumed to be in line with the general consensus of most African theologians calling for the (re)articulation of the doctrine of Holy Spirit, as in chapter one. It was mentioned previously, ignoring this proved to be more harmful than good, as it failed to meet the spiritual needs of Africans. In order for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to make a meaningful impact on African

Christians, this study calls for the articulation of a holistic pneumatology, and to move away from a mere repetition of the theology brought by early Western missionaries, which is commonly viewed as being dualistic and rational in nature. Furthermore, this failed to meet the spiritual needs of Africans who identify life with the spiritual and physical (Anderson 1991, 9). This does not mean that African theology is not rational when dealing with theological matters. Pobee (2004, 30) confirmed this when he said, “African theology has to be rational” and must focus on faith and hope as offered in Jesus Christ. He added, “Faith is what African theology is concerned to identify and articulate scientifically to delineate a particular religious identity and belief is helpful in discerning how the faith has developed....” (Pobee 2004, 30).

The task of articulating this holistic and integrated pneumatology from an African perspective will be based on John Mbiti’s thought, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti 1969, 108, 109). The principle purpose is to explore and grasp the uniqueness of the corporate life (communal), and then integrate and theologize some of the main concepts from a traditional African context, towards the realization of a holistic pneumatology. In Africa, an individual does not or cannot exist alone in line with this view of wholeness. In seeking to achieve this, I will briefly explore the African cosmology, noting the integral role of spirits in the African communal life. The importance of this is that it will help guide us to explore the central role of spirits in unifying communities, in moral aspects or moral formation, and in preservation of nature. In the other words, the chapter’s discussion will revolve around three focal points, with the aim of uncovering the communal, moral, and cosmological aspects of the spirits in African communities, as the basis for articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology. Moreover, this will be done in close connection with the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, specifically focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and everyday life.

The general consensus is that Africa has a sense of the wholeness of life. Traditional African religions are characterized by this motif of ‘the wholeness of life’; religion and life belongs together. Religion is not a compartment of life, and religion is life. Because of this, traditional religions lacked institutional symbols, which are distinguished from the daily life (Parrat 1987, 93-94). In the African worldview, there is no separate community of religious people because everyone who participates in the life of the community automatically participates in its religion.

There is no separate day for worship, because the whole rhythm of life is a continuous liturgy that permeates common activities such as eating, drinking, and lovemaking (Parrat 1987, 95). This holistic view is also expressed in the African spirituality, with community at its core (Skhakhane 1995, 110).

From an African perspective, the concept of community refers not only to the living, but also to the ancestors; for life is such a whole that not even death will result in its disintegration. Moreover, it also includes the state of the whole family and other creatures including nature and the environment. It also incorporates all people, their events, their richness, their hopes and concerns; life is fundamentally communal and relational. Mbiti's statement "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am," sums up the African view of wholeness in this holistic understanding of life. Mbiti (1969, 48) expresses this when he says, "According to African worldview, the well-being of man is intimately connected with the well-being of the total creation. If man abuses nature or the environment, nature also will abuse man". On the one hand, although the African way of life may be described as holistic, it does not seem not to agree with how the Christian faith describes life, especially in most mainline traditions where life is viewed from a dualistic perspective, thus, the spiritual and secular. On the other hand, this contributes to some of the challenges experienced when seeking to generate a holistic pneumatology. In light of this, I will begin by attending to the challenges impacting on this realization of a holistic pneumatology in African communities.

3.2 The challenge of a holistic integrated pneumatology in the African context

Some scholars have observed that pneumatology, as a subject of theological reflection, has largely been neglected in African theology. Charles Nyamiti (1994, 64) defined African theology as "...the understanding and expression of the Christian faith in accordance with African needs and mentality". Five general trends are distinguished within African theology, namely: inculturation theology, liberation theology, black Theology, African women theology and reconstruction theology (Sakupapa 2012, 424). Within the context of these trends, African theologians have done considerable work on these themes such as the Bible, African religion, enculturation, liberation, Christology, ethics, and more recently, on justice, reconciliation and health. However, Sakupapa (2012, 424) thinks that the discourse of pneumatology has

generally been neglected in African theology. Sakupapa observes that, among other factors leading to such neglect, pneumatology, which is not holistic in its approach, is mainly based on two assumptions, namely: the insistency of mainline churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestants, on the pneumatology inherited from the 20th century missionaries who assigned the role of the Holy Spirit to faith and ecclesial matters and domesticated the Holy Spirit to church structures, rather than its cosmic role. Therefore, the mainline churches have failed to be contextual, as indicated by Hendriks (2004, 27), saying that theology is done as a way of discerning what the church should confess, and it should be done between the global and local contexts. This calls for the mainline church to be realistic about their local situation and hermeneutically relate to their doctrines and confessions, rather than cling to their inherited Western theologies, which Hendricks says, has a tendency to apply their contextually formed views to all situations universally. Hendricks highlights the need to move out of such situation if our theology is to remain connected to our daily experiences, questions and challenges confronting members of the mainline churches in African communities. Another reason is that, according to Michael (2011, 294), “In most mainline churches in Africa, Holy Spirit is mainly talked as confessional or doctrinal information which is only taught in the baptismal and catechetical classes leaving out the experiential aspect while the Pentecostals have generally made the Holy Spirit an essential component of the Christian’s daily life whose presence is emphasized and experienced”.

Michael further explains that in most mainline churches, the Holy Spirit is merely a tenet of the creed that is unconsciously professed, and to some extent, for African Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit has been welcomed as a helper of the Christian life, and hence, is an essential personality for a successful Christian life (Michael 2011: 294). However, African Pentecostals are said to be obsessed with physical and material prosperity, paying very little attention to the active presence of the Holy Spirit on other hand, this scenario has created an imbalance, resulting in most Africans not being ministered to in a holistic manner. The outcome of which is that most are torn between cultural beliefs and Christian beliefs, both demanding their loyalty. This does not always present a clear road map according to biblical standards in the midst of evil forces (spirits) presumed to be active in their daily activities.

The other challenge is the proliferation of popular pneumatologies among the African Independent Churches (AIC’s) and Pentecostals, where the Holy Spirit came to take the center

stage in their belief systems (Mafokeng & Nganda 2001, 23). Some have indicated that the popular theology of the AIC's and Pentecostals has not drawn a distinction between the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the concept of power in African traditional thought. In this regard, Ngong (2010, 20) says, "These Pentecostal-type Churches seen as the perfect model, they preached and continue to preach the power of the Spirit of Christ as that which enables Christians to enjoy the kind of salvation central to ATRs" (Ngong 2010, 20). Elorm-Donkor (2012, 6) agrees saying, "Most Pentecostals' understanding is that the Holy Spirit as helping believers to overcome the work of the evil spirits, especially to ensure that they have material prosperity. They focus on the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and how it might be used to deal with the evil spirits of the African cosmos". The Holy Spirit is mostly comprehended as the power of God that overcomes all manner of problems in the lives of believers. This conception of the Holy Spirit has been attractive to many African people for a variety of reasons. For instance, phenomenon such as birth, death, illness, infertility, road accidents, unemployment, business, and many more, are explained as purposive acts of spiritual forces, evil or benevolent (Sakupapa, 2012, 425). Undergirding this view is an African worldview (the belief) that humans are vulnerable and open to spiritual forces for ill and good. No wonder then that salvation is perceived as the freedom from spiritual powers, which limits or hinders human beings from achieving well-being (Ngong, 2010). Elorm-Donkor (2012, 4-6) thinks this form of Christian expression is inspired to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of Africans and to offer solutions to cope with problems in a threatening and hostile world. This also concerns Mbiti (1975, 112-113), who explains that in African traditional religion, salvation "has to do with physical and immediate dangers that threaten individual or community survival, good health and general prosperity or safety is the immanent concern".

Similar to African traditional religion, AICs and African Pentecostalism emphasizes a this-worldly (physical and present) perspective on salvation. Material blessings are interpreted as the stamp of divine blessings. This view of salvation surely resonates with the soteriological discourse of African traditional religion. Many scholars suggest this to be one reason for the success of Pentecostalism in Africa, among other things, largely due to their ability to place the traditional understanding of the cosmic struggle in the realm of Christian belief. In such an understanding of reality, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as an "all-embracing, pervading power of

God” that can meet the existential needs of Africans (Anderson 1991, 73). The Holy Spirit is presented as the power that overcomes all malevolent powers. Since the African worldview sees life as a spiritual battle, Africans see the Holy Spirit as the power helping believers to overcome the work of evil spirits, especially to ensure that they have material prosperity. They focus on the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and how to use it to deal with evil spirits of the cosmos (Elorm-Donkor 2012, 6).

The approach adopted by the AICs and African Pentecostalism has been highly recommended for meeting the needs of Africa people, and their portrayal of the Holy Spirit as a power to overcome evil forces has been appropriate in the African traditional worldview; however, some theologians have expressed caution regarding the limitations of such an approach. If we critically focus on a holistic and integrated pneumatology, other scholars think that power to overcome evil forces may not be all what African societies need, for to present the Holy Spirit as the power to overcome all other forces is not adequate to address the challenges facing African Christians today. African societies face dire conditions including starvation (food insecurity), poverty, corruption in high places, wars, economic injustice, violence against women and children, and environmental challenges. Ngong faulted this endeavour to valorise African thought and practices and make the Christian faith speak to Africans, which it resulted in uncritical appropriation of the African worldview, which leads to limiting or domesticating the understanding of the Holy Spirit and salvation in contemporary African Christianity (Ngong 2010, 20). He also thinks that with this understanding Africans are not encouraged to think beyond their worldview, in other words, it encourages Africans to be uncritical of what they believe. For Anderson, Africa Pentecostalism is limited when only focusing only on the availability of power to deliver from evil powers. He (1991, 73) warns that such a pneumatology is dangerous to all of us, meaning to Africans and elsewhere. He says to overemphasize the power of the Spirit often leads to disappointment and disillusionment when that power is not evident or immediately manifested. He adds that our pneumatology must not only provide power when there is a lack of it; it must also be able to sustain us through life’s tragedies and failures, especially when there is no visible success. For Ngong, this stress on the Spirit as overcoming other malevolent spirits has overshadowed other ways by which the Spirit of Christ could be working in Africa. The Spirit, for example, could be seen as the Spirit of

love, unity, and reconciliation (Ngong 2010, 33). This scenario has led African Christians to live a life in which a holistic pneumatology has not been well articulated.

It is evident from the above discussion that there is a clear dilemma among African Christians regarding the realization of a holistic pneumatology. Here we are faced with two extremes that dominate the African understanding of the Holy Spirit—one inherited from Western mission traditions charged with limiting and domesticating the Holy Spirit to ecclesiastical related activities, and the other propagated by AICs and Pentecostals, to emphasize the Holy Spirit as a power to overcome malevolent spirits. The question that arises here is, “How can this situation be addressed from a theological point of view?” In my opinion, such a broad and complex situation requires a multifaceted approach in the form of a holistic and integrated pneumatology. It is my view that the articulation of such a pneumatology will be well balanced and a possible solution if the Christian faith and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit are to be meaningful for African Christians in their context. By a ‘holistic integrated pneumatology,’ I mean life approached from a pneumacentric perspective based on the reality on the ground, with biblical doctrines and confessions then formulated into a meaningful understanding towards an effective Christian life. This holistic and integrated pneumatology is based on two main conceptions, namely: the cosmological presence of God’s Spirit as presented by Moltmann, and the African worldview that spirits permeate all aspects of life and that life is understood as a whole, taken mainly from the thoughts of John Mbiti, and other African theologians. More will be said about the cosmic Spirit in chapter four. However, in the next section, I will explore the African cosmology, so as to grasp the extent to which the spirits influence and get involved in the daily affairs of humans in relation to the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and everyday life.

3.3 The scope of the spirit world and its influence on African societies

As we consider articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology, it is relevant to discuss the scope of their belief in the spirits and its influence on African societies. The African worldview is perceived as being densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits, and the living dead (Mbiti 1969, 75). Africans have a clear insight into their spiritual realities. In addition, they are sharply aware of a spirit world closely connected to the physical world—the two are one. To understand

the African ethos, it is significant to fully grasp how Africans perceive their spiritual world and its impact on their lives as that of God and the universe at large (Mbiti 1969, 76). To probe this sentiment further, the researcher will inquire how this conception can positively contribute towards the articulation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is holistic and sensitive to this context. Mbiti (1969, 76) argues that the belief in a myriad of spirits in their surroundings explains many of the mysteries they find in the universe. This belief is beneficial when no other explanation is available or satisfactory. It forms part of their life and is deeply ingrained in their consciousness, so that it helps them to interpret the reality of their daily life (Dicks 2012, 56-58). In agreement, Brand states, “ATR fulfils an explanatory function which is to provide meaning” (Brand 2014, 103).

Mbiti thinks that the belief that the universe is hosted by spirits, that they occupy the area between God and people, makes a beneficial contribution to how people understand their own existence. Shared by Anderson, he says, this belief is connected well with the holistic worldview..... Insists that “because all things from a present material-spiritual unity”, follows that in the African worldview the ‘spirit’ pervades all things (Anderson 1991, 8). In Oosthuizen’s view referred by Anderson (1991, 9), these pervading spirits are “...simply the continuum of the traditional religion (African worldview) where the essential thing is that your life should always be identified with the will of the spirit, at work and play, at worship, at a wedding perhaps, at meal times, in the harvesting and preparation of your food,” etc. (Anderson, 1991, 9).

Using the Akan traditional religion as an example, Elorm-Donkor (2012) explains that like any other African tribe (including the Chewa), it reflects a worldview that encompasses both malevolent and beneficent spirit beings that inhabit the universe; people’s circumstances can therefore be determined by forces beyond their control. This belief in the finitude of humans causes a yearning for power that can deliver them from their daunting conditions and place them in life affirming conditions where they can grow to be authentic human beings. On the other hand, the dualistic and rationalistic theology of the Western and historical churches, Anderson reports, did not meet the needs of the Africans for divine involvement_ (Anderson 1991:10)

To appreciate the intensity of the spirits influence over human affairs, we will further follow John Mbiti's description. He observes that to an African the universe is a unit; the physical and spiritual are so entwined, that it is difficult to draw a distinction between or separate the two worlds (Mbiti 1969, 75)

3.4 The concept of spirits from an African perspective

Broadly speaking, Mbiti outlines two categories of spiritual beings: those that were created as such, and those that were once human beings. Spirits can also be divided into divine associates of God, ordinary spirits, and the living dead. However, in Africa, people describe the spirit world in various ways; interestingly, the linking factor is always the presence of spirits. Most people recognize the existence of spirits, and regard them as having a great influence over the daily lives of the living (Ncozana, 2002, 16). Myriads of spirits are reported among the Africans. As for their origin, Mbiti (1969, 78) says, no clear explanation has been provided; many assume they were created as a 'race' by themselves, as other living creatures have continued to reproduce themselves and add to their number. Most people, however, seem to believe that spirits are the remains of human beings when they die physically. This then becomes the ultimate status of humanity. This is a common point of change or development beyond which one cannot go apart from national heroes who might become deified (Mbiti 1969, 79).

Mbiti (1969, 79) explains that spirits are the destiny of human beings; beyond them is God. They are invisible but they make themselves visible to human beings. In reality they have sunk beyond the horizon of the *zamani*¹⁴ period; they are in a state of immortality, relative to human being's position. The spirits are seen in the corporate belief of their existence, yet people experience their activities and many folk stories describe spirits in human form by observing their activities and personalities, since spirits are in a state of collective immortality, relative to man's position, explains Mbiti, although intrinsically the spirits are neither evil nor good. Idowu (1973, 174) notes, according to African beliefs, spirits are ubiquitous; there is no area of the earth, any object or creature, that does not have a spirit of its own or which cannot be

¹⁴ *Zamani* is the Swahili word for time, especially the unlimited past. For more details on *zamani* see John Mbiti (1969, 22-23).

inhabited by a spirit. Nothing happens in the visible world that has not been predetermined in the invisible world. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, 24) comments on the same matter saying that African traditions conceive of the universe as being alive with spirit powers, a place where evil is rampant and unseen powers are believed to be active in the natural order. From the above description, we can understand that the cause of what happens in the daily life of the living is mostly attributed to the spirits. In other words, African life is pneumacentrically motivated. They also strongly believe that the spirits bring pain to human beings and must therefore be repelled or accommodated. Africans attribute active deeds and influences to the spirit world. The spirits are said to be at work in every domain of life. Mbiti adds, spirits are believed to be more powerful than humans, yet in some sense humans are better off and the right human specialists (medicine men) can manipulate or control the spirits as they wish. Paradoxically, humans may fear or dread the spirits, yet they can drive the same spirits away. Some African societies believe that certain spirits are wholly responsible for some of the evil that people experience in the world.

Mbiti emphasizes that for the majority of Africans, spirits cannot be classified as either good or bad. However they feel, good or bad, depends on how people experience the forces of nature (in effect of nature spirits) and how they act towards human beings. The spirits can inflict good or evil on people, just as people can do both—good and evil—towards their fellow human beings (Mbiti 1969, 85). Nürnberger (2007, 36) puts it this way, “Africans live in a dangerous world. Dangerous forces (spirits) must be kept at bay, individuals must be protected and strengthened, community must be stabilized. Relationships, pattern of behaviour, procedures and basic assumptions are highly formalized and that for plausible reason”. Spirits are viewed as a source of life and welfare. They are giver benedictions to people. The birth of a child, success in business, agricultural growth, bountiful fishing, and other various benedictions, are always attributed to the works of the spirits (Gehman, 1989, 152). In most African societies, when an event happens, the ancestral spirits are sometimes consulted through mediums or dreams to give direction to the living members of the community (Parrinder 1974, 61). Many African societies believe that certain spirits are wholly responsible for some of the evil that befalls them. Such spirits have become scapegoats for people’s troubles even if other explanations may be forthcoming. They nearly always associate death itself with the living dead and spirits (Mbiti 1969, 155). Most of the time, death in African communities is attributed to evil spirits

in the form of witchcraft; this has caused more harm to African communities than good. The issue of witchcraft will be discussed later in the chapter.

The activities of the spirits are similar to that of humans, including activities of which people may be unaware. Yet, in certain aspects, the spirit world differs radically from the human world. It is invisible to the eyes of humans; people believe or know that it is there, but do not actually see it with their eyes (Mbiti 1969, 80). More importantly, even if the spirits are depersonalized residue of individual human beings, they are ontologically nearer to God: not ethically, but in terms of communication with Him. Human relationships with the spirits vary from society to society. They are, however, real, active and powerful, especially relationships with the spirits of those who have recently died, those who are called ‘the living dead’. This is achieved by performing various rites to keep this contact, such offering food and other articles, pouring a libation of beer, milk, water, etc. (Mbiti 1969, 82).

If any spirit becomes bothersome to people they may try to chase it away, or get rid of it. People have a means of overcoming mischievous spirits. Such spirits have become the scapegoats for most types of immoral living and other evils people deny responsibility towards, by attributing their behaviour to evil spirits. One such immoral issue is corruption, which has affected African governments. One will commonly hear from the people brought to face justice confessing that they did this because the evil spirit (the devil) made them do it. Although this has sufficed as a meaningful explanation in the past, it has become a challenge in the more modern African society, because it fails to be consistent with a scientific explanation of the same phenomena, making it less plausible (Brand, 2014). The other challenge with this belief is that all evil is attributed to evil spirits; thereby fostering the mindset that one is not responsible for their actions. This may to some extent explain the level of corruption in African societies. As explained, when brought to justice, they normally attribute the cause of their behaviour to the evil spirits (the devil); this is irrational to modern Africans and therefore ought to be challenged, such mindset, as Ngong has suggested, is detrimental to the well-being of the people and the whole of society (Ngong 2010, 9). However, not all spirits are deemed evil in the African worldview; other spirits are called good or benevolent spirits. But the question that comes to the fore now is, “How do African people differentiate between good and evil spirits?” This will be addressed in the next section.

3.5 Benevolent and malevolent spirits

Africans acknowledge the existence of both good and evil spirits; they are good depending on the type of relationship maintained with human beings. The good spirits are benevolent; they are thought to bring benediction and protection to the community. They are not feared but honoured. In order to maintain a good relationship and harmony with the spirits, people are obliged to offer them various kinds of sacrifices. In many African tribes, people expect numerous benefits from the spirits around them, especially ancestral spirits. Mashau (2007, 639) affirms this view by stating that the underlying premise of African occultism is the belief in a spiritual world with spiritual forces that have power to inflict harm upon the living. Among the Akamba in Kenya, Gehman explains that healing, sickness, and protecting people from sickness and other disasters are considered a major benefit. The ancestors can bless the living if they are given what they ask for; they can bring wealth, health to the sick, and protection from danger (Gehman 1989, 154). Some Africans attribute the coming of rain as help from the spirits (Parrinder 1974, 44). The lack of rain in a given region is deemed a disaster for the coming of the rain is a blessing in the African community. They would consult ancestral spirits to give them rain by providing sacrifices. Furthermore, good spirits are those that help diviners, medicine men, and mediums in their work. In some African societies, it is believed that these good spirits can possess an individual in order to communicate good news to the people. Spirit possession is considered a means of contact with the spirit world, so Africans can know what is happening in that world.

The above picture positively acknowledges the active presence of malevolent and benevolent spirits in daily human affairs. Here, this notion is assumed as the starting point for this conception to be incorporated and integrated with the doctrine of Holy Spirit. This would mainly be in response to the question in contrast with the functions of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. The integration is assumed to be a guide for the articulation of a holistic and biblical pneumatology, towards an effective ministry for African Christians in their totality. Such articulation aims at equipping African Christians to stand, and not waiver, in their faith, even where evil persistently confronts them in their societies. But the questions here are, “How do

they perceive evil in relation to benevolent spirits?” “Are there any available resources within their reach to help them deal with evil?”

3.6 Evil from an African perspective

Just as in most African societies, many things constantly go wrong. People are very much aware of the existence of evil in the world. However, Brand (2002, 75), in the book titled *Speaking of a Fabulous Ghost: In search of Theological criteria with special reference to the Debate on Salvation in African Christian Theology*, refers to the social anthropologist Robin Horton, who has presented different perspectives of evil between Africans and Westerners: “African and western patterns of thought in general differs precisely the former tends to couch its explanation in terms of personal forces-spiritual beings and the latter in terms of impersonal forces such as movements of elementary particles”. He observes that in the African traditional worldview, evil cannot be appraised in moral terms because it includes the actions of a free agent. For in the African view, most, if not all evil is attributed to the actions of free agents (Brand 2002, 73). How can evil be put right and avoided? This includes: wrongdoing, afflictions (as a consequence of wrongdoing), and witchcraft. All these forms of evil can be traced back, in one way or the other, to malevolent causes, either human or superhuman. In another article, ‘Witchcraft and spirit beliefs in African Christian Theology,’ Brand (2014, 106) refers to an African theologian, Magesa, who in his view insists that evil, from an African perspective, includes a moral aspect when he mentions witchcraft as one such manifestation of evil in the African context. The moral aspect comes in when the evil is mostly personalized and viewed as an enemy of the society, and is always at work. In such instances, the people ask themselves what or who caused these things to go wrong, i.e. to inform them of the sickness, misfortune, barrenness, accidents, death, and so on (Mbiti 1969, 213). Africans mainly attribute this to a personal agent, i.e. evil spirits, for they are malevolent. When they seek to do harm to people and these agents they are deemed anti-social. Africans believe that even if a physical explanation can be given for an accident, there are always major questions surrounding who made these things happen this in the future (Mbiti 1969, 214). The most common source of evil is spirits associated with humans. It is a common belief that certain deceased become evil spirits owing to the improper dispatch of the body during funeral rites, as well as through breaking tribal customs, an abnormal death, or improper ritual performances in life. In most

cases, when evil happens, they suspect someone used evil magic or witchcraft against someone's household, animals, or field. At times, evil spirits use human agents to inflict various kinds of sickness and suffering. This belief is found in most African societies and is still prevalent even among Christians. The most common way to deal with the problem when a person believes someone has used evil powers against him/her, they seek to establish the identity of the offender by consulting a diviner or medicine person (witchdoctors) (Mbiti 1969, 169-170). Others, especially Christians, look for a prophet or medium to cast out these evil spirits; this is noted to be a strong area of the AICs for dealing with supernatural forms of evil. Mbiti explains that the medicine persons or mediums are very important in the African society, for they have the power to put right what has gone wrong, they can heal, protect, and drive away evil, as well as counteract or neutralize the evil use of mystical forces. To do this they make use of traditional medicine or performing rituals (Mbiti 1969, 170). Though of recent this practice may have declined in most African societies, the truth remains that a good number of African societies (as the figures indicate) still rely on such forms of traditional help or medicine. This is evident by the presence of these traditional medicine men and women in most African cities selling medicines. This is confirmed by Nürnberger (2007, 42) when he states: "The picture provided by the study of Ashforth, that was conducted in the urban melting pot of Soweto at the turn of 21st century, is not more reassuring... It is sufficient to note that even in South Africa, arguably the most modernized and Christianized part in the sub-Saharan Africa, millions of Africans still turn to hundreds and thousands of diviners and healers when in trouble, and these claim to act in the authority powers of the ancestor (spirits)".

From my personal observation, in many cities in Malawi (this may be true in other African cities as well), a large number of people still seek help from traditional medicine men and women who display their herbs and traditional medicine on pavements along streets, some even advertise in public media. They do this when faced with challenges. Christians are frequently caught up in the temptation to seek help from medicine men/women, either to cure a physical illness, to get medicine to prevent things from going wrong, to bring good fortune, success, favour, and obtain a promotion or pass an exam (Mbiti 1969, 171). This brings us to another question on the impact of Christianity in African societies: "Why do many Africans, though claiming to be Christians, still seek traditional help in these trying moments?" One such trouble is witchcraft, which will be explored in more detail in

3.7 Witchcraft: An ominous phenomenon in African societies

Witchcraft is a worldwide phenomenon and can be identified by similar basic characteristics. Almost all African societies believe that witchcraft is real with special powers; this special power is believed to be so great that ordinary people can do nothing to it (Maboea, 1999, 20). Mbiti says it is an urgent form of disruption and destruction inflicted on the community, and together with other evil spirits, it is referred to as an enemy of the society, and perhaps even the most disturbing element (Mbiti 1969, 164). Mbiti further explains that witchcraft is a manifestation of mystical powers (forces), which may be inborn in a person, inherited, or acquired in a variety of ways. For some people it is said to function without them being aware of it or having control over it. Most African people share that fear. The belief and fear of witchcraft is deeply rooted in the African life, and in spite of modern education and religion like Christianity and Islam it is very difficult to eradicate this belief. It remains prevalent; even despite the colonial government legislating against the belief in and practice of witchcraft and the post-colonial government upholding this legislature, belief in witchcraft continues unabated (Togarasei 2011, 126). Brand (2014, 101-117) citing John Pobee states that Christian theology cannot avoid coming to terms with this aspect of the African experience, as it remains “a serious concern for large sections of African societies”. Togarasei notes that many in our worldview believe witchcraft, magic, sorcery and other associated phenomenon are irrational and unintelligible, especially because of its emphasis on the scientific approach to reality. However, it is highly considered by most Africans as a phenomenon that brings misfortune to a society with the ultimate aim being to harm, destroy, or even eradicate its victims (Maboea 1999, 20). It is usually associated with fatality or death; as a result, most African communities either fear or disapprove of it. It is condemned because it poses a serious threat to the community, which African theologians refer to as a moral aspect. On this moral aspect, Brand (2014, 106) refers to Laurent Magesa, who explains that in ATR, witchcraft is always associated with anti-social behaviour, which is regarded as deeply immoral. Unfortunately, there have been instances where accusations of witchcraft have been made in churches, when they elect bishops or other office bearers (Zimbabwe News Day, 05.04.2011). In Malawi, one is frequently confronted

with such stories in the media. For example, in *The Nation Online* (28th January 2016¹⁵), one such story was reported in the media alleging that certain members of the community had been involved in practices of witchcraft. This incident reported that the suspects, four elderly people, were brutally murdered by the community for allegedly killing someone through witchcraft; surely this is an immoral act aggravated by this deeply rooted belief.

Though this belief sounds irrational and unintelligible to the scientifically driven modern society, as highlighted by Brand (2014, 106), in an African spirituality, it offers an explanatory function for certain occurrences; however, it fails to be consistent with the scientific explanation. One thing is clear, in the African context, spiritual issues do matter and belief in witchcraft is very real and taken seriously. Africans are constantly influenced by this spirituality (worldview); they believe that there are always numerous evil spirits around intending to inflict harm on people, as a result, there is always a constant fear of these powers. The critical question therefore is: “How can a Christian theology deal with this issue?” Brand exposes how theologians differ considerably in their response to this issue. Their disagreements are based on the following considerations: Some question whether Christian theologians should take witchcraft and the belief in spirits seriously; others wonder whether they should offer an alternative set of categories in its place (Brand 2014, 101). Another question posed here is: “How the moral aspect of this phenomenon should be evaluated from a Christian perspective?” Due to limited space, this study will not elaborate on these questions. However, the focus will remain on how seriously theologians view this matter (witchcraft), and possible theological solutions. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, 23), in his article, ‘Witchcraft accusations and Christianity in Africa,’ argues that grasping the power and influence of evil, including witchcraft, is critical not only for realistic pastoral care but also for understanding African responses to the gospel throughout the history of Christian missions. For example, the spectacular growth of the African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICS) in the early twentieth century is linked, in particular, to the inability of Western missions to come to terms with the reality of supernatural evil, especially witchcraft, and to articulate a Christian theological response to it. Historic Western Christian missions have generally been perceived as powerless

¹⁵ Mercy Malikwa, 'APM, MLS Condem Neno Killings,' *The Nation Online* dated 28th Jan 2016, viewed 20 November 2016, from: <http://www.mwnation.com>. In this article, it was reported that four elderly people were brutally murdered by an angry mob because they suspected involvement in witchcraft, resulting in the death of one person.

when it comes to dealing with the supernatural and evil. Those who are spiritually afflicted and troubled have therefore turned to alternate resources outside the sphere of mission churches—traditional witchdoctors, medicine cults, charismatic prophets, or a combination of these—in search of diagnosis, explanations, and solutions to problems ranging from ill health, to infertility, to failing economic fortunes, says Asamoah-Gyadu. One critical question is: “Why, almost a century after the presence of AICs, and probably four to five decades since the beginning of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement in Africa, has the belief in witchcraft and its destructive power remained resilient in the African life and thought?”

Ngong (2010, 25), in his understanding, explains that witchcraft is an occultic activity, attributed to humans. Although, in some African societies, the powers of witchcraft may refer to both good and bad, but when complaints are it is usually about the bad use of such spiritual powers. And those accused of being witches are those who use their powers in a malevolent manner to impede the enjoyment of abundant life. Just as Magesa highlighted, in this regard, the concern is that witchcraft is perceived as an antisocial activity that drains the life of both the individual and society. Ngong thinks Africans have become preoccupied with how to remove witchcraft or at least limit its power over them. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, 23-25) reiterated this by saying: “African societies struggles to remove witchcraft in its midst because witches are believed to be people who hold both individuals and societies back”. While Christian theological reflection is called upon to combat this phenomenon, Asamoah-Gyadu believes that certain Christian approaches and media are responsible for the reinforcement of this belief in people’s minds when he says, on-going media stories, rumours and perceptions stories in most African Movies are more related to some witchcraft beliefs and are sustained in the public imaginations. Secondly, Asamoah-Gyadu mentions Christian preaching; he thinks the emergence of the prosperity gospel and the popularity it has achieved are a major challenge facing the church in Africa today. The prosperity gospel teaches and preaches that God has met all human needs of health and wealth through the suffering and death of Christ. Believers are therefore encouraged to claim these blessings—including insulation from disease, poverty, and sin—by making positive confessions and sowing seeds of tithes and offerings. In the African context where etiology and diagnoses speak of a supernatural agency as the cause of misfortunes, witchcraft is easily invoked to explain the shortfalls of the prosperity gospel (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015, 25). Explaining poverty in terms of the activities of witches has led to

a situation where Pentecostal/charismatic healing camps receive not only people accused of witchcraft but also perceived victims looking for divine intervention in their plight. Asamoah-Gyadu insists the accusers and the accused turn to the same well in seeking help. Perhaps the theological approach to correcting this belief requires a thorough biblical understanding of the phenomenon of witchcraft. However, to achieve this, I will provide a brief overview of the biblical spiritual world and briefly relate it to the African spirit world, with the idea of formulating a Christian theological solution to witchcraft.

3.8 The biblical spirit world and the African spirit world

The Bible has numerous references about the spirit world. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is imperative that a brief comparison be made between the African perspective and the biblical perspective of the spirit world. Several scriptures affirm that all the spirits in the universe were created by God when he created the universe; he also created a vast number of spirit beings called heavenly hosts (Ps 148:2-5; Col 1:16). These heavenly hosts include all creatures God created before he began his creation of the earth (O'Donovan 1996,186). These creatures include angels (cf. Ps 103:20-12, Job 38:4, 7; Rev 12:4, 9). The Bible presents the two main groups of angels: the holy angels, which are powerful and faithful servants of God (Ps 103:20-21) and the evil angels, who fell in rebellion along with Satan (Rev 7). Angels are spirits (Hebrew 1:14); the Bible has numerous references affirming that angelic spirits can directly affect the course of human events, as well as nature (cf. 2 Sam 24:15-16, Isa 37:36, Ps 34:7, Gen 19:9-11) (O'Donovan 1996, 187).

Following Mbiti's (1971, 140) enquiry where he focuses more on the New Testament and its spirit world, he shows how Jesus encountered the unseen powers. In his ministry, Jesus constantly encounters unseen powers in the form of the devil (Matt. 4:1-5; demons, Matt. 9:33, Mark 1:34; evil or unclean spirits Mk 1:23, 27, 3:11). The New Testament contains scattered references to one or more of these spirit powers (Mbiti 1971, 140). It is clear that there is a world of spiritual beings (Mark 5:5-9). Concerning their origin, one theory asserts that they were the offspring of fallen angels (Jud. 5:3, 2 Pet. 2:4). Mbiti refers to the rabbinic literature, where it is held that they are the offspring of Eve and Satan, and that their numbers are countless (1971, 141). From the temptation to the cross, Jesus is continuously fighting against these

powers of evil, with Satan being the archenemy of the gospel (Matt. 4:1-11). His healing of diseases and infirmities, casting out of demons, and raising the dead were acts that constitute the eschatological overthrow of evil powers by the Messiah (Mark 1:23, 3:10; Lk 13:11-13). These powers are considered to be the cause of people's physical disorders, as well as moral and spiritual illnesses (Matt. 12:27-39). These created beings have a significant degree of power and authority (Matt. 17:15; Lk 13:16), they can have a significant effect on what takes place in the visible world that we can see and touch. Throughout the gospels, the power of Jesus stands supreme, above that of the unseen beings (Mk. 1:27, 7:25). Similarly, in line with this notion, these spirits are regarded as the agents of all activities in the physical realm.

However, it is interesting to note here, that the prime New Testament emphasis on the nearness of the spirit world is the encounter between the reign of God and the heart of man. According to Nürnberger (2007, 62), the other interesting point is that "...as far as the authority of the deceased is concerned, the messages of the Old Testament and the New Testament leave no room for doubt: nothing absolutely nothing, should ever assume authority over God's people, or be given a space to stand between God and his people". He further asserts, "...as far as vitality of the deceased is concerned, the New Testament takes death as seriously as the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament, people return to dust when life is taken from the organic material that makes up their bodies" (Gen. 3.19) (Nürnberger 2007, 62). In other words, they come to life and they die as complete human beings—body, soul and spirit. If God in his mercy would grant them a new life after their death, as the New Testament assumes, this gift would again consist of a new body, soul and spirit. The incarnation brings the spirit world into the physical, says Mbiti, so that the person who comes to Christ is enabled to live simultaneously in both worlds. He appropriates the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5), as he awaits the final revelation (1 Pet. 1:13f) (Mbiti 1971, 143). This gives a very different view from the sheer fact of survival after death, which we encounter among the many African ideas of life after death. Mbiti further asserts that the experience of the Christian produces in him an active hope of participating in the internal life, a hope resting not upon the impersonal rhythm of nature, but upon God which he has revealed through Jesus. He adds that this is the anchor of the present life, and the light that radically illumines the meaning of hope of the future life. It is clear that the New Testament strongly emphasizes the faithful and the fellowship that commences in this present life, reaching full maturation in the hereafter when the faithful scale

the beatific vision (Mbiti 1971, 184). The importance of rediscovering the basic New Testament belief concerning power encounter or spiritual warfare is highlighted in the African context, where the existence, presence, and activities of these evil spirits (personalities) have cultural credence (Michael 2011, 154). Michael argues that refusing to recognize and explore the challenge of evil spirits in our African context will only lead to confusion and irresponsibility by the clergy and the church.

According to Michael, the biblical assumption of the realities and continuous activities of these personalities are graphically reflected in passages of Scripture and the experiences of our African context. The key questions for Africans are: “How can they live successfully while adhering to biblical standards in the midst of all these forces that are rooted in their culture?” And, “To what degree do these forces influence and affect African converts who seek to live according to their new Christian beliefs?” It is an undeniable reality that in most African communities, witchcraft remains a serious challenge. It is a phenomenon that has caused numerous fights, division, and even the brutal killing of those alleged to be involved in such activities. A few important points worth mentioning are discussed below:

First and foremost, the existence of witchcraft in our societies needs to be acknowledged and accepted as a reality. No amount of denial on the part of the church, Asamoah-Gyadu maintains, can eliminate this belief (in supernatural powers) from the minds of African Christians. In short, denial merely produces a hypocritical state of internal conflict for the believer. In official church circles they may pretend that they do not believe in witchcraft, but privately they resort to practices that assume witchcraft (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015, 24). This is not strange; even biblical witnesses confirm the existence of witchcraft, as is supported by several references (cf. Ex 22:18; Deut 18:10; Acts 8:9-21; Gal 5:20). In most of these references God forbids the use of evil powers in the form of magic, divination, sorcery, and witchcraft. Why does God forbid them? The Bible clearly states that these practices are an abomination and detestable before God, and not fit for his people who are called to live a godly life (cf. Lev 19:26). In such an environment, God demands total trust and obedience to his commands. Total submission to God’s word will open God’s rule, manifested through the presence of his Spirit in our lives in all situations, and fear finds no room in such a context (cf. Ps 139); this is what God demanded from the Israelites.

Secondly, it emphasizes the superiority of God's Spirit over all spirits, including all forms of evil spirits. Jesus demonstrated this in his earthly ministry when he cast out demons under the power and guidance of God's spirit. Any form of evil spirit cannot supersede the power of God's Spirit who is omnipresent. This is our referral point and assurance that God's Spirit is above all powers, including the powers of witchcraft. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us and guides us is not only powerful; he is also the Spirit of wisdom and discernment. He is the Spirit of love and unity. This is what African Christians need to learn and live by in their daily lives. God's Spirit as the source of all wisdom and the spring of love will unite our fragmented communities divided by ethnic, tribal, denominational and economical differences. The Holy Spirit is our helper in such situations to help us experience abundant life.

Thirdly, the mainline traditions need to be freed from their pioneer missionary teachings, which in some cases, denied the existence of witchcraft and considered it to be mere superstition. The newly trained pastors should be equipped with a holistic gospel that acknowledges the active presence of evil powers, which were however defeated through the powerful name and authority of Jesus Christ, who through the resurrection obtained victory over all these powers and principalities. This type of theological articulation should clearly be stipulated in our pneumatology as one way to overcome the challenges, fears and practices of witchcraft that African people are frequently confronted with.

So far, the researcher has explored an African cosmology, especially the role of the spirits, and the scope of their influence on the daily life of African people. An assessment was also made of the weaknesses of the mainline traditions as well as AICs and Pentecostals, regarding the realization of a holistic and integrated pneumatology. In this study, this is assumed to be the possible theological solution to the pneumatological deficit confronting African Christianity. Furthermore, this study insists on the integration of local/traditional concepts in its theological reflection, so as to effectively minister to the local people or this reason, I will explore the articulation of a holistic and integrated pneumatology based on the African concept of community, and the central role of spirits in the communal way of life. One may ask, "Why this focus on the concept of community?" It is based on the fact that African spirituality is centrally understood as being communal, and the whole drama of the African lifestyle revolves

around this concept. The question that still remains is, “How can the African concept of community be used as the basis for articulating the proposed holistic and integrated pneumatology?” This is explored further below.

3.9 A holistic and integrated pneumatology in the African context

The articulation of a holistic and integrated pneumatology in the African context demands a clear grasp of the holistic conception of the African way of life, with particular attention being given to the differences that exist between Western and African views. In describing Western theology, Mbiti has defined the biblical view of humankind as being either a dichotomy (body and spirit/soul) or trichotomous—body, soul or mind and spirit or soul, which Mbiti (1971, 130) says, is just for academic distinction. The biblical view of humankind, like that of the African, is holistic (Anderson 1991, 15). Furthermore, a person is an integrated whole, and not just the sum total of their parts. Kalilombe (1994, 119) adds that African spirituality is described as life in its totality with a holistic culture; the spiritual dimension of a person is embedded in people’s whole way of living. Thus, humankind is viewed in a holistic manner. This study therefore insists that everything that affects humankind requires a holistic approach if it is to meet the needs of the person. For this reason, a holistic integrated pneumatology is proposed with a biblical foundation. Earlier in the chapter, the challenge of why a holistic and integrated pneumatology fails to be realized and experienced was discussed. This study endeavours to articulate a pneumatology that integrates and embraces the totality and wholeness of all of reality. In the process, the researcher will further explore the central role of the spirits in the communal way of life and how this relates to the daily life in of African communities, and then articulate a possible holistic understanding by integrating the newly obtained insights into the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is relevant to the local context.

3.10 Community: The way of life in an African society

For traditional Africans, humanity is first and foremost the community (Kalilombe 1994, 122). In the African worldview, everything is connected together; all things form a present material-spiritual unity, with the spiritual pervading all things (Anderson 1991, 8). Africans strongly feel that people are called to a life of community, participation and sharing. And this can be

sum up in that one of the most remarkable and tangible dimension of African spirituality relates to the unique notion of community and collective solidarity that the African society exhibits in all spheres of life. There is profound sense of interdependence, from extended family to the entire community. The sense of community and humans living together are highly cherished values. For Africans, the community is sacred, rather than secular, and is surrounded by several religious forms and symbols.¹⁶ Mbiti (1969, 108-109) stresses this important belief and sense of community among traditional Africans when he says: “The individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately”. He adds, “...what happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group and what happens to whole group happens to the individual”. The individual can only say, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”. This is pivotal in understanding the African view of human nature (as communal beings), as presented by Mbiti. To fully grasp the African conception of community, it will be contrasted with the Western understanding (Menkiti, 2011)¹⁷. To the West, according to the general view, a community is a mere collection of self-interested persons, each with their own private set of preferences. However, on occasion, they get together because they realize they need each other to accomplish things, which they are not able to accomplish otherwise (Menkiti, 2011). In this explanation, whenever the term community (society) is used, it is meant to indicate the aggregated sum of individuals comprising it. This understanding of community is completely different to the African view of community.

In the African view, community refers to more than a mere association of atomic individuals. The term suggests bondness; it refers to the act of sharing and living in communion and in communication with each other, and with nature (Sindima 1990, 145). Based on Mbiti’s cardinal statement, “I am because we are,” the ‘we’ referred to is not an additive ‘we’ but a thoroughly fused collective ‘we’. Menkiti argues that the Western view asserts an ontological independence from human society, and moves from the community to individuals, whereas the African view moves from the individual to society (Menkiti, 2011). The African understanding

¹⁶ For more details on the concept of community, see <https://www.Afrikaworld.net/afrel/index.html>. [Viewed: 9 March 2016].

¹⁷ For further details on the concept of community from an African perspective, see www2.southeastern.edu/academics/faculty/mrassamo/graseminar. [Date accessed: 12th March 2015].

of human society (community) adopts a form of collectiveness in the truest sense of the word. It is a society, as well as unity of the visible and invisible world—the world of the physical and living on the one hand, and the spiritual world (of ancestors) on the other hand (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009). In a wider sense, the African community comprehends the totality of the world, including the physical, the environment, and all spirit beings acknowledged by the community. There is a sense of mutual dependence among all the different components—human beings, the animal world, vegetation, the elements, the heavenly bodies, the departed, as well as the diffuse forces, visible and invisible, that circulate all around us (Kalilombe 1994, 123). For Africans, human society is essentially part of a worldview that is fundamentally holistic, sacred, and highly integrated (EJizu 2000). Even children are regarded as a communal blessing from God, and it takes a whole village to raise a child (Sybertz 1996, 116). In African thought, personhood develops through relationships with others and a sense of belonging to a community (Kretzschmar 2006, 82).

The person in a community is a very important reality in the African society. The person is primarily a member of the community, and secondly, an individual (Sybertz 1996, 106). A person is a person through other people. Most African proverbs emphasize and communicate unity, cooperation, strength and success of the community. It includes the importance of sharing and working in the family, neighbourhood, village and town. Africans emphasize harmony in the community rather than division. This often dictates their lifestyle. Traditionally, a divided village was the greatest calamity that could befall a community (Sybertz 1996, 116). The worst evil in a traditional African society was to be cut off from the community; this is one reason why people must go to funerals, celebrations and other community events. Stability and reliability are more important than emancipation, if you venture out of the fold you are in trouble. Some of the values challenged in the communal setting include mutuality and interdependency; if one member suffers all suffer together with him or her. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together with that member. Kalilombe mentions hospitality as one positive consequence of community solidarity. For a member of the same family or clan exchanges hospitality as a matter of courtesy, as well as to outsiders. The bonded kingship, however, does have its boundaries, for instance, they exclude the enemy and the totally unknown incomer who might be a potential danger to the community (Kalilombe 1994, 122). It is worth noting that in all the communal sense of African traditional life, it is greatly

connected to active presence and acknowledgement of spirits, through rituals as a means of bringing stability and peace in the community. Spirits played an integral role in the building of the communal life. Before highlighting how the communal life can be integrated with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it should be acknowledged that there are challenges confronting the communal way of life. Despite the traditional emphasis on community values, many Africans are struggling with this way of life in contemporary society (Sybertz 1996, 118). Briefly, the researcher will now turn to discuss the challenges facing the communal life in society.

3.11 Challenges facing communal life

Community living remains a cherished value among traditional Africans. However, dramatic changes in the social, political and religious aspects of life have put considerable pressure on this sense of community. The ability for ATR to promote the community ideal of a peaceful and harmonious co-existence in the contemporary African society is declining in many urban areas (cities and towns). In recent times, the moral virtues often stressed in communal living, i.e. charity, honesty, loyalty, faithfulness, solidarity, respect for elders, respect for nature and God, etc., are sadly disappearing (Mwikwamba 1999, 84). Taboos or prohibitions against particular actions such as incest, murder, adultery, and eating certain foods were enforced, and positive communal relations were nurtured in both daily life and in the regular practice of many customs and rituals (Kretzschmar 2008, 83). Obviously this does not mean that societies were without crime, violence, inequalities, conflict or hatred. Kretzschmar explains that it does mean that moral socialization led to communal well-being. The challenges facing communal life are the result of urbanization, poverty, political change, and materialism (Kretzschmar, 2008, 84). Fortunately, on the other hand, the forces that precipitate and sustain radical change on the continent, including Western culture, social-political systems, Christianity and Islam now largely provide a new framework and elements for living harmoniously in Africa (EJizu 2000). Because of the rapid spread of the Christian faith on the African continent, churches are attracting hordes of people and are becoming an alternative community for converts. Despite the disappearance of many traditional African communal structures, the churches in Africa are proving to be an alternative for communal life. But the question here is: “What is the central force bringing so many into such corporate lifestyle of the traditional community?” In the

section below, I will explore the central role of spirits in communal life and relate this to the church as a community, and the unifying role of the Holy Spirit.

3.12 The Spirit: A vital and unifying force in the community

In traditional African communities, from birth to death, their lives are marked by customs related to the spirit world (Mofokeng & Nganda 2001, 24). As asserted by Mofokeng & Nganda, African culture (communal life) would be meaningless without the spirits and rites that prepare and integrate the child into the African society. Traditionally, their main source of strength and solidarity was through the ancestral spirits. For in African thought, the divine interpenetrates life as a force in becoming an integral part of their struggle to survive. Africans were held together by their strong belief in ancestral spirits, and obedience to them (Kalilombe 1999, 194). As noted earlier, the traditional African structures of the communal society is barely surviving in this postmodern society, yet some of its values are still cherished. It seems, however, that the church is functioning as a better alternative for such a life. It is important that we first comprehend what the church is, in relation to this model or image of the community or communal life.

Theologically, the church is described by means of many models and images, and one such image is that of a community. The notion of the church as a community of believers is found throughout the New Testament. In addition, it revolves around Jesus: His life and teaching, His death and resurrection, the celebration of the Eucharist in memory of Him, and in anticipation of the fulfilment of God's kingdom (Gibellin 1994, 35). We cannot separate the community of believers from the Holy Spirit. They are called believers because they are animated by the Holy Spirit (Moltmann 1992, 65). They are called the church because they are gathered together by God's Spirit (Vorster 1980, 54). It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that the community is bound to Christ; hence, one could say that Christ assembles his church (the community of believers) through the Spirit. Through this activity of the Spirit, individual people are incorporated into the body of Christ. The church lives in the world, bound to Christ (the authority) by a powerful tie. The church manifests these invisible connections in diverse ways, but especially through communal living and communal work in everyday life (Vorster 1980, 54-55). It is the Spirit alone that gathers people together from the most desperate vocations,

positions, classes and ages to form a new community, a new family of God, borne by their love for him and for one another (Vorster 1980, 54). This community, which is called by God's Spirit, is identified by its values. Dorr argues that there is no real community unless the members of the group share not just their food or faith but also themselves, thus, love (Dorr 1990, 58).

In the New Testament, fellowship and community sharing (*koinonia*) formed the foundation for the church in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). Kärkkäinen (2002, 117) explains that "...the church is a communion in the Spirit with a specific Christological expression" (2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10). This image is rooted in the activity of the Holy Spirit as the action of God's unity, and gives life to the body (de Gruchy 1994, 127). Stendahl (1990, 35) says, "The church is a community invigorated by the Spirit for the mending of the whole of creation". The first Christians essentially regarded themselves as a fellowship of believers in Christ who worshipped God together in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13). For Stendahl, "*koinonia* is the powerful designation for community Spirit"¹⁸. In this sense, "*koinonia* is not to be regarded as something spiritual separate from the daily concerns of life" (de Gruchy 1995, 127). *Koinonia* is recognized as a firm qualification for the life lived in a particular Christian community at a particular place. The term means "more than just sharing and being in communion, it means participation in something held or known in common" (Marais 2006, 151). In other words, the community and the sense of the community are by-products of *koinonia*, participation, and sharing in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13).

Acts 2:44-45 exemplified the early Church's life of fellowship and sharing of possessions. According to the biblical description, in this community all members participated on an equal footing. These communities were spontaneous, homogenous social groups, tied together by faith and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. It was *koinonia* that depicted the real life of the early church as alternative community (Marais 2006, 149-155). The survival of the community is strengthened by the fact that each member is integrated into the community (body of Christ) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through baptism (the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion), the Apostle Paul explains: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many

¹⁸ Krister Stendahl (1990) gives a more detailed description of the concept of 'koinonia'.

parts are many, they are one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the *one Spirit* to drink” (1 Cor 12:12-13).

This is the picture Paul sketched of the church that lived as a community (of believers); it embraced all the social and racial types of the ancient world, it overcame all the barriers of birth, sex, and prejudice, which could keep people apart—men, Romans, Jews, lettered and unlettered, freemen and slaves, fishermen and patricians, harlots and merchants. They were all represented in that diverse fraternity, and held together by the bonds of friendship and intimacy (Marais 2006, 174).

Here, the Holy Spirit is the bond between the community and the body. The body of Christ is nothing other than a fellowship of people (believers). It is the fellowship with Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit where *koinonia* signifies participation, togetherness, and a communal life. Believers are bound to each other by sharing in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Christian communities gathered together by the Holy Spirit are strengthened by the power of the indwelling Spirit who helps them to obey the Lord Jesus as the sole Authority. Hence, the Spirit is the force unifying the community and the bond that strengthens them to experience life in its fullness.

Within this framework, the challenging question now is: “How is this church as a community open to the Holy Spirit?” For it is only when Christian communities are open and obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they can be transformed and become instruments of change in our volatile societies. When they were frightened, they stood together in prayer guided by the Spirit (Acts 4:23-31); when one was in trouble they stood together in solidarity with the troubled person (Acts 12:12). Back then the Holy Spirit was active and present building up the community of believers in different situations. In the early church, the presence of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer had a significant impact on the role they played in the community (Ncozana 2002, 168). This suggests that we need to acknowledge the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. Based on the notion that the spirits play a central role in uniting African communal societies, similarly, this study suggests that this framework can be used to relate and emphasize the holistic role of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. This is the

pneumatology African Christians need to be equipped with, if they are to survive. Moreover, it fits well into the African worldview, which in the past was strengthened by a strong belief in the spirits, the integral role they play, and their lives revolving around this belief. Alternatively, the Holy Spirit also plays a central role helping, equipping and building the newly formed communities, by being actively present in their daily affairs. While the communities were held together by their strong belief in the spirits, in their unity, they were also shaped by their morals. In the next section the researcher will focus on understanding how the belief in spirits has shaped the morals of communal societies and relate this to how the Holy Spirit shapes the moral life of Christians.

3.13 The Spirit as the agent of moral formation in communities

Their belief in ancestral spirits did not only act as a bond in African communities but it also played a vital role in shaping their morals (moral formation). The African community is conceived of in terms of family, kinship, and extended family, where the duties and rights are exchanged unconditionally. It is this type of relationship that provides a sense of security, and at the same time, builds a strong sense of identity and belonging (Kalilombe 1994, 128). In the African context, the family is the locus for moral training. In other words, the family is held responsible for the moral training of its members. The primary responsibility of the family is moral training (Paris 1992, 77). However, African communities are facing a moral crisis, as are most societies in the world. Examples of moral challenges include: poverty, corruption in high places, war, violence against women and children, murder, rape and economic injustice (Kretzschmar 2008, 66). The question here is: “What can be done to restore morality in the structures and institutions of our societies?”

Kretzschmar (2007, 27), also referred to by Ethel C. Tuckey (2015, 9), defines moral formation as “a process by which people become in their deepest selves as well as in their attitudes and actions, genuinely committed to becoming good persons and acting justly and mercifully towards others and natural world”. And Kretzschmar believes that without spirituality, there can be no moral formation, as spirituality provides morality with a sense of the sacredness of

life and indicates a willingness to move beyond human self-fulfilment to self-transcendence. Spirituality and morality are rooted in God's relationships, which in turn shapes the universe. Through this definition, Tuckey thinks that it reflects the social nature of morality as it includes justice and mercy as virtues that are to be displayed by Christians who live out their calling to be part of the reign of God. Tuckey (2015, 9) affirms that moral formation is about wholeness and becoming human as God created us to be. Thus, becoming fully human in the Christian faith is to grow into the likeness of Christ. This involves inner transformation, the development of character, and participation in the creative and redemptive work of God in the world and all of creation. One may add that this inner transformation is fully attained through the active work of the Holy Spirit who continually works in believers lives. Again, Habgood (1983, 99-100), referred to by Kretzschmar (2008, 66-67), argues that the Christian faith and morality cannot be separated, in that Christians need to exercise a moral function in society. For Christianity is not just about values, nor is its primary purpose to secure social stability, though this may in practice emerge as one of its useful functions. Tuckey (2015, 10), referring to Van der Ven, considers that "...despite the decline of traditional religion and church membership, there is still a connection between religion and morality." He thinks that a relationship with God is pivotal for moral formation.

It is an undeniable reality that African spirituality is centered on communal living when facing challenges, though it still has a significant influence on African consciousness. It is confronted by change that goes hand in hand with modernity and postmodernity (Nürnberger 2007, 206). One such challenge is the loss of communal structures, which helps with moral formation. The loss of communal structures, according to Nürnberger, has caused many young generations to lose their sense of togetherness. This is identified as a major challenge in this research. Furthermore, it is difficult for African religion to continue to influence the moral formation of Africans, as it is inextricably linked to the coherence of its community structure (Kretzschmar 2008, 79). Kretzschmar (2008, 87) argues that "moral conscience is shaped and moral obligations are formed within those communities to which we owe allegiance". Kretzschmar further explains that character is formed when a person emulates the virtues of the community and imitates the behaviour of revered leaders. African spirituality has provided a platform for moral formation, for from birth a person is part of the family, clan, and larger community. Hence, traditionally, the family and community had a strong mentoring and restraining moral

function (Kretzschmar 2008, 87). Similarly, Mbiti (1975, 199) notes that “religion provides moral values, and African traditional religion has many moral values within the family and community”. Furthermore, Mbiti believes that morals play a vital role in building relationships between people, and between them and the world around them. In this environment, the ancestral spirits play a particular important moral function in this regard (Opong 2005, 93-96). For in African communities, the Supreme Being, the ancestors and the spirits are all powers or forces that impinge on human life in one way or another. In this sense, they are all moral agents. Magesa (1997) says that the way people act in a community has been determined by the ancestors and is preserved in the traditions of the people. Traditions, therefore, supply the moral code and indicate what the people must do to live ethically. According to this view, in the moral vision of ATR, Supreme Being (God) is the ultimate guardian of the moral order of the universe. This explains why is purposely full of rituals and sacrifices, to maintain a good relationship with the Supreme Being and other spirits delegated by God. Rituals represent a form of physical communication with the ancestors, spirits, or the Supreme Being, that mostly involves the whole community. In such accession, moral values and taboos are stressed for an individual or a group who behaves disrespectfully. It is a serious matter, risking greater shame and mortal danger for the individual and the entire community (Magesa, 1997). Though fearing spiritual powers is reinforced by moral values, in this sense, we may boldly ascertain that spirits shape the morals of African communities. The moral virtues often stressed include charity, honesty, hospitality, respect, loyalty, faithfulness, solidarity, respect for elders, respect for nature, and respect for God; these are sadly fading away (Mwikamba 1999, 84).

Nevertheless, in the absence of a traditional structured community the church is expected to function as an alternative community and provide important moral resources to both their own members and the world at large (Matt 5:14-16). Furthermore, the church as a community of believers is expected to be a moral community just as the traditional community has its roots in the family and extended family. The same logic can be applied to the Christian church. Where the Christian family and faith communities form the church community (Hendriks 2004, 14), the church is understood as the family of God, which is directly related to the concept of community. The church is the family of God, a great family with Jesus as the head serving under the Father. Christ invites us to love one another in this family. This invitation finds resources and concrete application in the African experience of family life, which promotes the

morals and values of hospitality, sharing, solidarity, etc. Thus, in the African context, the church as a community comprised of family members, needs to be based on this and to actualize the love of God and love for one's neighbour (Orobator 2008, 87). We know that among African people, the family has a much wider circle of members than those in the West, and extends to include children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who too may have their own children (Mbiti 1969, 106). The extended family is one of the strongest bonds that bind the Chewa people together. The family relationship from both the husband and wife are taken seriously. This is reflected in the Chewa proverb, "*chibale ndi chipysera*" which means, "the family relationship is like a scar on your body that does not disappear" (Chitheka 2014, 87). The church is viewed as the extended family of God, which fits well in the African context.

In the African context, just as morals are shaped within the family, extended family and the community under the strong influence of ancestral spirits, in same way, the church as the family of God helps its members to shape their morals, which are formed and shaped by the help of God's Spirit who keeps the family strong. Thus, becoming a vibrant community able to attract and influence others in the society. The church as the family of God implies the creation of small communities at the human level living as basic ecclesial communities. These cell groups function as family, even as extended family formed by the power of the Holy Spirit who gathers them together; they are formed to live more concrete and authentic lives, and experience fraternity (Sybertz 1996, 148). In this family, the members are born through the power of the Spirit (regeneration; they learn new values and morals and grow in the knowledge of the demands and responsibilities of the family through the power of the Spirit (sanctification).

This resonates well with Paul's explanation to the Galatian Church. He warned them about some moral vices if they do not allow the Spirit of God to guide and help them (cf. Gal5:16-21). It is clear how Paul mentions the role of the Spirit if they would see themselves as members of the family of God portraying moral values, as he mentions to them in verses 22-23 of the same chapter. This is part of the church's overall task, to provide training in spiritual formation, and the moral formation of the faithful in those family unit communities united by the Spirit of God. It is believed that this ecclesiology, the church as a family which emphasizes the warmth of love and care among widely extended relationships will not overlook the significance of the

Holy Spirit through which the warmth of love is expressed to family members (Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit is the power to change attitudes and lifestyles. He moves people to formulate ethical norms and abide by them. He is the one who moves believers, as well as the whole of creation towards new life. This, however, does not undermine the innate weakness that limits one's capacity in such a community regarding moral reasoning and a good relationship with God, one's neighbour, and ecology, seen as a result of sin. Believers in this web of relationships strive to emulate the life and character of Jesus Christ, and manifest these in practice. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in helping believers to embody the character of Christ is regarded as indispensable to our salvation (Elorm-Donkor 2012, 9). This can only be accomplished in a specific environment where the Holy Spirit can operate freely and facilitate the process of moral formation. When the character of Christ is embodied in the life of believers they become instruments of transformation in their societies empowered by the Spirit of God, and in turn their good morals attract many even those outside the church. This is a significant aspect, which the researcher hopes will be displayed in a holistic pneumatology, by integrating the notion that moral and ethical values in the African community are shaped by the spirits. In same manner, the Christian life cannot produce moral values without the integral role of the Holy Spirit in this spirit formed community—the church. Based on this, an integrated and holistic pneumatology will be relevant, for the Holy Spirit brings new life and opens up the possibility for moral living among all Christians. This is not far from the African worldview. In all aspects, the spirits play a central role in respecting and sustaining the nature (Magesa, 1997). In the same way, the Holy Spirit is not merely the power of new life in the moral sense of the word, but the renewal of the entire existence of humanity, in all the functions and possibilities of their existence (Van Aarde 1991, 513). This includes the whole of creation, that is, the earth, animals, and the whole ecosystem.

3.14 The Spirit as the sustainer of nature

Moral formation in African communities is directly linked to their strong belief in spirits and their influence, and the African sense of community, which includes the creation and nature. African spirituality is holistic and integrated with nature. It is essentially the way of living in the visible sphere in relation to the invisible world. African spirituality focuses on the preservation of human well-being and the promotion of what enhances life on earth. For

Africans, at the practical level, a healthy natural environment is acknowledged as being essential for a healthy and harmonious life.¹⁹ Kalilombe (1994, 122) explains, “The universe is seen as a common heritage, its diverse components as potential partners in the shared project of existence. There is a mutual dependence among the different parts: human beings, the animal world, vegetation, the elements, the heavenly bodies, the departed as well as the diffuse of forces, visible and invisible, that circulate all around....” This connection is deeply spiritual in nature. Furthermore, nature is viewed as a gift from the Supreme Being; it is a gift not to be abused. There is a host of nature spirits associated with specific animals, species of trees, sacred forests, rivers and mountains, which reminds local communities of their need to respect the environment and to use it sustainably.²⁰

In Africa, there is a strong sense of solidarity with the other creatures, unlike in the Western cosmology where solidarity is only found among human beings. The African recognition of the divine spirit in nature and of the community between human beings, other living creatures and natural phenomena, is said to be a positive framework that could be used to reinforce the Christian doctrine of creation as well as facilitate theological reflection on ecological matters (Appiah-kubi 1979, 110). Moreover, many scholars have argued that traditional Christian doctrine has played a major role in the current ecological and environmental crisis²¹. In general, it is blamed on the traditional interpretation of the doctrine of creation, and the Christian view of anthropology in particular has to a large extent exalted the place of humans in creation, resulting in the view that the rest of creation is to serve humans. The exploitative Western attitude is evident in physical and economical science and has recently begun to infiltrate African societies (Dorr 1990, 27). This is mainly because the traditional doctrine of creation is divorced from the Holy Spirit; therefore, Africans have the responsibility of articulating a pneumatology that can relate to the African context in respect to nature centered in its spirituality.

¹⁹ For more information on the African view of a relationship between humanity and the environment, see [www.http.safcei.org/faith-perspective/Africa-traditional](http://www.safcei.org/faith-perspective/Africa-traditional). Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute, One Earth, Many Faiths, all caring for creation [Date accessed 9th March 2016.]

²⁰ For more details on humanity and environment, see [safcei.org/faith-perspective/African-traditional](http://www.safcei.org/faith-perspective/African-traditional). [Date accessed 10th March 2016.]

²¹ For more information of the on the ecological and environmental crisis, see <http://scriptura.journals.ac.za>. [Date accessed 10th March 2016.]

It is encouraging to note that some African theologians have responded to the call to articulate Christian doctrine in terms of the ecological crisis. One such theologian is Teddy Sakupapa, who has attempted to articulate an African pneumatology as one way of dealing with the ecological crisis confronting African societies. Sakupapa based his argument on Tempels' thesis of Bantu Philosophy, which specifically focuses on the notion of vital force. Some have re-interpreted and appropriated his philosophy by accruing to it that it indicates a strong sense of respect for life. It has also been further highlighted that vital force indicates the centrality of life and the interrelatedness of beings (community) (Sakupapa 2012, 427). This means that all of reality is interrelated, without any separation between the sacred and the secular. Sakupapa, arguing from a theological point of view, explains that vital force is the power of God present in all creation and without which life is not possible. Sakupapa goes further in saying that this vital force is to be construed as the Spirit of God understood as the principle of life and enabler of communion within creation. This interpretation, he asserts, highlights the idea that the whole reality is pervaded by God's vital force, which makes life possible due to its interrelatedness and interdependence. However, Sakupapa is cautious with the limitation of the language used when the Holy Spirit is likened to the vital force. He is confident that the proposed articulated pneumatology based on this notion of vital force is relevant to the context, faithful to the biblical witness, and also accountable to the wider Christian community. He then agrees with Moltmann's approach in developing an ecological ethos for the African context, understanding that through the Holy Spirit, God is present in all things and all things are in God. With this, Moltmann says the work of the Spirit is not solely the Spirit of redemption but also that of creation (Moltmann 1992, 34). And according to Sakupapa, the African notion of vital force opens up avenues for reflection on the cosmic breadth of the Spirit given its emphasis on life and relationality. And not only that, it also echoes Mbiti's thoughts, when he says, "The living fabric of nature including people and other creatures is sacred. Its sanctity does not mean that nature should be worshipped but does mean that it should be treated with respect" (Sakupapa 2012-, 428).

In other words, what Sakupapa proposes is that the Spirit's presence will be recognized in the whole of creation in a panentheistic sense. In addition, he thinks that this perspective is important for the reason of getting African Christians and churches involved in ecological

work. He is positive based on that fact that in African cosmology, the sacredness of nature is derived from nature's relationship with the creator whose vital force has animated nature. Humans are therefore in an ontological relationship with nature given their common descent from the creator. He trusts that the pneumatological understanding of vital force enhances the ontological relationship and, at the same time, he thinks this could be one way to respond to the ecological crisis in the African context. That is, by recovering this notion of vital force with its underlying idea of God's pervading presence in the whole creation. It is believed that this notion of vital force, if integrated, could greatly help in the development of an ecological ethos based on reverence for the whole of life (Sakupapa 2012, 429).

From Sakupapa's pneumatological articulation, this study agrees with his approach and argues that if it is incorporated and integrated into the doctrine of Holy Spirit, it could be an adequate means to minister to African Christians. In turn, this understanding will help them live more effectively in their everyday life in relation to the environment and not only in the church. Moreover, this study assumes that the conception of vital force is closely related to the biblical concept of *ruach*, the breath of life. Furthermore, it is strongly believed in ATR that nature is a gift from the Supreme Being, and should be respected as part of the community. As mentioned in chapter two, the Chewa people believe that spirits dwell in nature, e.g. in forests and mountains. These places are declared sacred and nature is preserved based on the fact that they honour the spirits (chapter 2). It is based on this conception of revering creation, inhabited by God's Spirit which sustains it, and therefore, it should be respected and preserved. This study insists that if this aspect is integrated into the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it would be easily grasped by African Christians, who strongly view the universe as spiritualized, and in turn, acknowledge the active presence of God's Spirit in the whole creation not only in church relates activities.

As observed above, communal life in African communities is still highly valued in spite of numerous challenges. The church has in one way proved to be an alternative community, providing a corporate sense in African societies. The opportunity of being an alternative community only comes when these new communities understand the secret and central role of the Holy Spirit in these newly formed communities, the church. This calls for a paradigm shift in the way we understand and interpret the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We need to move beyond

the Western Christian view of the Holy Spirit, where the role of the Holy Spirit is not only applicable in reference to salvation, but is also *ruach*, vital force, the divine energy, active and present in every aspect of life, which could be independently recognized by embracing these traditional concepts. By embracing these concepts we are opening ourselves to a holistic and integrated pneumatology. In other words, this calls us to move beyond the traditional Western thought that emphasizes the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from a soteriological point of view, which many African commentators say has failed to meet the spiritual needs of most African communities. The question now is: “How can the holistic and integrated pneumatology be articulated under the framework presented above?” This will be the focus of the next section.

3.15 An holistic and integrated pneumatology

The task of articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology demands the active participation of African theologians. For when we speak of African theology, one definitely must address the integration and articulation of the local context. Traditionally, for Africans, everyday life involves a number of practices and beliefs (Katani 2008, 91). It is the general consensus that early missionaries did not take African concepts and values into account when employing Christian doctrines, particularly the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The missionaries imposed a Western worldview on the local people, and denied the reality of the spirits, which to the local context was an integral part of their daily life, yet the missionaries denounced it as mere superstition. It is undeniable that the outcome of this act had a significant impact on the spirituality of the African people. This compels us to search for answers as well as critically engage the Western worldview brought by the missionaries.

This calls for African churches to learn to adapt, integrate, and articulate the positive cultural values and present realities, as well as social, economic and religious factors that influence and condition people’s lives (culture). Bosch (1991, 447) notes that, “The Christian faith as a whole never exists except as translated culture”. In other words, if the Christian faith (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) is to exist among African people it must be translated into cultural or traditional local concepts. As was demonstrated in a previous section, integrating traditional concepts is relevant for it embraces the spirituality or worldview as well as theological and anthropological

factors. As noted by Katani (2008, 110), spirituality also reflects theologically on enculturation as it helps the participating community to share a common spiritual exercise.

Nürnbergger (2007, 97) argues that integrating new insights is not a novel idea, for throughout history the biblical faith has absorbed and reformulated new insights, worldviews, and metaphors from its religious and intellectual environment—Canaan, Babylonia, Persia, Hellenistic and Rome. This gives us confidence to take the bold step of incorporating the African concept of community, as indicated in the previous section of the chapter. There can be no Christian life without the active presence of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, there is no community of believers, body of Christ, or church without the active presence of the Holy Spirit. All Christian communities exist by the work of the Holy Spirit. Christians live and demonstrate Christ's character through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the belief that the spirits are an integral force that held African communities together, shaping their morals and sustaining the natural environment needs to be integrated with the understanding that the Christian church needs the Holy Spirit in its totality to live effectively.

However, Hendriks cautions that there are risks concerning the process of integration. One is that it may lead to becoming ingrown on one's own theological island (Hendriks, 2004). Nevertheless, the purpose of integration in this study is to acknowledge the need for the ecumenical aspect and to be canonically relevant, while at the same time taking the all-embracing culture seriously and presenting a holistic gospel and [an holistic pneumatology] which appeals to the local culture (Hendriks 2004,75). It also emphasizes the local situation and local concepts, and acknowledges the global impact on the local context, while not undermining the impact of the ecumenical faith tradition, for instance, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

What has been said so far is that a holistic and integrated pneumatology is but one approach that can be employed to effectively minister to traditional African Christians, for it takes cultural beliefs seriously and incorporates these with the Christian tradition. The process of integration should consider the risks that such an approach may entail, and not neglect the ecumenical aspect while emphasizing the reality of the local context.

3.16 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to integrate a holistic and biblical pneumatology from an African perspective with John Mbiti's views. To achieve this, I have explored the African cosmology with much focus on the spirit world, as it is understood from an African perspective. I have explained the influence of the spirit world on African people and their involvement in human affairs leading to one common challenge facing most Africans—witchcraft. I have also established that Africans are haunted by their fear of evil spirits. All problems are thus attributed to evil spirits, considered to be personal agents of evil and enemies of humanity. The chapter also looked at the commonalities between the African spirit world and the biblical spirit world. It was also confirmed that most Africans seek help from traditionalists in times of crisis; alternatively they seek help from AICs and Pentecostals. This is due to the reductive pneumatology commonly upheld in most mainline traditions. It was noted that mainline pneumatology has proved to be deficient in meeting the needs of African Christians because it has limited the Holy Spirit by simplifying his role in church related activities and failing to provide solutions to combat the fears of its members. On the other hand, African Pentecostalism has met the needs of most African Christians but is faulted for emphasizing the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome evil forces, limiting the role of the Holy Spirit as well. It has been demonstrated that both mainline traditions and African Pentecostalism has not fully addressed the needs of African Christians; hence the need for a holistic and biblical pneumatology that could be integrated and provide an alternative solution to meet the needs of African Christians. Three possible areas where the doctrine of the Holy Spirit could be articulated into a more holistic and integrated pneumatology, and could be practically applied were discussed. These include: the communal life, moral life, and nature based on the notion of Mbiti's cardinal statement, "I am because we are, and we are because I am". This emphasizes the significance of unity and the totality of life (communal life).

Firstly, the Holy Spirit as a force that unites and builds new communities has been highlighted as a possible area where Africans can experience the bond of oneness, considering that they are communally oriented people. The study conceded the challenges facing the communal life. Some of these challenges include urbanization, poverty, and many more. The church on the

other hand is considered an alternative community in the midst of these challenges; it is the community gathered by the Holy Spirit and fellowship. Furthermore, the activities of this community are centered on the power of the Holy Spirit. I confirmed that this emphasis correlates well with African communal life, which was solidified by the strong belief in ancestral spirits. Secondly, the Holy Spirit is the agent of moral formation. This was based on the fact that communities in the African society greatly value the significance of morals, especially in families and villages. The church embracing the image of the Family of God can also be viewed as a moral community, and the Holy Spirit as an agent of moral formation, which in turn will transform its members; they in turn will transform society. And lastly, I discussed the Holy Spirit as the Spirit that sustains the whole of creation. Based on the same notion, Africans view creation as part of the community; when Africans say “we are” they include nature. (Sindima, 1990) Thinks the notion of being together is intended to emphasize that life is the actuality of living in the present together with people, other creatures, and the earth. In the African perspective, nature is part of human life, and to understand the source of life in all creation one is drawn to the Supreme Being, who is the source of life. This study supported Sakupapa’s view by adopting Tempels’ philosophy of the notion of vital force, which was applied to the presence of the Holy Spirit in all creation. It was argued that if African Christians adopt this notion and integrated it with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it could indeed serve as a possible solution to the ecological crisis confronting African societies. I now turn to explore the cosmic dimension of God’s Spirit, as presented by Moltmann and other contemporary scholars.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
A COSMOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY:
EXPLORING MOLTSMANN'S VIEW OF A HOLISTIC AND BIBLICAL
PNEUMATOLOGY**

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the cosmic dimension of the Holy Spirit and its impact on the universe, as presented by Jürgen Moltmann. The researcher will establish in what way Moltmann's view of pneumatology is holistic, biblical and relevant to the African context. To achieve this, special attention will be given to his writings, particularly *The Spirit of Life, A Universal Affirmation*, as well as some of his other works. The idea is to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology that is biblical and contextually relevant, with the aim of equipping African Christians and the church at large.

Moltmann criticizes the lack of a holistic pneumatology when he asserts that God's Spirit is often bound to the church, its Word and sacraments, its authority, and its institution and ministries, in a way that has impoverished congregations (Moltmann 1992, 2). For him, this is what empties the church of God's Spirit, causing the Spirit to be associated with more spontaneous groups and personal experiences. He boldly states that this pneumatology has domesticated the experience of the Spirit to merely the being-revealed of his revelation in human beings. In Moltmann's understanding, the Holy Spirit is more than merely God's revelation to human beings, and more than simply the finding of faith in the heart through the proclaimed Word. He insists that the Spirit actually causes men and women to experience new life through their fellowship with Christ, meaning that the Holy Spirit is the experiential presence of God, both inwardly and outwardly, in the community of their church, experienced as love poured out in their hearts (Moltmann 1992, 3-4).

Before proceeding, perhaps I need to briefly explain why I have selected the work of Moltmann in this study. In short, in my endeavour to construct a holistic and integrated pneumatology I found his views on pneumatology quite enlightening, particularly the following points:

- The exposition of his pneumatology incorporates all theological aspects and it is referred to as one of those that permeate an overall theology.
- His pneumatology specifically addresses God's creation, and his ideas on the Holy Spirit comes as theological response to the ecological crisis, the negligence of humans in relation to the natural environment, as indicated by Van den Bosch-Heij (2012, 175).
- Moltmann's approach to pneumatology unveils the transcendence and immanence of the Spirit of Life—God's Spirit—in the whole universe as the divine Spirit of life who permeates life in its fullness, not in portions. He presents God's immanent presence as an experiential dimension of everyday life, which we hardly acknowledge as Christians. On the other hand, the immanence of spirits is a reality in most African communities. So his expression of the immanence of God's Spirit correlates closely with the African view of spirits.
- The exposition of his pneumatology closely supports what Vorster thinks is the task of pneumatology, that is, to forge the link between God and reality. In other words, pneumatology must order or create the connecting links of the various experiences of God encountered in one's context (Vorster 1980, 34).

In short, these factors have motivated me to engage Moltmann's work in this study. In what follows, I will explore the experience of God's Spirit and its implication on everyday life. In the next section, I will explore how Moltmann comprehends this idea of the experience of the Holy Spirit.

4.2 The experience of God's Spirit

Moltmann's interpretation of the experience of God's Spirit is more than subjective. It is much deeper than what is usually understood by this concept of experience. Firstly, he expounds the experience of the Spirit as the personal awareness of God in, with, and beneath the experience of life, which assures us of God's fellowship, friendship and love (Moltmann 1992, 17). By seeking to understand this awareness, he tries to connect it with the concept of experience in the dimension where experience is defined as the totality of that which a person encounters in his/her consciousness. "It is the lasting expansions of the consciousness ... not fleeting impressions" (Moltmann 1992, 19). He further asserts that experience is a perception that

touches the person at the center of his/her personhood, constituted by consciousness and reason; this perception then turns into experience. He explains that in the Western view, experience is acquired through reason, or through deliberate intentions. The event we perceive affects us by means of our senses; it affects our bodies, and penetrates the unconscious level of our psyche. For Moltmann, experience is both outward and inward, and there is also a collective experience, which is experienced at the social level. From a religious perspective, experience is described as the trust which people commit themselves to in this life, and their openness to the experiences they encounter. Religious experience according to Moltmann is not some “special enclave” cut off from everyday secular life, “but is something that is present in, with, and beneath all our experiences of things, events, and people”. In other words, religious experience is not to be emphasized on its own but in which all experiences find their echo (Moltmann 1992, 27). He boldly affirms that the dimension of religious experience provides the preconditions for all the various experiences of life, but these are difficult to discern, and can only be perceived through experience. He warns that the Holy Spirit should not only be experienced outwardly in the community of the church, but rather inwardly by means of self-encounter, as the experience of God’s love that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). For this to take place, Moltmann understood the precondition to be the mutual relationship between the Word and Spirit. In other words, we should be cautious when we hear about the experience of the Holy Spirit detached from the Word. God’s Word and his Spirit belong together, and they should always complement each other (Moltmann 1997, 93). Moltmann argues that where the Spirit is, God’s Word speaks to us. So God’s Word and His Spirit go together, we experience them together.

Often people call what they experience of God as the power of God or the Spirit of God. In other words, it is the reality of God himself. For Yahweh’s *ruach* is also described as the confronting event of the efficacious presence of God and not a characteristic of God’s being, but also the mode of his presence in creation and human history as well (Moltmann 1992, 11). However, Moltmann acknowledges that God’s presence might also be comprehended from different perspectives as discussed in chapter one.

Above all, the expression of the experience of God’s Spirit, for Moltmann, is intended to enforce the awareness of God’s presence through his Spirit among his creation. This awareness

is the state of being sensitive to the ever-present Spirit, the divine energy of life, which we need to experience and discern in our daily life and among all his creation. For God's Spirit is not and should not be limited to human subjects' experience of themselves; it can be perceived in all things. It can be experienced in, with, and beneath each and every day experiences of the world, for God is in all things and all things are in God (Moltmann 1992, 34). In other words, Moltmann is saying that we can discover the immanence and transcendence of God in all things through his Spirit. Bruce Milne (1982, 228) puts it this way, "...the heart of experience of Holy Spirit lies in bringing us into a living relationship to Jesus Christ so that we share in his redemption and all its blessings". In this relationship we experience the triune God through the presence of the Holy Spirit in all creation.

However, for Moltmann, the experience of God in all things, through his Spirit has several implications. Firstly, Moltmann thinks experiencing God in all things means we must abandon the narrow reference to the modern concept of self-consciousness, so that we can discover the transcendence and immanence of God's Spirit in every experience. For God's Spirit fills the world and he holds all things together. He calls the Christian understanding of the experience of God as the presence of God the creator in the protean variety of his creation. Moreover, he further suggests that the possibility of perceiving God in all things, and all things in God, should be theologically grounded on the understanding of the Spirit of God as the power of creation and the wellspring of life. So every experience of a creation of the Spirit is also an experience of the Spirit itself. And that every lived moment can be lived in the inconceivable closeness of God in the Spirit (*interior intimo meo*), God is closer than I am to myself (Augustine) (cited by Moltmann 1992, 35).

Secondly, Moltmann suggests that to experience God or his Spirit in all things, we need to carry the experiences of the world into the experience of God. Life should embrace a holistic view in all aspects, and we need to integrate these experiences into God's experiences. Reverence for life should be absorbed into reverence for God, and the veneration of nature becomes part of the adoration of God (Moltmann 1992). Through this, we sense that in everything God is waiting for us, so that we experience his presence in everything. To realize this, Moltmann cautions that unless the perception of elevating the soul above nature and the body, which has caused human beings to exert their power over nature and progressively

destroyed it, is transformed. In my understanding, Moltmann suggests that the anthropocentric pneumatology needs to be reviewed and in its place, he proposes a holistic and integrated pneumatology. It must be holistic in two ways: firstly, we must comprehend human beings in their totality, as soul and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, person and sociality and institutions. On the other hand, it must embrace the wholeness of the community of creation, which is shared by human beings, the earth, and all other created beings and all creatures sustained by the *divine energy of life* (Moltmann 1992, 37). In other words, Moltmann talks about communal life, which embraces all creatures as well as the creation, whose source of living is the divine energy of life, the presence of God through his Spirit. The exposition of such a pneumatology resonates well with the African view of life, which is centered on community, and views life not holistically (not dualistically), as he suggests (see chapter 3).

Moltmann, however, acknowledges that a holistic pneumatology faces several hindrances and therefore may not easily be attained or experienced, unless several areas are attended to. He highlights a number of factors hindering the realization of experiencing God's Spirit in a holistic manner. These are: 1) Failure to discover the cosmic breadth of the divine Spirit not fully experienced. Moltmann attributes this development to both Protestant and Catholic theology and devotion, which he says has the tendency to view the Holy Spirit solely as the Spirit of redemption. Where the Spirit is off from boldly life (everyday life) and from the life of nature, and commonly related to faith matters. It is due to this reductive and domesticated view that the Spirit of God is simply and solely seen as the Spirit of the church and the Spirit of faith (Moltmann 1992, 8). He bemoans this as one of the factors that greatly influences people to turn away from this world and hope for a better world beyond. Also, this view causes people to seek and experience the Spirit of Christ as a power that is different from the divine energy of life, which according to the Old Testament idea is that which interpenetrates all things. 2) Moltmann mentions the continuation of Platonization of Christianity. By Platonization he refers to the type of spirituality commonly found in churches and religious groups, a view that is hostile to the body and remote to the world. This view prefers the inner

experiences of the soul rather than sensory experiences of sociality and nature²². 3) The filioque favoured decisions, which according to Moltmann meant that "...the Holy Spirit has come to be understood as the Spirit of Christ, and not at the same time as the Spirit of the Father. As the Spirit of Christ is the redemptive Spirit. But the work of creation too is ascribed to the Father, so the Spirit of the Father is also the Spirit of creation. Moreover, if redemption is placed in the radical discontinuity to creation, then the Spirit of Christ has no longer anything to do with Yahweh's *ruach*" (Moltmann 1992, 8). He adds, "...according to this notion, which insists that the soul is saved from this vale of tears, and from this frail husk of the body, and is carried up to the heaven of the blessed spirits is gnostic, and not Christian" (Moltmann 1992, 9). Moreover, he insists that if redemption is the resurrection of the body and the new creation of all things, then the redeeming Spirit of Christ cannot be the Spirit other than Yahweh's creative *ruach*. This confirms that the redeeming Spirit of Christ is the same as the creative *ruach*. In addition, since Christ is confessed as the reconciler and head of the whole cosmos (Col 1:16f) the Spirit is present where Christ is present and this Spirit has to be understood as the divine energy of life animating the new creation of all things.

According to Moltmann (1992, 10-11), the other reason for this failure to experience the Holy Spirit in a holistic manner is due to "the unsolved problem of the personhood of the Holy Spirit". He argues that the expression "experience of the Spirit" is largely described by non-personal words such as: the divine energy, wind and fire, inward assurance and mutual love, which he says, compounds the problem. Considering all the theological assertions and interpretations of the personhood of the Holy Spirit in church history, he proposes a solution to this problem. Firstly, he suggests that the understanding of the personhood of the Holy Spirit should rather be comprehended as always being in relational mode, which must be looked for in the trinity itself and not in the Spirit's outward efficacies. For its personhood becomes comprehensible only from that which the Spirit is, in relation to the Father and the Son (Moltmann 1992, 10). Relating this to the concept of experience, he states that it must therefore be open for the transcendent origin of experience. In other words, the experiences of God in all

²² In *The Spirit of Life* Moltmann explains the idea of Platonization in more detail. He refers to it as the view of life that is hostile to this world and comfortable with the inner and spiritual experiences rather than the sensory experiences of sociality and nature (Moltmann 1992, 8-9).

situations were comprehended by Jewish people and referred to as Shekinah²³. In this way, God's presence by it was experienced as God's companionship in suffering, which often led to the assurance of God's nearness.

From the above assertions, it appears that Moltmann thinks that the way to overcome this limited view, which fails to acknowledge the active presence of divine Spirit, is to rediscover and acknowledge the cosmic dimension of God's Spirit. He thinks we can only fully grasp this when we understand the notion of *ruach* in the Hebrew tradition. This notion will help us to know and understand that the Spirit of Christ is the same Spirit of the Father, and both are the Spirit of redemption and creative *ruach*. This Spirit is present everywhere, where Christ is present. Since Christ is the head of the whole universe, the Spirit must therefore be present in the whole universe as the divine energy of life, animating the new creation.

4.3 The Spirit of God: the divine energy of life

The term used to describe the Old Testament perspective of the Spirit is *ruach*, which differs from the Western view. The following concepts, in the Greek (*pneuma*), Latin (*Spiritus*) and German (*Geist*) and English (*ghost*) are conceived as the antithesis of matter and body, and mean something immaterial. From the Greek, Latin, German and English, the term 'Spirit of God,' refers to something disembodied, supersensory and supernatural. This differs greatly from the Hebrew view of Yahweh's *ruach*²⁴, and means God's tempest, a storm, a force in the body and soul, human beings and nature (Moltmann 1992, 40). Moltmann observes that in the Old Testament records the word '*ruach*' is used about 380 times and the phrase '*the ruach Yahweh*' is used in twenty-seven passages. The meaning of the word is so complex that it is difficult to describe using a single, unified concept for what it meant. The word *ruach* was probably originally an onomatopoeic word used for a gale—a strong wind, which divided the red sea at Israel's Exodus from Egypt (Ex 14:21). The word always means something living compared with something dead, something moving over against what is rigid and petrified.

²³ Moltmann, (1992, 10-11) in *The Spirit of Life A Universal Affirmation*, provides a more detailed description of the 'shekinah'.

²⁴ He describes the Hebrew understanding of the concept *ruach*, which is widely defined and not limited to the specific action of God's Spirit (Moltmann 1992, 40-42).

The tempest becomes a parable for the irresistible force of the creator's power [God's killing wrath and life of giving mercy (Ezek 13:13ff; 36:36f)].

Ruach was also seen as the livingness of life in the inhaling and exhaling of air; it was also the breath of life, and the power to live enjoyed by everything that is alive. Moltmann further explains Yahweh's *ruach* as the confronting event of God's efficacious presence reached into the depth of human existence, and it is the divine presence (Ps 139:7, 23f). If *ruach* is the confronting event of God's presence, then we also need to understand the happenings of God's presence as *ruach* (Moltmann 1992, 42). This is to say that in the creative power of life, God is present. Every efficacious presence of God is determined by the *ruach* and Calvin says this has to be interpreted pneumatologically. He continues saying that this creative power of God is communicated to the beings he has created in such a way that when talking about *ruach*, we are talking about the energy of their life too. This "*ruach* of Yahweh is transcendent in origin, but it is equally true to say that as the power of life in all the living it is immanently efficacious". Thus, the creative power of God is the transcendent side of the *ruach*, while the power to live and enjoy everything that is alive is its immanent side. In other words, *ruach* means God whom is in all things and all things are in God—although this does not mean making God the same as everything else (Moltmann 1992, 42). Also, *ruach* is seen in close association with Yahweh's *dabar*—his Word. *Ruach* is thought of as the breath of God's voice. In the early period of the prophets, they owed their calling to Yahweh's *ruach*, while in the latter period; they were generally called by Yahweh's *dabar*. Moltmann says that if this unity of breath and voice is carried over to God's creative activity, then all the things are called to life through God's Spirit and his Word (Psalm 33:6).

Heron defined *ruach* in a similar way to Moltmann. Although he defined *ruach* from its root, which means "the movement of air," including wind, breath and life. As wind, it commonly refers to the strong wind of a storm, or a raging blast from the desert (Ex 14:21). This driving wind, however, is not immediately identified with the *ruach* of God, but its elemental power made it a powerful image of divine strength (Heron 1981, 4). Heron expounds *ruach* further by stating that the Old Testament people understood God's *ruach* as a surging energy from the Lord of hosts, a terrible force of his invincible judgment. According to Heron, *ruach* conveyed a sense of the devastating impact of God on men and on their world as expressed in Isa 31:3.

Heron acknowledges that *ruach* is largely expressed as an impersonal concept, mainly related to natural or supernatural strength, force, power and energy (Heron 1981, 4)²⁵. When applied to God, *ruach* is used to speak of God as being present and active in the world, and in particular, among human beings. The Old Testament employed a series of terms to express God's active presence, such as the arm, hand or finger, or his face (usually translated as his presence). Heron adds that all these images are more or less pictorial and anthropomorphic; they use analogies drawn from human experience to describe God in action. The *ruach* of Yahweh is not detached as it were from Yahweh himself. It is his living impact here and now (Heron 1981, 8). *Ruach* speaks of the act of God reaching from his remoteness without ceasing to be himself. God's *ruach* can be directly and immediately present in a particular place though not contained in it or limited by it (2 Chron 6:8). Heron continues to say that God's *ruach* is God's activity in relation to the world and to man. Heron refers to this as God's transcendence, which is balanced and implemented by his immanence; it his universal presence in everything (Heron 1981, 9). He gives a classic example of understanding *ruach* as the divine presence in Psalm 139:7-10: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depth, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast".

Kärkkäinen's understanding of *ruach* is similar to that of Moltmann and Heron. For him, the idea behind *ruach* is the extraordinary fact that air should move. Thus, it basically means blowing air. Both terms in the Bible, the Old Testament's *ruach* and the New Testament's *pneuma* carry the same ambiguity of multiple meanings—breath, air, wind and soul (Kärkkäinen 2004, 25). He mentions three major uses for the term *ruach*: 1) wind or breath of air; 2) the principle of life, in other words, the force that vivifies human beings; and 3) the life of God himself, both at the physical and spiritual level (Kärkkäinen 2002, 26). He however, cautions that the *ruach* (breath) of the Old Testament is not disincarnate; it is rather what animates the body²⁶.

²⁵ Cf. Alasdair I.C. Heron (1981, 4) for a more detailed explanation of the concept of '*ruach*'.

²⁶ Kärkkäinen (2002, 26) explains in detail how '*ruach*' is viewed as the principle of life or the force that vivifies human beings; the life of God himself, both at the physical and spiritual level.... and it is disincarnate rather than what animates the body.

Kärkkäinen (2002, 26) insists that "...the life-giving Spirit is the only proper source of life and strength". *Ruach* also denotes the life force of individuals (Judg 15:19) and the group (community) (Num 16:22). This life force is not available through any other source but God (Ps 33:6) and the Messiah (Isa 11:4). Above all, God is the only one who gives the life force (Isa 42:5), and he protects it (Ps 131:5). To Kärkkäinen, it is characteristic of the Old Testament's pneumatology, where *ruach* is common to both humans and animals. *Ruach* is not a specifically human endowment; it denotes God as the source of life for both. Related to this concept in the Old Testament is the Spirit's cosmic function that goes far beyond the human sphere of life (Kärkkäinen 2002, 27). Fahrenholz (1995, 27) notes that the Old Testament's emphasizes on the Spirit of God as the principle of life, the inexhaustible power that bestows breath and order, as well as energy and love of life on all things. It is the divine power that maintains creation.

The above picture gives us the impression that Yahweh's *ruach* is a much broader concept, and is comprehended openly and differently. However, there are common threads among the scholars in understanding the term, *ruach*. Firstly, the three scholars mentioned above agree that *ruach* is the creative power of life, the energy of life (Moltmann 1992, 42), supernatural strength, force, and power. Heron (1981, 9) sees *ruach* as God's activity in relation to the world and man; and Kärkkäinen (2002, 27) sees *ruach* as the source of life for humans and creatures, the cosmic function that goes beyond the human sphere of life. This picture provides some guidelines when seeking to construct a holistic and biblical pneumatology: It is holistic, for God's Spirit is comprehended as being present and active in the lives of both humans and creatures. The Spirit's presence is not limited by space. It is biblical, in that the claim is based on concrete canonical evidence, and therefore, has a biblical basis.

However, it is one thing to know and acknowledge a holistic pneumatology and another to live by it on a daily basis. Wallace, in his book *The fragments of the Spirit* (1996), says something needs to be prepared if we are to live and experience a holistic pneumatology. He identifies one of the common problems hindering the realization of a holistic pneumatology as the resistance to cross borders; these are culturally sanctioned whims. He boldly claims that those under the influence of God's Spirit need to take a risk and cross such borders in order to

engender in the other, including the non-human other, which is the realization of everyone's potential (Wallace 1996, 220). He mentions the human distinction as one such boundary; the other he says is central to the Western and theological worldview. He argues that this culturally constructed distinction has long served the interests of Western societies and economies in their efforts to maintain dominance over nonhuman life forms (Wallace 1996, 220). He reiterates that Christianity is partly responsible for the ideological maintenance of this partition between human kind and the other nonhumans. The Western Christian tradition is partly blamed due to the influence of the Enlightenment. Wallace thinks that normative Christian thought has positioned human beings as lord over God's creation, on the basis that we are God's chosen wardens and stewards of the created order. "This seemingly benign understanding of the human–nonhuman relationship betrays, however, a residual commitment to a monarchical and feudal notion of a great Chain of Being in which human beings function as the hierarchs over a natural world that is at their disposal". He appeals, "At the behest of the Spirit it is time for a reversal of this convenient hierarchy: rather than placing nature at our disposal, it is now the natural world itself, in all its power and poverty, its grandeur and fragility, that disposes us to interact with it as equal co-partners. The Spirit is calling us to become friends of the earth rather than stewards of its resources" (Wallace 1996, 220).

For Wallace, a theological basis of what he calls a green ethic of equality and friendship with the earth begins with a re-visioning of the Spirit as a *life form* who indwells and sustains all things. This view agrees with that of other scholars mentioned in this study. The call to shift or re-visit the Western Christian tradition, specifically the doctrine of Holy Spirit, is called upon for historically, the Spirit has been understood either theocentrically, as the principle of unity in the triune Godhead, or anthropocentrically, as the power of regeneration and sanctification in the human person (Wallace 1996, 220)²⁷. In line with Moltmann's view, and in the light of the environmental crisis, Wallace proposes a shift in emphasis towards a biocentric redefinition of the Spirit as God's agent of interdependence and unity within all creation. Wallace thinks this biocentric focus is a powerful resource for addressing the current crisis. He highlights two focal historical aspects of Christian thought about the Spirit. First, he thinks that the biocentric

²⁷ Mark Wallace (1996, 220-221) suggests the need to adopt a new approach, which he calls biocentric, moving away from the Western Christian tradition, an approach referred to as theocentric.

approach will retrieve the scriptural tropology of the Spirit that is based on nature imagery. In the Bible, the Spirit is alternately figured as a vivifying breath, healing wind, living water, and ministering dove. He states that all these images underscore the Spirit's reality as a living being, a life form, which breathes the breath of life into all living beings and sustains them through the ministry of healing, refreshing and reconciling love (Wallace 1996, 221). Secondly, "The biocentric approach recovers the classical idea of the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis*, the power of perichoretic union between Father and Son, as the basis for the more expansive notion of the Spirit as the biotic enactment of the unity and kinship that characterize the relations between all members of the ecosystemic whole". In addition, he echoes the similar view that the Spirit is a bond of love not only within the intra-Trinitarian life of God but also within the whole biosphere. The Spirit is the *vinculum caritatis* who indwells and sustains both the "inner economy" of divine trinity and the "outer economy" of all life in the cosmos (Wallace 1996, 221). To Wallace, these two pneumatological traditions within the history of Western religious thought—the Spirit as the biblical agent of life and renewal, on the one hand, and the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis* within the Godhead and creation, on the other hand, provides a solid foundation and a constructive ally in the struggle for ecological justice and renewal. From the explanation above, I have established that *ruach* is the all-encompassing presence of God's Spirit, the principle of life, the inexhaustible power, energy and love, which bestows the breath of life on all things. It is the life of God's divine presence. I will now discuss how the life-giving energy influences daily living through fellowshiping with us.

Based on the above understanding of God's Spirit as *ruach*, one traces some merging points to the African notion of the vital force of life, as discovered by Tempels (1959). It relates well with the African worldview, whereby creation is both divine and secular, and one cannot separate the two because the universe is permeated by spiritual powers. The African worldview insists that the spirits permeate all things and these spirits influence all things and are present in all things. As Moltmann explains, the divine Spirit, the creative Spirit, the energy of life, and the life-giving Spirit of God are but the same. Therefore, the experience of the life-giving Spirit in the faith of the heart, should in this case lead beyond the limits of the church to the rediscovery of the same Spirit in nature—plants, animals, and ecosystems of the earth (Moltmann 1992, 10).

Apart from complementing the African worldview, it also supports a holistic and integrated pneumatology, where the Spirit's presence in the life of all creatures is also emphasized. For Moltmann, the experience of God's Spirit in our hearts should through faith open the door to the spiritual awareness of God's presence in all his creation. Moreover, the experience of God's Spirit should extend beyond Christianity to a greater fellowship with all God's creatures. According to Moltmann (1992, 10), "The community of creation, in which all created things exist with one another, for one another and in one another, is also the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." Moltmann (1997, 58) insists, "If a person is seized by the Spirit, the whole of personal life becomes a charismatic experience". "Life in this Spirit lays hold of the whole of life as it is lived, making it living from within outwards, and configuring it". No sector is excluded, for it would deny Christ and quench the Spirit. He argues that if we are to eliminate the natural, social, political and physical life in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and only seek higher spiritual experiences, we will deny God, Christ and his Spirit (Moltmann 1997, 58). For the Spirit's presence is everywhere in the world and to creation as the principle of all life, or to the Spirit's activity in society, history, culture and religions (Welker 2006, 64).

This expression can also be aligned with John Mbiti's understanding of African communal life, as expressed in his cardinal statement "I am because we are, we are because I am". The "we" includes all created things that exist with one another, for one another. This also includes the fellowship of the Spirit of life, the divine energy of life, the vital force of all things. Moltmann insists that the discovery of the cosmic breadth of God's Spirit should lead to respect for the dignity of all created things, in which God is present through his Spirit (Moltmann 1992, 10). I will now explore the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the implication of such on daily life.

4.4 The fellowship of the Holy Spirit

"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" is part of an ancient Christian benediction (2 Cor 13:13). Moltmann expounds why the special gift of the Spirit seems to be its fellowship (*koinonia*), whereas grace is ascribed to Christ, and love to the Father. He explains that evidently, the Holy Spirit gives himself and enters into a fellowship with believers, and draws them into a fellowship with him. In addition, he says, the inner being of the Holy Spirit is capable of fellowship with the community and sociality. For Moltmann, the word fellowship

indicates that it is something that does not require force and possession, but something that liberates, and draws one into a relationship. “Fellowship means opening ourselves for one another, giving one another a share in ourselves”. It also creates respect for one another. Fellowship entails reciprocal participation and mutual recognition (Moltmann 1992, 217). For Moltmann, fellowship can exist between people who are alike or similar but also between those who are not alike and quite dissimilar. He says, in this case, human fellowship with God is the formula for a community of those who are unlike and dissimilar. Thus, the fellowship must have something in common and must be able to mutually share in each other for meaningful fellowship to take place. So, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit evidently enters into a relationship of reciprocity and mutuality with those concerned.

In addition, in line with this, it allows them to exert an influence on him, just as he in turn, exerts an influence on them (Moltmann 1992, 218). This fellowship of the Holy Spirit, he says, must be understood from a trinitarian perspective (and not Unitarian). This is because the Holy Spirit issues from his fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the fellowship into which he enters with believers corresponds with this trinitarian fellowship²⁸. Furthermore, the fellowship of Holy Spirit goes beyond a trinitarian fellowship for it is described as the link between the Holy Spirit and the community experienced by human beings and other creatures. In other words, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is another way of describing the life-giving Spirit. In fellowship with himself and through his creative energies, God the Spirit creates a network of social relationships in which life comes into being, blossoms, and becomes fruitful (Moltmann 1992, 219). In this way, Moltmann describes the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as an exhibition of God’s transcendence and immanence. In other words, the trinitarian fellowship displays God’s transcendence, while fellowship with other creatures reveals the immanency of God’s Spirit. So then, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the activity of the Spirit that confers fellowship or community. In addition, “life comes into being out of community, and wherever communities spring up which makes life possible or further it, the divine Spirit of God is efficacious” He further observes “Wherever community of life comes into being, there is also the community with God’s life-giving Spirit” (Moltmann 1992, 219). Moltmann (1992, 219) understands, it is God’s purpose that “all created beings exist in other beings, not out of

²⁸ Moltmann (1992, 218-220) discusses this idea in more detail.

themselves”. They live together, are alive for one another, and exist for one another. In other words, ‘Bios’ (life) “is always symbiosis”.

From this, I agree with Moltmann’s view, that the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is also the fellowship of the life-giving Spirit. It is present in a community that serves life, and can only be understood as integrating and as a creating unity in diversity. In other words, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit one encounters or experiences God individually, but also socially in one’s encounter with others (Moltmann 1992, 220). He adds that through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the experience of God has to reach beyond the experience of self and the experience of sociality, and become an experience of nature too, for the Spirit is the creator of all things. In other words, here Moltmann is emphasizing the need to intentionally cross the boundary where the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is mainly limited to the Trinity and human beings. For the fellowship of the Holy Spirit should not, in this case, be confined to human persons, communities, or the church only, but must also keep in mind the communities found in nature. He asserts that all human communities are embedded in natural ecosystems, and we live by exchanging energy with them (Moltmann 1992, 225). Above all, by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we mean the cosmic Spirit, the life in everything that lives. In Chinese they call it *chi*, in Greek *eros*, in Hebrew *ruach*—the Spirit of the universe (Moltmann 1992, 227).

From the framework described above, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit should be understood as being in close communion with the divine energy and source of life for all beings. In fellowship with the Holy Spirit one should know that it is being in close contact with the same cosmic and empowering energy and the creator Spirit. This implies that the Spirit cannot be limited in its operation, and therefore, we ought to open ourselves to the Spirit’s unlimited presence. Green (1975, 23) echoes the same thoughts when saying: “God’s Spirit can break into human life, and sometimes he does it through the violent, the unexpected, alien and in ordinary ways”. I will now explore the impact of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit on the daily life of believers.

4:5 The fellowship of the Holy Spirit: Implications for everyday life

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is a living communion with the life-giving Spirit; it has implications for our daily lives. It is not a theoretical and abstract expression, it is experiential. With this I am referring to the awareness of the Holy Spirit experienced by Christians and the world. This close connection between the triune God and the community of believers, the church, should not, however, be so ecclesiocentric that it is blind to either the whole life natural order or everyday life. In this sense, the concern is not merely the church, which is the community of Christ, but becomes the place of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the fellowship creates an atmosphere where the believers are empowered and endowed with the Holy Spirit and varied grace in preparation to go out into the world. Moltmann says we are to ask about Christian experiences in natural communities— in homes, family, work and civic life (thus, its impact in the world).

What impact does the Christian experience of being in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit have on daily life, the community, and voluntary groups concerned with people brought together by the world's problems and development—peace, the environment third world groups, and other initiatives? For the fellowship of the Holy Spirit brings new life. In other words, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit endows the community of believers to manifest God's nature (character) once they are sent from the congregation into society, going beyond the confines of the church, for the Holy Spirit is God himself in person, no less than God the Father and the Son. The life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit should be experienced just as intensely in the homes to which people return when they leave church as in the church, when the Spirit is invoked and expected in these homes. The sending out, according to Moltmann (1992, 235), acquires its concrete form from the needs and distress of the world, which is threatened by injustice, violence and ecological annihilation. Kärkkäinen (2002, 71) echoes a similar sentiment when he says, "The church as the fellowship of persons empowered by the Holy Spirit is not a communion for its own sake". He adds, it must be open to the world, thus living in *koinonia* makes it possible for the church to become a servant, gift, and sign to the world. That is why, according to the Nicene Creed, in the community of believers, the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son is worshiped. However, this worship should lead to the transformation of lives from within, and in turn, influence the world without. Moltmann further suggests that the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is open to all believers, based on the biblical promise, which tells us "the Spirit is poured upon all flesh" (Joel 3:28), to make eternally living. In addition, there are gifts given to

believers for the tasks given to them in their everyday life. Above all, the Holy Spirit is available to guide, empower, motivate and inspire believers to live for God in the world. Referring to Paul in Rom 12:3, who describes these gifts (endowments) as the everyday charismata of the life lived in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (Moltmann 1997, –58). Moreover, Moltmann understands that the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is what calls us to the faith, and the charismatic endowment of life into this world, so that the world is pervaded by the energy of the divine Spirit. These believers, the community of Christ, endowed with the Holy Spirit, is a community of free and equal people (Gal. 3:28), who in the charismatic diversity of their gifts and vocations, live with one another, and for one another, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit together serve the kingdom of God in the world (Moltmann 1997, 69). He also mentions the Christian community's closeness to action and self-help groups as one way the Christian church proves it is Christian. Moltmann thinks that when the Christian church creates free spaces for action groups and self-help groups on both sides, and brings them together for discussion, people learn to live together with "the other". The closeness of these groups to the Christian community is found in Jesus himself, "in the way he encountered the "lepers", in the trust with which the humiliated and insulted approached him, and in the healing which came about in his vicinity" (Moltmann 1992, 245). On other hand, Moltmann argues that the moral notion of church traditions, with which society's religion has always operated, causes self-help groups from Christian congregations to become remote. He, in this instance, challenges that the more Christian congregations are pervaded by the Spirit of Jesus, the closer it will be to the people in action groups and self-help groups, and the further it will distance itself from the moral notions dominating the religion of the society in which it live (Moltmann 1992, 245).

Since the Spirit is understood as the principal force of life and to every Christian, the empowering energy available to impact their community in everyday vocations, not limited to the fellowship of believers. This then calls for the awareness of God's Spirit in every activity. As Moltmann attested, "All divine activities are pneumatic in their efficacy, so that every created thing, everything that exists and lives in the unceasing flow of the energies and potentialities of the cosmic Spirit" (Moltmann 1985, 9). Therefore, what can we say in this matter regarding the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and its impact on the daily life of Christians? Following Moltmann's understanding, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit has a divine impact on

the everyday life of the Christian community. Christians are endowed with diverse gifts, not to live for themselves, but to live for another, and to serve one other in their homes and at their various places of work/vocations. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian community to be open and closer to different groups in society, i.e. self-help, voluntary and green movement groups, coming together for various reasons including poverty, political and ecological crises. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian community to become aware of the Spirit's working in ordinary ways outside the church. For the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of communion (2 Cor. 12:13), establishing the close connection between the triune God and the (Christian community) church. And this does not, however, "lead to a kind of 'ecclesiocentrism' that is blind to either the Spirit's presence everywhere in the world and in creation as the principle of all life or to the Spirit's activity in society and history, peoples, cultures, and religions" (Welker 2006, 64). The fellowship of the Holy Spirit should in this case help us become sensitive to the whole scope of his activity and to be engaged in the world, for he wants us as a community of believers, to promise the world a new style of co-existence, because we are in co-existence with him (Vorster 1980, 54). For through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, believers are sent into society as a whole. In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, God is felt as a "primal and all-embracing presence," and God is no longer an aloof counterpart in heaven (transcendent) (Moltmann 1997, 69). "In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we perceive a much more intimate and mutual relationship than the relation creator and creature, more intimate even than the relation between a father, mother, and child. It is the intimate fellowship of mutual in dwelling: God is in us in a divine way, and we are in him in a human way (1 John 4:16)" (Moltmann 1997, 69). This mutual fellowship according to Moltmann is for us an inexhaustible wellspring of strength. The question we may consider from an African perspective regarding the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is: "Does this fellowship of the Holy Spirit include the community of the dead?" This will be the discussion of the next section.

4.6 The community of the living and the dead

Moltmann brings the sentiment of the community of Christ (body of Christ) beyond the usual understanding of the communion of the fellowship of the living, to include the dead as well. "It is not just a community of mothers and daughters, and of Fathers and sons," referring to Romans 14:9, where Paul writes: "For to this end Christ died and lived again that he might be

the Lord both of the dead and the living” (Moltmann 2004, 135). He argues that His Sovereignty over the dead is not yet the resurrection of the dead but is only yet their reception into the community of Christ. When Christ descended into hell (the realm of the dead), as the creed puts it, Christ broke the powers of death and took the dead into his fellowship. Therefore, to Moltmann, the community of Christ is a community of the living with the dead and of the dead with the living. For in the risen Christ, the wall of death has been broken down and in this community with Christ the dead are not dead in the modern sense; they have a presence (Moltmann 2004, 135).

Nürnberg, discussing the same issue, wonders if the dead in this regard include the “ancestors” belonging to the communion of the saints (Nürnberg 2007, 83-89). Different from the above view, Moltmann (2004, 135) boldly asserts that “...the communion of saints includes the dead, for Christ is the Lord of both the living and the dead”. However, Nürnberg differs from him by referring to Paul when he speaks of the community of believers as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12-14 and Roman 12). The members of this body are empowered by a variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit to serve one another, build up the community, and witness to the world (Nürnberg 2007, 86). Referring to Philippians 1:21-24, Nürnberg thinks the death of Paul would mean, he is no longer present with them but will be with Christ. However, for the congregation in Philippi it would be better if he remained in the flesh because then he could still serve Christ and serve them. Nürnberg thinks the implication of this is that Paul would be of no further use to them if he were dead. If Paul thought he would become a mediator for his congregations or serve them in any way after death, he would have said that it was better for them if he departed than if he stayed. Nürnberg concludes that there is no mediating role of the deceased in the theology of Paul. Even in the eschatological passage of Rev 7:1-17, Nürnberg sees no mention of the presence of the deceased in this world, or of continuing fellowship between the deceased and the living, or of their possible functions as mediators (Nürnberg 2007, 87). He continued to emphasize the point where he referred to Hebrews 12:1-2, which mentions the cloud of witnesses. He insists the text does not in any way suggest the following: that deceased believers are now alive and present, and can communicate with the living; that we can appeal to them for help or guidance; and that they can mediate between the living and the living God. He concludes that ancestors have no place and function as per the New Testament; therefore, they are excluded from the communion of believers.

The two opposing views both sound convincing, biblically and theologically, however, to an African Christian, it may cause a certain dilemma. I will therefore engage in a discussion in agreement with both, based on the following: Firstly, agreeing with the idea that the communion or fellowship of believers, the body of Christ, includes the dead. Following Moltmann's expression, when Christ rose from the dead, he destroyed the powers of death and he was exalted above all powers and principalities, he is the Lord of the dead and the living (Rom 14:9). The dead are no longer dead under his Lordship. Theologically, both the living and the dead are the community under his Lordship. However, the dead may not mean the dead in the African sense where the dead are regarded as living-dead, meaning they are still considered part of the living community. Here, Nürnberger may be right in saying that the ancestors in no way mediate or intercede for the living, thus, the biblical view. But in regard to Christ's Lordship, they all belong to a community under his Lordship, whether dead or living.

This means that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the community of the dead and the living, but we, the living, have no direct link with the dead, only Christ's power which is not limited by space. Christ is present among the living through his Spirit, he dwells within us and this communion with him does not extend our influence to the dead or the dead to us, the living. However, for an African, life is understood as a whole, even death cannot destroy it. The solidarity between the living and the dead is possible because of the belief in the active presence of the creator of life, from whose presence both the living and the dead cannot escape (Parrot 1987, 96). It might not be an easy task to change to core of this deep-seated worldview, but the message is that they should believe and accept the transformative gospel of our Lord and seek to relate with Christ alone who is present through his Spirit. Christ's Spirit interpenetrates all things so that by communion with him one experiences his Spirit; but is limited to relating with the living only, and not the dead. Therefore, I need not fear the spirits in the name of the dead, for Christ has overcome all powers and principalities. Theologically, looking at this from a Christian perspective, the communion of saints includes the living and the dead under the Lordship of Christ, as the communion is limited between them. However, from an African perspective, this may have a different meaning for death cannot limit the communion. So, the communion of saints here includes the dead but not in the sense of the African perspective. In other words, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit encompasses the whole scope of life's activities. For the Spirit

of God is not limited to a particular sphere of life, but the whole creation. This study therefore calls for a pneumatology that embraces the whole reality. In this regard, a holistic pneumatology takes Christ's presence through his Spirit seriously in all circumstances. In the next section, I will discuss Moltmann's understanding of a holistic pneumatology.

4.7 Tracing the contours of a holistic pneumatology

In a way, to answer one of the key questions of this study: "Is Moltmann's views on pneumatology useful for everyday life in an African context?" In response to this question, I will follow Moltmann's exposition of his pneumatology in an effort to identify the contours of a holistic pneumatology, a pneumatology relevant to everyday life in the African context.

Firstly, Moltmann has consistently called for the development of a holistic pneumatology for the church to experience the realities of the Holy Spirit and the gospel to have an impact on the world (Moltmann 1992, 38). In his understanding, one such feature of identifying a holistic pneumatology is when one is able to acknowledge and practically be open to God's active, creative and interfering presence in the whole of society and the world. By embracing the realities of the Holy Spirit around us, we are able to deduce and discern that the Holy Spirit is the source of life, the origin of a torrent of energy in everything. To experience this, Moltmann thinks there is the need to rebel against the traditional Western pneumatology, which is ecclesiocentrically bound, and move to a more open view of God's Spirit. This open view, Moltmann thinks, can be attained by embracing the Hebrew notion of God's Spirit, the *ruach*, as the primal vital force, the divine energy of life, the Spirit that vivifies all creation and is not limited by space, and is always present among God's creation. This idea agrees with Calvin's pneumatology, as referred to by Van den Bosch-Heij; the Holy Spirit is seen as the sustainer of life, God works through his Spirit who also works through people (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012).

Secondly, Moltmann thinks a holistic pneumatology can be identified when we acknowledge a pneumatology that is open and contextually sensitive to the presence and activities of the Holy Spirit in the community. A holistic pneumatology acknowledges the Holy Spirit as a communal Spirit, and a bond that unites communal relationships. Flowing from the triune

model, God's Spirit brings human beings and other creatures into a communal life based on a mutual relationship. Moltmann explains, fellowship with the Holy Spirit enables the community of the body of Christ to become sensitive to the active presence of the Spirit in life, even among non-human creatures and creation. In other words, a holistic pneumatology is one that integrates relevant concepts from one's context.

Thirdly, a holistic pneumatology acknowledges the experience and fellowship of the Holy Spirit with individuals and the community. It empowers the community to go out into society and have a significant impact, even on secular structures. It recognizes that the Holy Spirit is active and present among the people, to empower them in their daily vocation, whether spiritual or secular. It encourages a respect for the creation, for we share a common source of life, the divine energy, the principle of life. This will help in changing the destructive attitude towards nature and the rest of creation, to address the issue of environmental degradation.

Fourthly, this pneumatology calls for a sensitive awareness of God's Spirit, even in ordinary activities of the Spirit, and moves away from an obsession of extraordinary activities confined to the church. The work of the Spirit has a real effect on the daily life of believers. The effect is directly related to God's salvation that can be experienced in the present. Moreover, a holistic pneumatology acknowledges that the Spirit is the one who fills the present with divine power and reveals God's salvation in everyday life; amidst sin and destruction, salvation is already present and effective (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 185).

Fifth, a holistic pneumatology is also understood as being sensitive to context and encounter (Welker 2006, 67). This takes into account that the Holy Spirit is not a power that acts and operates in each and every context in the same way, and that all associations of uniformity and homogeneity must be balanced by the statements that speak of diversity. The Spirit's presence and ministry, therefore, are both sensitive to context and encounter.

Lastly, a holistic pneumatology embraces the reality of God's presence in all things, and also rises above the traditional Western view that the Holy Spirit is restricted and confined to church structures and to faith related activities. This study believes that Moltmann's view of a holistic

and biblical pneumatology is relevant to the African context, and applicable to their daily life, based on the following considerations:

- Moltmann insists that his pneumatology is practical and open to God's active and interfering presence in the whole of society and the world; this resonates well with the African spirituality, which acknowledges that the universe is active with spiritual powers directly interfering in human affairs all the time. The notion of the active presence of God's Spirit and spiritual beings is the focal point that demands theologizing the notion of spirits from an African perspective and embrace the reality of the Holy Spirit as is biblically presented. This of course demands the dislodging and replacement of deep-seated underlying traditional beliefs, to allow for the Lordship of Jesus Christ who is actively present through the Holy Spirit.
- The holistic expression of Moltmann's pneumatology draws very close to the African view of life, for he emphasizes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the community, a bond that unites communal relationships. Taking its model from the triune God, it includes a community of human beings such as the church and a community with other creatures as well. The central role of God's Spirit in the community fits well with the African view of life. For Life in the African view is a community, a community that extends to all living creatures, nature, and the dead. In African communities, spirits are the bond or force that unites these communities (see chapter 3).

Based on these considerations, Moltmann's pneumatology is contextually relevant for African Christians and is universally applicable. However, Moltmann is aware that such as task faces several challenges. Next, I will consider some of these challenges.

4.8 The challenge of a holistic and integrated pneumatology in the Western context

While Moltmann has a positive view of a holistic pneumatology, he acknowledges the challenges to embrace and live by it. Some of the challenges he includes are the following: (1) Traditional Western pneumatology has over the centuries confined the Holy Spirit to ecclesiocentric activities (Moltmann 1992, 8). To overcome this, Moltmann suggests a radical or drastic change so as to fully embrace and experience a holistic pneumatology. (2) The fact that traditional Western theology developed under the context of a dualistic worldview, where

the spiritual is divorced from the secular, it requires revisiting the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be more open, whole, and communal based, where the Spirit is always present and active, as the source of life for all creation including humanity, nature and the world; we are a community. (3) Over the centuries, traditional Western theology sanctioned a boundary over the work of the Holy Spirit confining it to church related activities. It is imperative, therefore, to break away from these boundaries and reach new frontiers, where we become sensitive to the context and aware of the Spirit's activities in all creation. (4) Traditional Western theology has unconsciously attributed the hidden quality to the work of the Paraclete. The first two persons of the trinity are conventionally represented by the kingly figure of the Father, and the crucified figure of the Son; but the third person is usually only portrayed by the modest figure of a descending dove (Welker 2006, 170). "Taking seriously this veiled presence of the Holy Spirit, expressed in the hidden character of pneumatological action, by no means implies a denial of more manifest activity also" (Welker 2006, 170). Yet, a holistic and balanced pneumatology needs to take into account both modes of working (Welker 2006, 171). Lastly, the continual denial of the active presence of other spirits apart from the Holy Spirit is a common tendency, as many Western theologians ignore the existence of other spirits.

Kärkkäinen has identified this as a challenge even in Moltmann's (1992) work, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. Kärkkäinen says he is silent about other spirits, whether evil spirits, demons, or even angels. He reckons this is a serious challenge for a holistic pneumatology (Kärkkäinen 2014, 1-9). In short, I have discussed some of the common challenges towards realizing a holistic pneumatology in the Western context, as noted by Moltmann and other scholars. These challenges are summed up as follows:

- Ecclesiocentric pneumatology
- Dualistic worldview and mechanic worldview
- Traditional theology emphasizing the hidden quality of the Paraclete.
- Denying the existence of other spirits

The question here is, "How can such a reductive view of pneumatology be changed to a holistic pneumatology?"

4.9 Towards a possible holistic pneumatology: Moltmann's approach

To first step to move beyond such a reductive pneumatology, is to move away from traditional doctrinal borders of Western traditional pneumatology, as this has often confined the Holy Spirit to ecclesiastical settings. It is proposed that one adopt a more open understanding of the creative Spirit, who is actively present and working in, with, and through us, in all aspects of our lives as well as in creation. Secondly, the transcendence and immanence of God's Spirit needs to be grasped. It is assumed that by the continual inflow of the divine Spirit created things are formed; they exist in and are renewed by the Spirit (Moltmann 1985, 10). From this, Moltmann thinks the Spirit is poured out, to, and on everything that exists, and that the Spirit preserves it, gives it life, and renews it. Based on this understanding and the Hebrew perspective, the Spirit of God is the giver of life, as Calvin calls it, the fountain of life. So if the Holy Spirit is poured out on all created beings (cosmos) then the fountain of life is present in everything that exists and is alive, so everything that is and lives manifests the presence of this divine wellspring (Moltmann 1985, 11). In other words, God's Spirit acts in and penetrates the world without himself becoming emerged in it. The cosmic Spirit remains God's spirit, and becomes our Spirit since he acts in us as the power that makes us live, says Moltmann. The centre of this thought is the recognition of God's presence in the world and the presence of the world in God (Moltmann 1985, 13). From this we get the truth of God's imminence in the world, in that, through his cosmic Spirit, God the creator of heaven and earth is present in all of his creation and that through the fellowship shared among all his creatures.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed Moltmann's understanding of a holistic pneumatology, reflecting on insights from other scholars as well, i.e. Kärkkäinen and Wallace. Moreover, I explored the concept of 'the experience of God's Spirit'. In the chapter I also reflected on Moltmann's understanding of the idea of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as another way of describing the life-giving Spirit. In fellowship with himself and through his creative energies, God the Spirit creates the network of social relationships in which life comes into being, blossoms, and becomes fruitful. In this way, Moltmann describes the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as an exhibition of God's transcendence and immanence. Also, in this chapter, I

identified some factors that Moltmann thinks hinder the realization of a holistic pneumatology. A number of challenges were mentioned, including: Ecclesiocentric pneumatology; dualistic and mechanistic worldview; traditional Western theology that commonly emphasizes the hidden quality of the Holy Spirit. This chapter sought to identify possible characteristics of a holistic pneumatology, in a bid to break the religious walls constructed by tradition, domesticating the Holy Spirit to church related activities. The aim was to move towards more open, holistic and integrated pneumatology, which is the path to the Spirit's rediscovery of God's immanence and active presence among all of creation. Lastly, the question that still needs to be answered here is: "How can everything that has been discussed in this chapter be articulated into the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so that it is relevant in the African context and meets their deepest needs in a meaningful way?"

CHAPTER FIVE: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED PNEUMATOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to bring the traditional Chewa view of spirits into dialogue with the Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in search of a functional relationship. This will entail theologizing traditional concepts from an African perspective. Furthermore, the ensuing conversation seeks to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology that incorporates the traditional concepts of ‘birth’ and ‘initiation,’ that is culturally practiced among the Chewa people; it also includes the African understanding of the concept ‘community’. The aim of this chapter is by the end to foster a more realistic pneumatology that is appropriate as well as biblically relevant for local Chewa Christians.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: Firstly, I will briefly provide a historical overview of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as presented within traditional Western theological discourse. The purpose is to establish possible gaps that requires renewed theological engagement. This will be followed by a discussion of the traditional concepts referred to above, with the hope of finding a common basis for a holistic and integrated pneumatology. Due to the limited scope of this study, it is noteworthy to mention here that this thesis will not provide an extensive historical analysis of the Western traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However, in line with this study, the researcher will seek to find influential historical beacons that have stood out over the centuries.

5.2 Historical background of the reductive pneumatology of the Western tradition

One cannot fully discuss a Western pneumatology without mentioning the contribution made by the early Church Fathers (in the patristic era). Obviously, Western pneumatology is greatly indebted to the Church Fathers, the Reformers, as well as other scholars from the 18th century, and a significant few others from the modern era. I will therefore, in this section, identify the matrix of Western pneumatology and enter into a conversation with the local Chewa people’s belief in spirits, with the aim of articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology.

The early church faced a diversity of views regarding the Holy Spirit, for instance, the Triune God. The Holy Spirit was traditionally recognized as “the inner love of the Trinity, inner animating principle of the church, and the source of the inner life of the soul” (Heron 1981, 88). Heron indicates that Augustine celebrated the description of the Holy Spirit as the bond of love (*vinculum caritatis*) between the Father and the Son. Irenaeus and Tertullian strongly linked the Spirit to the church; Augustine however, in his pneumatology, purposely focused on the Trinity. Yet, before Augustine, the other Church Fathers expressed diverse views in their understanding of the Holy Spirit. One of the early Church fathers Irenaeus (c. 130-200), in an apologetic spirit against Montanism asserted that the Spirit preserves the truth in the church and only those who are members of the church will share in the Spirit and in the truth (Gaybba 1987, 41). Irenaeus identified the Spirit with wisdom in the Old Testament. Moreover, for him the Spirit and the church are so closely linked that, where the church is, there too is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is also the church and all grace; for the Spirit is truth (Gaybba 1987, 41). Gaybba noted this to be one of the concrete evidence of the institutionalization of the Holy Spirit’s activity, which no doubt contributed to the relative disappearance of charismata, such as prophecy, in subsequent centuries. However, Irenaeus himself did not see the exclusive link between the Spirit and church as stifling the charismata. He was known to speak warmly of church members who possess and exercise the gift of prophecy as well as other gifts such as tongues, healing, and exorcism (Gaybba 1987, 41). However, it is clear that the Spirit’s relationship to the church implies that the Spirit can never be invoked in the support of prophecy that claims to supplement the truth preached by or publicly handed down in the church, says Gaybba. Irenaeus’ insistence on an exclusive relationship between the church and Spirit is understandable considering the context in which he lived.

Tertullian is one of the outstanding theologians who contributed greatly towards the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He is one theologian who developed a theology of the Spirit as a distinct person of the Trinity; it is a landmark in Christian thought (Gaybba 1987, 45). Many scholars, however, found his Trinitarian expression to be greatly influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly in his reference to economic Trinity. The economic Trinity is the Trinity viewed in relation to human’s salvation; it is the belief that no Trinity pre-existed our creation and

salvation (Gaybba 1987,45). Tertullian, just as Irenaeus, affirms a very close link between the Spirit and the church. In his response against heretics, one of his arguments is that the unanimous tradition of the church is a sure sign of the presence of the true apostolic tradition. Tertullian argued that the Spirit was active in the church precisely in order to teach the truth, and unanimity was the surest sign of the Spirit's activity. This link between the Spirit and the church moves further away from apostolic times (Gaybba 1987, 47).

Augustine's theology of the Holy Spirit is characterized by the idea of the Spirit as the bond of mutual love between the Father and the Son. And the understanding of the Holy Spirit as the agent of unity has over the centuries emerged in reformed theology (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 207). Augustine understood the Holy Spirit as "...a certain unutterable communion of the Father and the Son; and on that account, perhaps, He is so called, because the same name is suitable to both the Father and the Son" (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012,207). He reiterates that the Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son in all things, and he starts to define this communion as love. According to Van den Bosch-Heij (2012, 207), Augustine contends that within the Trinity, "...the Spirit is characterized as the One who is the principle of divine communion and unity. This implies that the Spirit, as bond or embrace of the inner-Trinitarian love, is the provider of love and communion" (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 207).

One outstanding characteristic of traditional Western pneumatology inherited by the African church is that the Spirit and church is linked to one another in an unbreakable bond within the structure of the church, i.e. The Spirit as the principle of divine communion and unity, as was shown above. On the one hand, the church is understood as a Spirit-filled reality (Gaybba 1987, 91). The church was the Spirit's church. On the other hand, the Spirit was the church's Spirit where individuals shared in the Spirit because they shared in the church (Gaybba 1987, 91). For Augustine, the Spirit works in the church community mainly for saving unity. This arose in response to contention with the Donatists. This is best described as the institutionalization of the Holy Spirit.

Gaybba (1987, 92) noted that during the medieval period, there was a change in ecclesiology, which led to a change in how the activity of the Spirit was viewed. This is based on the systematization and institutionalization of church structures, and a defense of the church's rights and powers. The result, according to Gaybba (1987, 92), was the obscuring of the idea

of the church as a Spirit-filled *communio*, a community whose unity, sacraments and consensus in faith are guaranteed primarily by the Spirit. Instead, it is conceived of in the first instance as a legal body, a legal structure, a clearly defined society structured along legal lines. This created a scenario where church's unity, consensus in faith, and sacraments, were no longer seen as the result of the Spirit's work. Church unity was brought about by adherence to legal structures. However, Gaybba noted that in all this the Spirit was not replaced by law, but seen as functioning in the church, and sacraments, and councils. The legal structures became the primary guarantor of the spiritual reality. The Spirit, therefore, becomes almost a servant of the structures, being there to give them spiritual content (Gaybba 1987, 92).

The above picture may not be the final description of Western pneumatology; we know that the Reformation was partly a direct response to a pneumatology that had been enslaved to institutions and the tradition of the church. From the twelfth century onwards until the period of the reformers, a new direction began to emerge.

However, the underscoring expression of the Holy Spirit in the Western Christian tradition has been to confine the Holy Spirit to church related activities, and more importantly, to the redemptive works of the divine Trinity. I will now examine the reformers' contribution in the section below.

5.3 The reformers' contribution towards a Western traditional pneumatology: Martin Luther and John Calvin

Martin Luther explained that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the gift of faith, who interprets the scriptures for us, who sanctifies us, and who maintains the unity of the church. Luther wanted to break away from the patristic and medieval view of the Spirit, which was institutionalized during this time. He stated that it was the Spirit that created the church's presence, and not the church that created the Spirit's presence. The church and the Spirit could not be separated, but it was the Spirit that showed us where the true church was and not the church that showed us where the Spirit was truly present (Gaybba, 1987, p. 99). It was Luther's intention to clarify his standpoint regarding the Spirit and the institutional side of the church. He wanted the Spirit and institutional realities to be apart. However, Luther did not have much

influence in terms of breaking the confinement of the Holy Spirit from the church as an institution.

John Calvin is attributed with the rediscovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the idea of the Spirit of God in action. Furthermore, Calvin expounded that the Spirit of God is the energy and efficacy of action, which he did under the trinitarian concept. The Spirit's action is totally at the service of the Father and Son. The special role of the Spirit is not to do something independent, but to be the means whereby the work of the Father and the Son is achieved (Gaybba1987:101). Calvin did not limit the Spirit's activity to the church; rather, he attributed the spirit's cosmic activities, the creation and preservation of the cosmos, to its final fulfilment, the new creation. Gaybba (1987, 101) noted that, for Calvin, the whole point of the Spirit continuing to be present in creation is that humanity and its world may benefit from salvation. Calvin's expression of the Holy Spirit was freer and not limited to the church. Oladipo (1994, 100) observes that Luther and Calvin maintained that the Word of God preached is primarily the efficacious Word of God after the Holy Spirit works upon the hearts of the hearers. They believed that no one can rightly understand the Word of God without the working of the Spirit. Where the Word is, the Spirit inevitably follows. Without the Holy Spirit, Scripture is only a letter and law (Oladipo 1994,101). In other words, Oladipo insists that the reformers stressed the primary work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. However, Calvin's pneumatological expression focused on and showed a holistic understanding of the Spirit. It is observed that most of 17th and 18th century Western church leaders did not fully grasp Calvin's expression of the holistic view of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the rational Western Christian thought of the Holy Spirit prevailed at the time. It continued to influence patristic views and was described as Trinitarian and soteriological, for instance, when the Holy Spirit was referred to as the bond of love, as Gaybba noted. In addition, Western traditional theology has very often been inclined to restrict the activity of the Spirit to the spiritual, psychological, moral or religious life of individuals. Amos Yong observed that Western thought spiritualizes, soteriologizes and eschatologizes the work of the Holy Spirit. Contrarily, African thought focuses on the material, physical, and socioeconomic work of the Spirit as an extension of the blessings of Christ in the present life (Yong 2016, 9). John Calvin "in occasional brief hints saw matters differently, and managed to combine the experienced presence of the Spirit in us with awareness of its universal creative power" (Heron 1981, 154). On other hand, the reformers' contribution to the doctrine

of the Holy Spirit brought new perspectives and opened more avenues for experiencing the Holy Spirit, other than being institutionalized. However, the institutionalization and the work of Trinitarian salvation remained the beacon that defined traditional Western Christian pneumatology. Moreover, this is how the 17th and 18th century Western missionaries presented the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to African converts, together with a dualistic view of life shaped by the Enlightenment. More recently, Kärkkäinen (2014) in his article ‘Holy Spirit and other Spirits,’ described the characteristics of mainline pneumatologies (traditional Western Christianity) as theoretical. He says it tends to offer a theoretical explanation of the spiritual realities in the cosmos, whereas the realities of other spiritual beings are rarely recognized or mentioned (Kärkkäinen 2014, 1-9). This, he boldly asserts, characterizes the reductive view of mainline pneumatologies, which this study agrees is one of the identifying characteristics of the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

To sum up here, some notable characteristics of the reductive view of the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit are: (a) The institutionalization of the Holy Spirit; (b) Trinitarian eschatological salvation work; (c) Dualistic view; (d) Theoretical explanation of spiritual realities.

The above overview briefly describes the historical reductive features of the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This study assumes that this is enough reason to consider other convictions. In this regard, I will firstly, engage the Chewa belief in spirits, focusing on the concepts of birth, initiation, and community. This is done, in search of a meaningful and relevant pneumatology for African Christians. We therefore need what Nürnberger calls a dialogue at a deeper and concrete meta-physical level between the Western Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit and the African (Chewa) belief in the spirits.

5.4 A dialogue between the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Chewa people’s view of the spirits

A dialogue between the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit and traditional African belief in the spirits is highly recommended by many scholars (Ott 2000, 455). Ott thinks it will benefit to enter into such a conversation. He says it will help to “...arrive at the concept of mystical

Church which at the same time is concrete and meaningful for the local people [the Chewa]” (Ott 2000, 455). A discussion of the Chewa people’s view of the spirits with the traditional Western view of the Holy Spirit should therefore focus on understanding the underlying assumptions and consequences of these convictions (Nürnbergger 2007, 40). It must be meaningful and concrete for the local people so that the discussion will lead to an integration of some local (religious) concepts, which in turn, will aid in establishing the faith of the local people.

In this dialogue, I will focus on the concepts of birth and initiation in the rites of passage, which will be related to the concepts of regeneration and sanctification, respectively. This will then be related to the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The entry point of these two convictions is the belief in the active role of the Spirit. For both, the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit and Chewa traditional beliefs (as part of the African belief system), acknowledges the active role of the Spirit, and the integral role of the spirits. In the discussion, I will therefore focus on the all-embracing reality of God’s Spirit, as was deliberated in chapter 4, and refrain from presenting a reductive view by domesticating the activities of God’s Spirit to spiritual or religious matters only. This will be related to the spirituality of the Chewa people, who view life in a holistic way, where everything at the same time is given a ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ meaning without being categorized (Anderson 1991, 5). The central role of the Spirit/spirits will be the point where the two convictions converge in an integrated and holistic pneumatology.

5.5 New life begins in the Spirit: Christian Faith and Chewa beliefs

By bringing the two convictions into dialogue with one another, the researcher endeavours to explore the integral role of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification. This will be done in line with the belief and conception of the role of spirits in the rites of passage, birth, and initiation. And from both convictions, a framework will be constructed as the basis for articulating and integrating the insights into a holistic pneumatology for the benefit of the Chewa people in their local context. This is purposed to widen and embrace the reality of both the Holy Spirit and the spirits towards an articulated holistic and integrated pneumatology. This process of articulation will be used to theologize these concepts. In theologizing, we speak of the act of integration and enculturation of the local context. This study assumes that this could

be one of the proper ways of articulating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is relevant to the local situation. However, Nürnberger warns that caution must be taken when engaging in such an exercise. Nürnberger adds, convictions must be taken seriously within their own terms of reference and enter into dialogue with them on that basis, without abandoning the Christian conviction. He also mentions the use of metaphors, examples, and valid insights taken from our respective religious, cultural, and social environment, as long as they express an essential meaning of the gospel (Nürnberger 2007, 158). Katani notes that for the Chewa people, life usually revolves around traditional practices and beliefs (Katani 2008, 91). In this regard, these traditional practices and beliefs need to be taken into account as we seriously seek to construct a holistic and integrated pneumatology. We will consider the traditional beliefs of the rites of passage of birth and initiation and relates to the biblical concepts of regeneration and sanctification. In the end draw the functional relationship of the integral role spirits and the Holy Spirit.

(a) Regeneration

In traditional Christian Theology, the term regeneration refers to the creative work of God that produces new life in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Berkhof 1996, 465). Moltmann (1997, 26) says the Christian faith isn't just a conviction, a feeling, and a decision. It invades life so deeply that we have to talk about dying and being born again (rebirth). Ferguson (1996, 116) refers to Calvin's explanation of regeneration as renewal, which the Spirit effects throughout the whole course of the Christian life. According to John's Gospel, the Spirit is the agent of our second birth. Scholars differ in their understanding of this concept; however, this study is limited in its engagement with this concept. Nonetheless, the discussion of this concept will lean towards the reformed view, as referred to in the Heidelberg Catechism, Q54, which affirms that regeneration is new life manifested in conversion through the faith of the sinner. Furthermore, regeneration is not affected through the Word and sacraments, but by the almighty works of the Holy Spirit; however regeneration should not be divorced from the Word (Berkhof 1996, 476). Several biblical references affirm that the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of regeneration. This means that, the Holy Spirit works directly in the heart of a person and changes its spiritual condition. There is no co-operation of the sinner in this work; it is the work of the Holy Spirit directly and exclusively (Ezek. 11:19, John 1:13, Acts 16:14, Rom 9:16, Phil. 2:13) (Berkhof 1996, 473). In the same vein, Moltmann says that the

experience of the Spirit leads to such a new experience of the self that we talk about the birth of a new life (Moltman 1997, 27). The new birth (*regeneration*) takes place through the Holy Spirit or through the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the agent of our second birth; thus, according to John's Gospel, just as we are born from our natural mothers womb in our first birth, so we must be born anew by the power of the Spirit (Migliore 1991, 228). Comblin (1989, 47) thinks regeneration is the act of renewal of being made in the image of Christ by the Spirit. It is the continual restoration of the image of God in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. Theologically, the regenerated person experiences or is born anew into the family of God. This family, is also called the community of believers, the church. The church as a community of God's people is also called the "Spirit's own creation" (Gaybba 1987, 162). The church is the visible result of the Spirit's activity in the world. The rebirth makes them "children of God". One becomes part of this community, through the work of the Holy Spirit in the act of rebirth. One grows in this community by learning values, beliefs, and the traditions of the community, and by the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus sanctification. The Holy Spirit unites each member of the family and community into the mystical body of Christ indwelled by the Spirit. In the event of regeneration, we see the integral role of the Holy Spirit and we cannot talk of regeneration without mentioning the Holy Spirit.

(b) The rite of birth among the Chewa people

Birth is a significant rite of passage that religiously and culturally allows the child to be incorporated into the community through the power of the ancestral spirits. Among the Chewa people, every child that is born into the community is welcomed and accepted as a gesture from the ancestral spirits. Birth is the arrival of a new life into the world and into their community. It is a very happy moment for the family, and the whole community rejoices (Kamwana 1997, 52), as they believe birth itself is sacred (Chifungo 2013,57). Like most African people, the Chewa take the rites of passage very seriously; it is also highly valued because it involves significant transitions in the lives of individuals and members of the tribe. The birth of a child is viewed as a kind gesture from the ancestral spirits, for the continuation of the ancestral line (Gehman 1989,143). The place where the birth occurred becomes a holy sanctuary because it has become the place of the spirits of the dead who bring life and meet the living (Chifungo 2013, 57). To the Chewa people, birth is not a single event. Nature brings the child into the world, but society creates the child into a social being, a corporate person. For it is the

community that must protect the child, as well as feed, raise and educate him/her, and in many other ways, incorporate the child into the wider community (Kamwana 1997, 52) (cf. Mbiti 1969, 117-120) .

It is important to highlight that in the traditional Chewa view, one is accepted into the Chewa clan (community) through birth into the family, and the arrival of a child signifies and confirms the strong link between the living and the living dead (ancestral spirits) with the family, extended family, and the whole community (Van Breugel 2001. Birth as a rite is closely tied to a person's sense of identity with his/her family, extended family and the community of the clan (O'Donovan 1996, 245). Ott agrees with this saying that the birth of a child in the Chewa culture has a communitarian dimension (Ott 2000, 472). Above all, the birth of any child is attributed to the ancestral spirits who have remembered the living. And the child is incorporated both physically and religiously just as the Jewish rite demanded once a child is born there was presentation of the child in the temple. Just as in the Christian faith, the act of being spiritually born into God's family (John 1:12-13), one is unified into the community of believers by regeneration (rebirth) through the work of the Holy Spirit, and physically one identifies with other Christians in fellowship (church). Through rebirth or regeneration, the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ (his body). Critically reflecting on this, one may deduce that the spiritual birth is an act of kindness from God to our ancestors (Fathers of the Christian faith), and in turn, this would help the church (local church) take the issue of regeneration seriously, for it is a critical stage in the Christian's life. In addition, as birth is celebrated among the Chewa community, spiritual birth (regeneration) should be celebrated as well, as a new member is introduced into the believing community (Lk 15:10), the church.

The bottom line is that in both convictions, the Spirit/spirits are the source of new life (it brings forth life through birth), and therefore, it requires serious theological attention to make the doctrine of the Holy Spirit meaningful for the local people, particularly the Chewa, who greatly value this rite of passage. Among them, the new birth is highly attributed to the benevolent spirits. As in other African communities, when a child is born, they have a sacrificial feast where the parents, the newly born, and the ancestors come together in one multifold community (Sawyer 1972, 131). In the same way, the Christian life is a new life we receive from God through the working of the Holy Spirit. This underscores the central role of the Holy Spirit in

the family of God, the community of believers, and the church. In chapter 2 it was argued that in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is mostly acknowledged as the active presence of God's Spirit within the church and in faith related matters among its members.

From a theological perspective, one cannot be fully incorporated into the community of believers, the church, unless they have experienced spiritual rebirth. This means that one has to have a personal experience of God's presence in his/her life through the work of the Holy Spirit. If this experience is overlooked, the church becomes a gathering of people just like any other social gathering. For the local people (the Chewa or any African people), this theologially acknowledges that the personal experience of regeneration leads to the active presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life. When one believes and accepts the gospel, there must be a change in one's worldview. The old worldview must be dislodged (for spiritual rebirth involves the transformation of the inner being) and filled with a sense of the cosmic presence of God's Spirit present in the whole universe. Through regeneration, one is embraced by the Spirit of God, and one becomes aware of God's presence in all aspects of life. It is through the process of regeneration that one is born anew into the family of God, a new community of believers; there is therefore no vacuum in one's life. This study assumes that the local context is central, for by incorporating such concepts (i.e. birth), the role and understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit among the local people becomes evident. This has to be clearly reflected in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in this case, in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Spiritual birth, therefore, should be regarded as the entry point for one to become a member of the believing community, the church, and should therefore be emphasized. In other words, there is no Christian life without the active role of the Holy spirit. The Christian faith begins and continues under the active presence of God's Spirit. Similarly, this has been paralleled with the integral role of the ancestral spirits, believed to be the source of the birth of a child in traditional communities. It is also believed that they continually guard and guide the child throughout their lives (Michael 2011, 296). Africans strongly believe that, life is not real without the involvement of the spirits. This justifies the need to articulate the doctrine of Holy Spirit by incorporating these concepts and relate it to the belief in spirits. In saying that, when one becomes a Christian, there is an active presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life, replacing the role of the other spirits. The proposed pneumatology is assumed to be relevant and ready to

meet the needs of African Christians in their context. Further justification was provided in chapter 3. Moreover, other scholars are concerned that the pneumatology present in the mainline traditions continues to be dualistically presented and domesticated, and is not relevant to the needs of its members.

This study has argued that a reductive and dualistic view produces several challenges for Chewa Christian converts. Firstly, it fails to address their underlying assumptions, for believing in the Spirit proves to be merely theoretical, as the Holy Spirit is deemed inactive and absent outside of the church; hence there is the continual influence of other spirits over their lives. Secondly, it again falls short of meeting the spiritual needs of the local people. The Chewa (African) converts were taught by the early missionaries that their belief in spiritual forces and witchcraft was mere superstition, while for the Chewa (Africans) these images were a real life threatening force. On other hand, the missionaries introduced a personalized devil and associated the gods with demons; in this case, the missionaries strengthened their belief in witchcraft (albeit indirectly). Yet they failed to provide an alternative solution to deal with the spiritual world, especially the fear of demonic possession and witchcraft.

This study has demonstrated that for Africans (including the Chewa), believing in the existence of God and spirits is not as hard as to deny the existence of God and other spiritual forces (see chapter 2). It is inconceivable, therefore, for Chewa people to imagine the universe free of spirits and witchcraft, although most early missionaries thought this to be an illusion or part of one's imagination. The existence of God, the spirits, and witchcraft forms part of the core of the Chewa people's worldview. According to Dicks (2012, 49), it also helps them interpret everything that occurs around them through their grid of assumptions. Furthermore, "It enables them to evaluate certain behaviour as right or wrong, a phenomenon as real or unreal, objects as valuable or invaluable, and then act accordingly". As discussed in chapter 2, when the new converts believed in gospel message, they also adopted God's Spirit; however, they needed a clear explanation on how to deal with other spirits, which constantly threatens their existence. In addition, they needed answers to particular questions, for instance, when some illnesses could not be medically diagnosed (Mbiti 1975, 198). For the Chewa people, like most other African people, the spirits are an integral part of their lives, and the source of both good and evil. It is not limited to a particular area of life, but affects the whole. Based on these views,

which sees spiritual forces in the whole of life and, consequently, sees life as spiritual warfare (Chike 2011, 244). For this reason, they seek help from Pentecostals and traditionalists. This demonstrates the need for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be clearly articulated when ministering to the local people, in order to address their deep assumptions guiding the reality of their lives. One such way is to embrace a biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit in the manner stated by Welker (1994, 43), “The universality of the Spirit and Spirit’s action”. Similarly, Moltmann (1992, 42-43) has called for the need to understand the Holy Spirit as *ruach* in a broader sense, for the immanence of God’s Spirit, the divine energy, is actively present and experienceable in the whole creation. In other words, there is the need to present the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a holistic manner, and break away from the ecclesiastical boundaries traditionally erected, limiting the activities of God’s Spirit to the church and faith related matters.

This study further justifies the need for the articulation of a pneumatology that moves away from the traditional Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as it does not offer a clear biblical explanation on how to deal with other spirits. This created a sense of divided loyalty among the local people, resulting in a syncretic lifestyle, thus combining the two beliefs. On the other hand, the biblical witness confirms the active presence of God’s Spirit in and outside the church, involved in all our affairs (as Psalms 139 indicates). If this were clearly emphasized in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it would have a meaningful impact on the believers in their local context (see chapter 4). This study has stressed that in the articulation of the doctrine of Holy Spirit, it should incorporate the aspect of the universality of God’s Spirit in relation to the Hebrew notion of *ruach*, for it is assumed that this would play a key role in helping African Christians (including the Chewa) to assimilate the work of the Holy Spirit into their consciousness, and to acknowledge that He is active among them, not just during the worship, but also in their everyday life and in the whole creation. The strength of this belief is that the Holy Spirit becomes meaningful and brings a sense of security to their personal lives, as they become aware of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the type of pneumatology this study is advocating for; one that is relevant and ready to equip local Christians with a sensitivity to God’s presence in different situations, while offering liberty from the constant fear of precarious spirits and witchcraft that forever haunts them. In an effort to underscore the integral role of spirits and the Holy Spirit as the source of life, through the active involvement

in bringing life, the researcher has paralleled the concept of birth in the traditional context to spiritual rebirth (regeneration), so as to appreciate the active role of the Spirit/spirits. It is hoped that this will lay the foundation for those converted to the Christian faith to embrace the active presence of the Holy Spirit. Since birth is not the final stage in the life cycle, the next section will focus on the possible link between the rite of passage of initiation and sanctification in the Christian life.

5.6 Sanctification-initiation: Active involvement of the Spirit in daily affairs

This section will explore the concepts of sanctification and initiation, so as to establish a possible link between the two. The researcher will then integrate some of the newly acquired insights into a holistic and biblical pneumatology. This is part of the process of inculturation, which Ott (2000, 515) says, requires a “multi-level” dialogue in the local concepts, eminently suited to express even the most delicate relationship between the gospel and culture (in this regard, the doctrine of Holy Spirit and the traditional view of spirits). The “multi-level” approach suggests that the concept and insight of initiation, when theologized, would not only integrate high levels of Chewa traditional beliefs, but also everyday life in such a way that people are given the means to penetrate slowly into the subtle domains of the faith-culture encounter (Ott 2000, 515). Therefore, we will engage in authentic dialogue between the Christian faith and Chewa cultural tradition, aiming at realizing the practical means from the encounter between the two convictions. Ott highlights one of the main goals of African theology as attempting to find a parallel between Christian and African initiation, and in this context, seeing if some parallels exist. That is, if there is an interconnection between the Chewa initiation rite and the Christian faith, especially the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and more specifically, the concept of sanctification (Ott 2000,476).

The church is both an organization and an organism (Hendriks, 2004). The church is also a community or society. As an organism, it is the mysterious body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). As an organization or community, it has structures or methods of organization. As was discussed previously in chapter 3, one has to be born again in order to become a member of this community, the church. One has to grow into a mature person regarding spiritual things.

Growing spiritually is a process that demands the continual presence, help, and guidance of the Holy Spirit; that is, if one is to become a mature Christian (John 14:16).

Like most African communities, one has to be born to become part of a particular community, and further initiated, to be fully incorporated and identified as part of that community and society. Yet being born into the community is just one step, it is a rite of passage that introduces one into the corporate community, but it does not only stop at the introduction. When the child is born, it is passive and still has a long way to go. The child must grow out of childhood and enter into adulthood—physically, socially and religiously. Mbiti (1969, 120) calls this a change from passive to active membership in the community. Many African people do observe initiation and puberty rites. Among the Chewa, initiation is one of the major rites of passage, apart from birth, marriage, installation of a chief, and death (Ott 2000, 470). Between birth and puberty much goes on into a person's life. Many rites are performed in which many prayers are said to enhance the individual's vital powers. According to Magesa, the initiation of the young is one of the key moments in the rhythm of individual life, which is also the rhythm of the corporate group of which the individual is a part, what happens to the single youth happens corporately to the parents, relatives, the neighbours and the living dead. Initiation rites have many symbolic meanings, in addition to physical drama and a significant impact on the person. Just to mention a few, the youth are ritually introduced to the art of communal living. "The individual learns the traditions and patterns of life of the family, the village, and the clan" (Magesa 1997, 182). Another significance of the initiation process, is to introduce candidates to adult life, where they are now allowed to share in the full privileges and duties of the community. The initiates enter into the state of responsibility: they inherit new rights and new obligations, which are expected of them by society. Incorporation into adult life also introduces them to the life of the living dead (ancestral spirits) (Mbiti 1969, 121). More so, it prepares young people for sex, marriage, procreation and family responsibilities. Initiation provides an educational opportunity in the sense that it is an occasion marking the beginning of acquiring knowledge, which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated. Through initiation, they learn to endure hardship, they learn to live with one another, they learn to obey, they learn the secrets and mysteries of the man-woman relationship, and so on (Mbiti 1969, 122). Initiation marks a serious transition from one stage to another; in most cases, the uninitiated person is not a full member of the tribe, and will be despised and regarded as a mere

boy or girl, unless they are properly initiated (Gehman 1989, 53). They initiates are entrusted with values and beliefs of the tribe from the ancestors. They become the instruments and keepers of the traditions, values and practices, which the ancestors will always monitor to see whether they faithfully keep them. The new knowledge constitutes the core of his or her transformation. It symbolically transforms the initiate into an adult person. When a person is initiated, he/she is initiated into someone's name. They become legally and spiritually joined to the person (O'Donovan 1996, 160). Mercy Oduyoye, writing on the task of theologizing African beliefs (Appiah-Kubi & Torres(eds) 1979:114), explains that initiation into adulthood is an introduction into a full responsibility in one's community, a culmination of a long process of socio-political education. This calls for further discussion on the relationship of these initiation rites to confirm similar rites prevalent in some Christian denominations. The study suggests that initiation can be related to sanctification in the Christian life. The question is: "How can the rite of passage of initiation be likened to sanctification?" My approach is to bring these two concepts into dialogue from a pneumatological point of view, in search of finding some common aspects in both concepts. Although sanctification is defined differently by various scholars, the researcher is not able to comprehensively define this term here. But for the sake of this study, it will particularly be defined from pneumatological point of view.

Sanctification is described as the process of being made holy (Kunhiyop 2012, 95). For Berkhof, sanctification is the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, which delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his/her whole nature in the image of God, and enables him/her to perform good works (Berkhof 1996, 532). Migliore (1991, 240) refers to sanctification as the process of becoming holy or being conformed to the image of Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In other words, sanctification is the process that one's life is transformed into the likeness of Christ through the active working of the Holy Spirit. The process where one is incorporated into the believing community, the body of Christ, and continues learning the values of being a member of the community. The Holy Spirit helps the new member to live a life of becoming an active and fruitful member, by living a life reflecting the values of the community of believers. Grudem says that sanctification is a life-long process (Grudem 1994, 748-749), that will be completed at death when the Lord returns. Ephesians 4:13 reads: "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ" (NIV).

This we know will only be fulfilled when the Lord returns. In this process, the Holy Spirit is the main actor in the life of the believer who has experienced the spiritual rebirth. Sanctification only occurs in the lives of those regenerated, those who have experienced the spirit birth, and is a life-long process of growth into maturity. In this process, the Holy Spirit is described by different functional names like the counsellor, the guider, the helper, comforter (John14:16), and the Spirit of truth. One cannot say anything of sanctification without relating to the integral role of the Holy Spirit. The whole process revolves around the active work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

In a like manner, during the Chewa initiation process, the initiates are introduced into adulthood in the community; the process includes counseling the initiates. They are counselled by a reliable member of the community (*Nankungwi or Phungu*), specifically assigned to the task of passing on the values and practices of the community. The *Nankungwi* represents the ancestral spirits who are the guardians of their traditions, according to which one ought to adhere or live by all their life till death (Longwe 2007, 24). In other words, the initiates are equipped with knowledge, skills and an understanding of how to successfully live in the community and be able to interpret daily situations, based on the frame of reference infused during the process. In a similar manner, initiation has no meaning without the integral role of the ancestral spirits. So then, the Holy Spirit is an active and ever present counsellor, who indwells every believer guiding and helping them to assimilate the values of the believing community. One is incorporated into the believing community by rebirth through the working of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father, and Jesus Christ, is the counsellor, helping those born to grow into mature believers in the community. It is the Holy Spirit that help in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ and to live a fruitful life. Sanctification cannot be complete unless the believer willingly obeys the instructions and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the counsellor. Sanctification is a life-long process and will only be complete when Christ returns. In both concepts, we see the active participation of the Holy Spirit and ancestral spirits, whose primary task is to assist in the successful well-being of the community. To clarify this further in the next section I will compare and contrast the Holy Spirit and ancestral spirits, in order to derive a functional relationship.

5.7 Functional similarities and differences between the ancestral spirits and the Holy Spirit among the Chewa people

Firstly, among the Chewa people, the ancestral spirits act as intermediaries (mediators) between God and humanity. By virtue of their heavenly status, the ancestors are closer to God and humans on earth; they are also endowed with spiritual qualities that enable them to act favourably on their earthly descendants. They speak to the Supreme Being on behalf of the living (Oladipo 1994, 84). In the same way, the Holy Spirit prays (intercedes) for us before the Heavenly Father (Rom 8:26). The Holy Spirit also mediates and reveals things from the Father (Rom 8:27, 1 Cor. 2:10-14, John 16:15). Secondly, the ancestral spirits are sent by *Chauta* (God). They are delegated to lead and direct the living overseeing them, just as the Spirit of God in the Bible is sent by God the Father to be among the believing community and lead them into all truth as a counsellor and comforter to accomplish God's purpose (John 14:15-18).

Oladipo (1994, 110-111) highlights the following fundamental differences between the Holy Spirit and the ancestral spirits:

- 1) The Holy Spirit does not acquire his status after death like the ancestors.
- 2) The Holy Spirit relates to believers, because of his supernatural relation with God the Father and the Son. The relationship between the believer and the Holy Spirit transcends all family ties and relations. The Holy Spirit does not require the tribal qualification for one to achieve this status, as is the case with the ancestral spirits.
- 3) The Holy Spirit is more perfect as the guide and source of Christian living, than the ancestral spirits are among the Chewa people.
- 4) The Holy Spirit is the inner source and vital principle of the Christian life. He is much more than the ancestral spirits who are mostly external exemplars of the behaviour of their living descendants. Furthermore, they are unpredictable; therefore one ought to be on guard.

What do we make of such a situation? It is clear that in both initiation and sanctification, the Spirit/spirits play a central role and are actively involved in the life of both the initiates and Christians, to prepare and equip them for active and fruitful participation in community life. Their belief in the continual presence and active involvement of the ancestral spirits helps them

to continually abide, obey, and live by the values of the community. In the same way, the continual presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer transforms the person into the likeness of Christ and manifests the fruit of the Spirit (i.e. love, joy, peace etc., (cf. Gal. 5:21-22)). One of the main purposes of initiation is to prepare the initiates relate well with family members, the extended family, and the community at large. It is also to get the identity of their community or clan wherever they go. In the same manner, through sanctification, the Holy Spirit prepares and equips believers with values to relate with fellow believers, the fraternity and brotherhood, and obtain an identity in Christ (Sybertz 1996, 148). However, the Holy Spirit does not equip them for an inward fraternity alone, but together as a community energized by the cosmic Spirit to go out with the love of God poured in their hearts and display the character of Christ in their society, located outside the believing community. The character of Christ is expected to be part of their daily life. In other words, the active involvement of the Holy Spirit should be expected to influence the whole community in their everyday activities; it is thus holistic.

Contrasting the influence of the Holy Spirit and ancestral spirits in our daily activities is one means of identifying a possible area of integration to incorporate and theologize some relevant concepts into a more appropriate pneumatology. Michael (2011, 296) thinks if African Christians (including the Chewa) can assume the presence and activities of benevolent spirits it would influence their understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit. This presence and these activities are not to be confined to religious activities on particular days; it encompasses the whole of life, and occurs every day. By adopting this understanding of the Holy Spirit, this study hopes to realize a holistic pneumatology that acknowledges the holistic presence and activities of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of our lives and in the whole of creation. In this regard, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod should consider reviewing its doctrine of the Holy Spirit and incorporate this notion with the aim of realizing a pneumatology that is more relevant to the local context.

So far, in the section above, I have discussed the link between the Chewa traditional concepts of the rites of passage of birth and initiation, and related them to the Christian concepts of regeneration and sanctification. From this dialogue it is noted that the Spirit plays an integral role and in both convictions. The Spirit has an all-embracing function that cannot be limited to

one aspect of life. In both the Chewa and Christian life, the Spirit is the source of life and life continues to gain meaning and bears fruit under the close fellowship with Holy Spirit and spirits. The question here is: “What are the theological implications of the above discussion?”

Firstly, the conception of the active presence of these all-encompassing spirits is a vital notion worth incorporating into the proposed pneumatology. It must be linked to the biblical notion of Yahweh’s *ruach*, as the life-principle that is not detached from daily life, but rather energizes and supports all life in the cosmos, as noted by Kärkkäinen (2002, 25-26). For the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is transformative, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This calls for the traditional Western pneumatology to extend beyond salvation (regeneration) by seriously embracing the Old Testament notion of the Spirit and accept that the Spirit intervenes in and indwells the human and natural sphere. Another implication is to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit, as the all-powerful Spirit that is above all other spirits. This further calls for the incorporation of the perception of the spirits permeating all spheres of life. Hence, the call for a holistic pneumatology that acknowledges the active presence of God’s Spirit in all spheres of life.

Secondly, the local people, on the other hand, need to understand that the Holy Spirit is infinitely perfect as the guide and source of the Christian way of living, more than any other spirit, even ancestral spirits. The Holy Spirit is more than an external prototype of the Christian conduct of believers because He is the inner source and vital principle of the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is more than the ancestors, who can only be external exemplars of the behaviour of living descendants (Oladipo 1994, 111). This emphasis guides us to the realization that this type of pneumatology has a biblical basis, and is not only based on traditional concepts. It will only be achieved when the gospel is presented holistically.

The goal of communicating the Good News should be to reach the area where the perception of reality concerning the spirit world is conceptualized. The emphasis should therefore be on the superior power of the risen Christ and Holy Spirit over all other spirits in the world. Christ was and is exalted above all powers and principalities. He is the Lord, and all powers must submit to his authority. The challenge lies in behaviour change; thus, transformation, which only occurs when a person’s worldview is changed (Dicks 2012, 51-52). Change at this level

only takes place when the spirits and ancestral spirits are replaced with Christ's Spirit. However, change is not easily accepted in most situations, particularly in traditional communities. Nonetheless, we are living in an ever-changing global world; Africa and Malawi are not exempt. The Chewa people in Malawi are not spared from the changes that are taking place due to the impact of modernity and postmodernity. Therefore, for any theology to be articulated meaningfully it has to consider this fact if it is to remain relevant. In the next section, I will briefly evaluate the current Chewa Christian context in Malawi.

5.8 The current Chewa Christian context in Malawi

The current state and context of the Chewa people in Malawi can best be described as adjusting to the influence of modernity and postmodernity. It has been observed that the influence of Christianity and Islam has greatly contributed to the position of the ancestors being replaced by the creator God as the all-powerful. Others think the belief in ancestors has greatly ceased to be the cornerstone of African religious consciousness, though it still remains essential. Apart from this, the influence of globalization has had a great impact on the Malawian society. Hendriks and Soko (2011, 102-103) mention that globalization has many aspects. Nevertheless, Hendriks (2004, 77) refers to globalization as change at the micro level brought about by global media coverage and information. Hendriks and Soko then highlight some global realities that pose a very real spiritual challenge. I will mention a few of these, including mediascape, technoscape and global warming.

Mediascape refers to the global distribution of media images and texts that appear on our computer screens, in newspapers, television, and radio. Mediascapes are the most influential distributors of global culture, which in turn threatens local cultures and identities. In Malawi, the television broadcasters mainly broadcast foreign programs. DSTV and some other freely aired channels are where most foreign charismatic televangelists, preachers, and prophets have impacted the Malawian society, and have directly and indirectly influenced the Chewa Christians, who are the majority members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

In seeking to describe what is meant by technoscape, Hendriks and Soko highlight the impact of technological advancements sweeping across the entire globe, including Southern African

countries, such as Malawi. The introduction of the cell phone has improved communication. For instance, people in rural areas are now able to communicate with those abroad. Furthermore, the use of improved hybrid seeds and livestock has slowly begun to replace local seeds and breeds of livestock.

Global warming is the phenomenon of increasing temperatures that have gone beyond normal causing significant environmental disasters and challenges. For instance, changes in weather patterns that have caused inadequate rain in certain regions and flooding in other parts (Soko, 2011). These have negatively impacted African societies, including Malawi, as is evident in their acute food shortages and other unprecedented challenges that have occurred due to global warming.

The above-mentioned framework has led to a variety of social issues that have become part of the increasingly diversified living space (Hendriks & Soko 2011, 103). The enforceable relations between globalization and the daily experience of life illustrate the shift that many African cultures (including the Malawian Chewa culture and the CCAP Nkhoma Synod) cannot escape, and it has found itself part of the new changing world. It is caught between the past, present, and the future. This demands new approaches to deal with the issues relating to the spiritual needs of its members, especially issues relating to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Hendriks (2004, 30) says this situation requires the faith communities to practice discernment. Discernment demands a critical and constructive dialogue between their interpretations of the realities of the global and local context and the faith resources at their disposal. In other words, the church is therefore called to speak to its own context and beyond to understand these global events (Hendriks 2004, 16). These and other challenges force people to search for new solutions, just as Mbiti has rightly said, religion has an interpretive role to play in social, emotional, economical, intellectual and spiritual life (Mbiti 1969, 198). Mbiti adds, religion has to be relevant in all areas of life, and in this case, ATR has been responsible for cultivating the whole person. Currently, some traditional beliefs and practices are not taken seriously among the young modern generation, especially in urban areas. Nevertheless, eighty percent of the Malawian population lives in the rural areas (Ott 2000, 150). In most of these areas, modern and postmodern trends have had a certain degree of impact on the masses with regards to certain aspects. This implies that the majority of Malawians are still driven by a traditional

worldview with some adjustments here and there. It is important therefore to underline that one such aspect is the fear of witchcraft, which is still rampant and taken seriously even in the urban communities and this has prompted many to seek protection from traditional herbalists, diviners, healers and witchdoctors. This is evident by the open display of herbal substances in most Malawian cities and even the advertising of traditional services in the print media. Of recent, the media has been flooded with shocking reports of killings, and abductions of people with albinism. These brutal acts are fuelled by the strong belief that the body parts or bones of a person with albinism have powers to make someone acquire wealth or more money²⁹. However, the driving force behind all these reports is the strong belief that one is able to access these mystical powers to make someone accumulate riches and wealth. It is a form of witchcraft.

Moreover, those with strong Christian beliefs, instead of visiting traditionalists or witchdoctors frequent Pentecostal gatherings. This has become their alternative option and has proved to be a solution to their fear of uncanny forces often cited as being responsible for the misfortunes of many. Owing to this, over the past two decades Malawi has seen a considerable influx of Pentecostal churches. As discussed in chapter 3, many are attracted to Pentecostal churches simply because they provide spiritual as well as physical solutions for desperately needy local Christians. Pentecostal pneumatology has been one common means of attracting a multitude of followers, as is observed by many African Pentecostal theologians. Kalu (2002, 129) says that Pentecostals present the Holy Spirit as the power that enables believers to conquer evil forces and malevolent spirits. The Holy Spirit is the enabler who brings victory in spiritual warfare, and who is considered as the “new Christian change-agent”. Deborah van den Bosch-Heij (2012, 263) states, “The Pentecostal message of God’s life-giving power, which delivers from evil and allows one to feel safe in a hostile world, is relevant to the existential world of Africa. The message of African Christianity therefore, must provide for the existential this-worldly needs and not only for the life to come”. In Pentecostal theology, the Holy Spirit is perceived as the divine power who guarantees the fullness of life in the here and now. In a

²⁹ See: Owen Khamula: ‘Another Albino killed, mutilated for rituals in Malawi,’ Dated 25th May 2016, Viewed from: <http://www.nysastimes.com>. [Date accessed: 20th November 2016]. This article reports the brutal killing of persons with albinism in rituals related to witchcraft.

Pentecostal pneumatology, Van den Bosch-Heij explains that the Holy Spirit is presented as experiential, intervening, and soteriological (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 264). This has been very appealing to Africans, including Malawians. However, scholars have criticized the Pentecostal pneumatology for its strong emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit at the expense of Christ's resurrection power. While Pentecostal pneumatology is criticized for its imbalance (see chapter 3), it is proper that we also critically assess the mainline church's pneumatology as presented in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod in the Malawian context. This will be done below.

5.9 Pneumatology in the mainline traditions: The CCAP Nkhoma Synod

In the case of the above situation, the questions posed to the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are as follows: "What is the Church doing to address these challenges in relation to the pneumatological dilemma among its members?" "Is the current pneumatology of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod relevant and meaningful in such a context?" While the impact of the Christian faith in Malawi is evident; among many, Christianity is highly commended for introducing education, medical services, and even commerce. These were introduced by the early missionaries apart from the gospel, which transformed many lives through the proclamation of the gospel (see chapter 2). However, some believe that the impact on the majority of African Christians has been superficial (Nürnberg 2007, 40). The obvious fact that many African Christians live in 'two worlds' has often been lamented.

Reflecting on the mainline traditions of which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is a part, it is noted for emphasizing moral principles, the last judgment, and the forgiveness of sins. This does not seem to address the experiential needs of the local (traditional) context (Nürnberg 2007, 207). It is therefore perceived that the theology of the mainline traditions has failed to provide solutions for the challenges faced by its members. Moreover, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod has shown that its doctrinal foundation of the Holy Spirit, as reflected in its catechism (BLK) and preamble of its rules and regulations (*Zolamulira ndi zopangana*), it lacks a clear understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (see chapter 2). The researcher therefore identifies a pneumatological deficit in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod; hence, the dire need to fill this gap. As mentioned earlier, failure to provide a theological solution has created numerous challenges for the members of the church. For this reason this study insists on the need for the articulation

of a relevant and meaningful pneumatology. It is assumed that this will have a positive influence on all aspects of life, including the political, social and economic sphere. A holistic and integrated pneumatology accepts that the Holy Spirit empowers and endows people with gifts, sending them into the world to share the experience of God's love in all aspects of life. Nevertheless, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod needs to understand that it has been called to witness in a world characterized by rapid transition and innumerable global challenges (Hendriks 2004, 15). These global events have brought about significant challenges, which call for the church to critically reflect on the relevance of its doctrines. Those in Africa, including the Malawian Chewa culture, and even the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, cannot escape the influence of globalization on everyday life. They find themselves living in a new world. It is caught between the past, present, and the future; and demands new approaches to deal with the issues relating to the spiritual needs of its members, especially issues relating to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This calls for the discernment and critical reflection among the faith communities to interpret the realities confronting them.

The articulation of a holistic and integrated pneumatology is one such means of reflection. The construction of the proposed holistic and integrated pneumatology is based on the following:

- a) There is a tendency for Chewa Christians as well other African people to be influenced by the spirits. Therefore, traditional Western theology cannot merely dismiss the existence of other spirits.
- b) Believing in and experiencing the Holy Spirit should free people from their fear of these unpredictable spirits. They need to fully trust the presence of the Holy Spirit and be led by the Spirit (Gal 5:16; John 14:16). This is reflected in the supernatural ministry of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1, 18). Matt 12:28, "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God," proved that the kingdom of God has come. Another good biblical example is the story in Acts 8:7-20, where the evil spirits were expelled out of the lives of the believing Samaritans, including the man with witchcraft powers (see verses 9-11). The evil spirits are compelled to submit to the power of the Holy Spirit (Anderson 1991, 118). The CCAP Nkhoma Synod's pneumatology should also consider including and clearly state that the Holy Spirit is experiential and ever-present, and equips us to face these evil forces in the world so that its members are set free from the fear of witchcraft and other evil forces. Moreover, the Holy Spirit also equips us for different responsibilities in society.

- c) It calls for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to clearly redefine its pneumatology, indicating that the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be limited and confined to the church, for the Spirit of God is actively working everywhere in the world, as reflected in Ps 139 and Ps 104. Broadly speaking, the Holy Spirit is both the Lord of creation at work within cultures, and Lord of the Church bringing both renewal and life. The source of life is found in and given by Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Turner 2015, 63-87). Furthermore, the emphasis on the conception that the Spirit of God is immanently present among us should be redefined. The Spirit of God himself is present and completely surrounds us from every side. The Holy Spirit should therefore be explained as more than a gift of God. “He is the unrestricted presence of God in which our life wakes up, becomes wholly and entirely living, and is endowed with the energies of life” (Moltmann 1997, 11). In the words of Fahrennolz (1995), the process of articulation should be clearly defined so that “God’s Spirit is beyond that which has come into our midst and can neither be organized nor domesticated”. Thus, embracing the holistic nature of God’s Spirit. The holistic and integrated pneumatology called for in this study is communal based. Meaning it should be understood as the active presence of God’s Spirit in the community of believers and in all aspects of life.

In the next section I will discuss the communal aspect of this holistic and integrated pneumatology.

5.10 Holistic and communal life from an African perspective: Reflecting on Christian views of the church as a community

In this section I will discuss how a holistic pneumatology is related to the concept of communal life from an African perspective, and how it relates to the church as a community. In the African context, life is understood as being in community, and it revolves around Mbiti’s (1969, 108) cardinal statement: “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”. In African traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. A person owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and their contemporaries. He/she is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual, and the individual depends on the corporate group explains

Mbiti. In other words, Africans have a sense of the wholeness of life. ATR is characterized by the motif of the wholeness of life, religion and life belong together; it is far from being a department of life, religion is life. Because of this, traditional religion has lacked instructional symbols to mark their daily life (Parrot 1987, 95-96). In the African view, there was no separate community of religious people. This is because everyone who participated in the life of the community automatically participated in its religion. African cosmology is holistic; everything is at the same time given a spiritual and secular meaning without being categorized (divided into spiritual and secular) (Anderson 1991, 5).

As discussed in chapter 3, the sense of community and human living are highly cherished values in the African society. This sense of communal life is emphasized by Mbiti (1969, 108) when he stated, “Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When one suffers, does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead and or living”.

In this chapter I briefly contrasted the African view of community with the Western view. According to Sindima (1990, 137-147), community in the African perspective is more than a mere association with the atomic individual, “It is a bond referring to the act of sharing and living in communion and communication with each other and with nature”.³⁰

In the West, community means “a mere collection of self-interested persons, each with his/her private set of preferences, but all of whom get together nonetheless because they realize, each to each, that in association they can accomplish things they are not able to accomplish otherwise” (Menkiti 2011). From this explanation, whenever the term community (society) is used, we are meant to think of the aggregated sum of individuals comprising it; this understanding of community is completely different from the African view of community (Menkiti 2011, 172).

³⁰ For Sindima’s explanation of the communal life, see: <http://www.religion.online.org> [Date accessed: 20th July 2016].

The communal aspect of life is closely linked to the African view of totality, that there can be no ultimate separation between the sacred and secular, and that religion must be brought to bear on all of people's problems. It greatly differs from the Western worldview, which is dualistic and rationalistic, and fails to penetrate a holistic worldview. The African worldview does not allow for the Western tendency to separate the physical and spiritual, or personal and social; there is a presumed interpenetration of both. Based on this understanding, even for African Christians, the Spirit pervades all life and not just the spiritual part of it (Anderson 1991, 101). The community includes the living and the living dead. It is a community of family, extended family, and strong bonds on kinships and tribal lines. In other words, in the African communal life you cannot separate the spiritual beings, which includes ancestral spirits (see chapter 3).

For an African the basic concerns are the stabilization of a precarious world, and the maintenance of the life force of the community. Life is viewed in a holistic sense, for the physical realm is directly influenced by the spiritual world—a unity of the visible and invisible world. In short, this study calls for a reflection on the above framework (the communal life, with the spirits at its centre). In my endeavour to engage in a dialogue with this understanding of the concept of church (as a community), I will firstly expound the church as a community, and then relate this concept to the role of the Spirit in their community and communal life.

The church is an eternal community, part of the body of Christ; Christians are spiritually joined to Christ as the Head and to each other as parts of his body. It is a community of believers gathered by the Holy Spirit (O'Donovan 1996, 159). Basically, the community is made up of families, and as a Christian one automatically becomes a part of a worldwide family consisting of brothers and sister from every tribe and nation. The extended family of God has been joined together for all eternity by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not only sanctify them above all, He unites them into the extended family. Because of the social structure of life in Africa, one easily understands what it means to belong to the local church. It is close to being a part of the extended family and ethnic community, and is an important reality for an African person (O'Donovan, 1996, 160). The family is a group of people where we feel at home, where we belong, where people know us, speak our language, and understand our way of thinking. It

is where we are accepted. It is the community, where brothers and sisters care for each other, and where even distant cousins are called brothers and sisters to help you when you are in need or in trouble. The local church, as a community gathered by the Holy Spirit, can be likened to ‘a family’ (as described above). The members of the church are the people who know us and speak our language about spiritual truth; they understand our way of thinking. The local church is the community where we can be accepted, regardless of racial, social or ethnic background or differences, because we are all just forgiven sinners before God. In the local church, one becomes part of this through spiritual rebirth and is incorporated spiritually through the power of the Holy Spirit, who continually works in, with, and through us. The local church, is the community where people (members of the family) are obligated to support and care for each other because they are brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong to each other because we belong to Christ. Just as in the African community, life is meaningful when we stand together: “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”. It is God’s intention that the church is the community where people can count on their brothers and sisters in Christ to help them and encourage them when they are in need or trouble (O’Donovan 1996, 161).

We find commonalities with the African community, extended family, and the local church. One becomes a member of the family through birth into the family of a clan or tribe. The community is where one learns values and beliefs, and receives one’s early training in life. It is where one establishes their deepest and most enduring relationships. It is also where one derives their name and personal identity (Mbiti 1969, 121-12).

Likewise, the church is the community where one learns values and beliefs, and receives one’s early training in the Christian life. It is where one establishes their deepest and most enduring relationships in life. It is also where one derives their name as a Christian, and personal identity as a child of God. The community is where one finds a sense of purpose in life, because you help to make it what it is by serving God and serving others. Like the family, the church is the community where we are corrected and disciplined if we misbehave; we learn principles and values of godly living by learning from the great heroes of faith found in the Bible. Acts 2:42-47 reflects something of the lifestyle of the early Church as a community. The early believers lived a communal life; their fellowship was motivated by serving one another as well as caring for and supporting one another. The secret to the strong bond between the early believers was

their strong sense of awareness and sensitivity to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was actively working in all aspects of their lives. Even when one is needed to serve on tables, one has to be full of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the communal Spirit. For the Spirit brings communities into fellowship. The first Christians regarded themselves as a fellowship of believers in Christ who worshipped God in the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13). The Holy Spirit was the bond that unified the community—the body of Christ. The body of Christ is nothing but the fellowship of persons.

Kärkkäinen (2002, 124) refers to Pannenberg who says the church is the creation of both the Spirit and the Son. I discussed in chapter 3 that Christian communities are gathered by the power of the Spirit who dwell within and help them to live obediently under the authority of Christ. We cannot, therefore, separate the community of believers from the Holy Spirit. According to Moltmann (1992, 65), they are animated by the Holy Spirit and are called the church because they are gathered by God's Spirit (Vorster 1980, 54). We saw that only through the work of the Holy Spirit is the community bound to Christ. They are equipped with various gifts to help them live out their Christian life in the world. Moltmann (1997, 96) continues saying, "The practice of the community is not an organizational principle; it is a Pneumatological experience in the fellowship with himself and through his creative energies, God the Spirit creates the network of social relationships in which life comes into beings, blossoms and becomes fruitful. In all the Holy Spirit is actively present and in holistic manner."

In the same manner, in traditional African communities, one is part of the community by passing through the rites of birth to death. Customs related to the spirit world of incorporating one to be identified with the community are always practiced (Nganda & Mafokeng 2001, 24). For Nganda & Mafokeng, African culture (communal life) would be meaningless without the spirits and rites that prepare and integrate the child into the African community. "The strength of their solidarity is through the spirits of the ancestors. They were held together by their strong belief in the ancestral spirits" (Kalilombe 1999,194). Based on this, the point I am making here is the church as a community and traditional communities are unified by their strong bond with the Holy Spirit and spirits, respectively. This is the entry point in seeking to articulate a holistic pneumatology. The presence of the Spirit in both convictions is not limited to one aspect; it encompasses the whole. Above all, the idea of spirits unifying the community resonates well

with the biblical ecclesiology, and at the same time, would make Africans feel secure in their newly found faith by the assured presence of the indwelling Spirit (cf. chapter 3). The notion of a permeating and cosmic Spirit would be meaningful to Africans if integrated into their daily life experiences. Agreeing with this, Anderson thinks that the African idea of the Holy Spirit, interpreted in the light of a holistic African worldview, is not as far removed from the biblical revelation, as is sometimes asserted (Anderson 1991, 5). For the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be meaningful to African Christians, it should therefore consider the African view that all things are saturated with religious meaning because everything is at the same time sacred and spiritual. To Africans, everything is all embracing including people, events, nature, and work; in fact, all facets of the African life. Mbiti (1969, 2) also noted that the Christian faith would fail to be meaningful in an African context unless it fully occupies the whole person, at least as traditional religions do. So, the Christian church should integrate the Holy Spirit into the daily lifestyle and experiences of its members. Every activity in their daily life should be pneumatically based and not a one-day-per week act (Shaw 1998, 137-158). The Holy Spirit should be understood holistically, as encompassing every aspect in one's daily affairs. However, this needs to be done with caution, it demands discernment of the Spirit. This study is limited to engage into serious discussion on the issue of discernment of Spirit as it demands special attention.

The researcher has selected Jürgen Moltmann's pneumatology to engage in dialogue with the traditional belief of the communal life as a point of departure towards the realization of a holistic and integrated pneumatology for the body of Christ globally and Chewa Christians in Malawi more specifically. His pneumatology is deemed holistic, for it permeates all theology, where God's immanence through his Spirit receives more attention than God's transcendence. Moltmann's ideas about the Holy Spirit have also been linked to the ecological crisis and to God in Creation (Van den Bosch-Heij 2012, 174-175).

I already described Moltmann's pneumatology as holistic because it takes the reality of God's presence in the whole of creation seriously. Furthermore, it acknowledges the personal experience of God's presence through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit actively working in and through the community of believers, empowered by the Spirit to go out into the world, in secular vocations under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. It is this understanding

that prepares individuals and empowers communities to become aware and sensitive to the active presence of the Holy Spirit, even in creation.

Oden also understood the holistic pneumatology as expounded by Moltmann as a pneumatology that accepts the interdependence of the individual fellowship of believers empowered to go into communities and become sensitive to the universal workings of the Holy Spirit (Oden 2009, 266).

In an attempt to appreciate Moltmann's pneumatology, I will further enter into a dialogue with his view of the Holy Spirit as the energy of life and relate it to the notion of the vital force, as understood and described by Placide Tempels (1959) in the well-known exposition he calls "The theory of MUNTU or Bantu Philosophy"³¹, and how they relate to the concept of community, as the meeting point towards the realization of a holistic and integrated pneumatology. The point of departure for Moltmann's holistic pneumatology is the rediscovery of the Hebrew notion of the cosmic Spirit from the understanding of the divine Spirit *ruach*.

5.11 The cosmic dimension of the Spirit and vital force

To understand the Holy Spirit as the cosmic Spirit and divine energy of life, Moltmann proposes the need to rediscover the Hebrew understanding of the divine Spirit, *ruach*, as the entry point and presupposes that the redeeming Spirit of Christ and creative and life-giving Spirit of God are one and the same (Moltmann 1992, 9). He argues that it is only through experiencing this life-giving Spirit in the faith of the heart and sociality of love that one is able to go beyond the limits of the community of the church and discover the same Spirit in nature, plants, animals, and ecosystems. I will therefore relate the cosmic Spirit–divine energy, as presented by Moltmann, with notion of vital force, as presented by Sakupapa in relation to Tempels' thesis on Bantu ontology.

³¹ See Placide Tempels' (1959 95-113) explanation of the concept of 'vital force,' which he says permeates the universe and is active in humanity, and that which the Bantu see in human beings as the living force....

Moltmann describes the cosmic Spirit as divine energy or creative energies. It is a confronting event of God's efficacious presence, which reaches into the depths of human existence. Yahweh's *ruach*, according to Moltmann, is his divine presence (Moltmann 1992, 42). This implies that in the creative power of life, God is present; every efficacious presence of God is determined by the *ruach*. He asserts, the divine energy could be understood as the power of life for all the living. God the Spirit, as the energy of life, creates the networks of social relationships in which life comes into being, blossoms and becomes fruitful. Moltmann says this activity of the Holy Spirit confers fellowship or community and the community is where life comes into being. Moltmann thinks the creation of the community is the goal of God's life giving Spirit in the world of nature and human beings (Moltmann 1992, 219). For this reason, all created beings exist in other beings, not out of themselves; they exist symbiotically as a community.

Theologically, Moltmann explains that the creative power of God is communicated to all created beings; and it is the energy of their life too. They exist by being in the community. This divine energy of life is the same cosmic spirit, the creative Spirit, who gives life to created beings to live in community. Hence, the Spirit is called the communal Spirit. This implies that when we view God's Spirit as the life-giving Spirit in the world, we are saying God is in all things, and all things are in God—though God is not the same as everything.

Similarly, Sakupapa engaged in a dialogue with the notion of vital force and the concept of the divine energy of life. Regarding the notion of vital force, Tempels highlights the concerns of the Bantu people and how they interpret reality; he discusses the conceptual framework of the Bantu ontology and cosmology (Sakupapa 2012, 422-430). Sakupapa embraces the notion of vital force and presents a view of God as the giver and source of all life (Tempels 1959, 31). Sakupapa argues from a theological point of view, saying that vital force is the power of God present in all his creation and without which life is not possible. He explains analogically that the vital force is the Spirit of God understood as the principle of life and the enabler of communion with creation. From this one gets the idea that the whole of reality is pervaded by God's vital force, which makes life possible in its interrelatedness and interdependence (into community) (Sakupapa 2012, 428). This agrees with Moltmann's (1997, 68) understanding of the cosmic Spirit, which he states as "the Spirit that signifies the presence of God in all things

and all things are in God". He argues that you cannot limit the Spirit to be the Spirit of redemption for the believing community alone and for creation.

Therefore, the notion of vital force from an African perspective opens up avenues for reflection on the cosmic breath of the Spirit, given its emphasis in the life of the community and its interdependence. In other words, God's Spirit is a vitalizing energy. Through this vitalizing energy, we sense that God surrounds us from every side, and we experience this in our relationships with other people; thus in community and creation (Moltmann 1997, 68). This expression resonates well with the African notion of vital force, where other scholars have reflected on and found that it indicates the centrality of life and the interrelatedness of beings (Sakupapa 2012, 427). This means that the whole of reality is understood as being interrelated, without any separation between the sacred and secular. Sakupapa insists that this relates well with African cosmology, where the sacredness of nature is derived from nature's relationship with the creator, whose vital force has animated nature. This is why Kalilombe describes African spirituality as mutual dependence among the different parts— invisible and invisible (Kalilombe 1994, 123). There is a strong sense of community and solidarity. My point here is that life is viewed holistically, and at the same time, is pneumacentric. This is the heart of the current discussion. Moltmann's view and the African view both agree that the notion of the Spirit as the divine energy of life is holistic in nature, just as the African notion of vital force; hence the articulation of a holistic pneumatology integrated with these African concepts.

Relating to this understanding, one finds that among the Chewa nature plays an important role in humans and in the process of human growth, life and development. As such, nature and persons are all one, woven by creation into one texture or fabric of life (Chitheka 2014, 87). According to Chitheka (2014, 87), "For the Chewas, the universe is full of scared life, full of life that transcends itself through fecundity". There is great respect for nature/places where spirits are believed to be stationed. Graveyards/cemeteries are the dwelling places for ancestral spirits. These days, one may notice that many trees in the graveyards are reserved because of one's reverence for spirits inhabiting nature. It is argued that this act of revering nature could be integrated with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit under the conception of acknowledging the cosmic presence of God's Spirit over nature and the whole creation. This would greatly contribute to the reverence of all creation, and would be a theological response to the current

ecological crisis. This has been a most illuminating discussion for present purposes for us to seriously respect nature and our environment, for we live for each other not for ourselves. We share and experience the common source of life, thus the divine energy of life, also referred to as the life giving Spirit. This study, therefore, assumes this to be a solid framework for a holistic and integrated pneumatology, to be articulated in place of the current doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. It further assumes that the articulation of this doctrine of the Holy Spirit contribute to a change of attitude towards nature, and be used as a theological response to address the environmental crisis in Malawi, while meeting the needs of Christians holistically. The discussion has also enlightened us that integration of local concepts is vital to help the local people face the realities on the ground and to easily assimilate them into their belief system.

5.12 Towards a holistic and integrated pneumatology: A more effective ministry in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod

As was discussed in chapter two of this study, the Chewa worldview strongly emphasizes the spirit world. They share three basic spiritual discourses and practices, namely, belief in the existence of the Supreme Being, the high God; belief in witches, and belief in ancestral spirits who play an intermediary role (Katani 2008, 69-70). The Supreme Being is referred to by different names, for instance, *Namalenga*, meaning the Creator, which is credited with the creation of the world and everything in it. It is understood as the “Big Spirit,” surpassing all other spirits, and belongs to the spiritual world. Because of his transcendence he is seldom and not directly approached, except during times of national calamities and drought (Van Breugel 2001, 32). The spirits greatly influence the daily affairs of the Chewa people. The belief is that they are delegated by the Supreme Being, and are entrusted with day-to-day human affairs. The ancestral spirits play a significant role in the lives of individuals, the family, and in society at large. This belief lies at the heart of the Chewa worldview; it makes them very sensitive to the spirits’ activities. Because of this, most Chewa, even those converted to Christian faith, are constantly fearful of malevolent spirits, for they are unpredictable.

The evil spirits are feared for many reasons. For example, it is believed that witches manipulate them to harm others. It is this phenomenon of witchcraft that tempts many Chewa Christians

to revert back to traditional practices in order to obtain protection from traditionalists, who are believed to possess special powers that can protect them from such evil forces. This was discussed as an opportunity for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to revisit and articulate its doctrine of the Holy Spirit in response to the above situation. The proposed pneumatology should clearly stipulate the difference between these spirits and the Holy Spirit. It needs to emphasize the superior power of God's Spirit over these other spirits in an effort to effectively minister to such desperate people, and thereby, offer hope and freedom from their fears. Above all, the articulated pneumatology should be holistic by stressing that God's Spirit is all-encompassing in nature, permeating all aspects of our life and nature, and is actively present in our midst and the whole of creation.

Their belief in the spirits is also reflected in their strong communication system. It was noted that spirits communicate through various modes, i.e. through dreams and visions, and in difficult situations by bringing about sickness and death, and sometimes even drought, to obtain the attention of the living. This is another interesting point in contrast to the Christian understanding of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit is believed to communicate with Christians. There are some commonalities between the Christian and Chewa beliefs. However, there are also clear differences between these two convictions. It was observed that in the catechism used by the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is shown to be actively limited to salvific related activities; it was also greatly influenced by Western theology. While the Chewa people believe that spirits are found everywhere, there are also specific dwelling places where they are stationed. These places are highly respected; by misusing or mistreating such places, one shows disrespect to the spirits. The consequence of such behaviour affects the whole community. This view, in one way, helps to preserve nature in most places. This is evident today when one sees more trees being preserved in graveyards; this is a sign of respect for the dwelling places of spirits. This study maintains that if we can adopt and theologize this idea, and preserve nature based on the notion that the Spirit inhabits nature and therefore deserves respect (although the Chewa preserve nature out of their fear for malevolent spirits), it seems to be closely related to the biblical view of God's Spirit as the cosmic Spirit inhabiting the whole of creation. It is proposed here that this conception be incorporated into the proposed pneumatology. This study assumes that this will help shift the

current paradigm of dominating nature for personal gain, to one of respect and reverence for nature, but at the same time not worshipping it.

Furthermore, in chapter two, the pneumatology of the DRC missionaries was also reviewed. During this evaluation it was noted that their mission work flourished among the Chewa people of central Malawi (Pauw 1980, 70-76). However, a deficient presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was found. The Heidelberg Catechism, which was used by the early missionaries, was developed in a different context to that of Malawi and Africa. Nevertheless, it was heavily relied upon when formulating their new Catechism to teach the new converts. Their reductive view of the Holy Spirit observed in the Catechism is due to their Western worldview, and the strong influence of the Enlightenment and mechanical view of the universe. This study assumes that the DRC missionaries did not critically analyse the context of those they ministered to. This created a dilemma among the converted Chewa in the sense that they were taught the reductive view of the Holy Spirit, which meant that God's Spirit is actively present in the church, but it was not clearly explained that the Spirit is present in all affairs. As a result, they feared the other spirits in their daily life outside the church.

However, we cannot continually blame the early missionaries for their insensitivity to the African context. Africans in this regard, particularly Malawian theologians, have a responsibility to articulate a pneumatology that is sensitive to their local context. I therefore highlighted the need to reformulate this reductive view of the Holy Spirit into a more holistic pneumatology, one that will effectively minister to the people in their local context. It was indicated that this may be attained by employing the Hebrew notion of the Spirit "*ruach*," thereby widening the conception of God's Spirit as being all-encompassing. In doing so, it was assumed that a holistic and integrated pneumatology would consider the active presence of the Holy Spirit and His involvement in their everyday life and ordinary daily activities. This will be achieved by integrating the notion of the spirits permeating the whole universe; this will easily help the local people grasp the concept of the cosmic Spirit.

In chapter three, in my endeavour to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology, I engaged in dialogue with the African concept of communal life based on John Mbiti's views, summed up in his cardinal statement: "I am because we are, because I am therefore we are".

This was contrasted with the concept of the church as a community. The dialogue focused on understanding the central role of the spirits in the communal society, and this was related to the role of the Holy Spirit in the church, the community of believers. It was noted that the strength of the communal life in African societies is their strong belief in the ancestral spirits. In contrast to the role of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers, it similarly relies on the continual ministry of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the church's source of life lies in its continual dependence on the cosmic Spirit of God.

From an African perspective, it was observed that the aspiration to live a holistic life is reflected in different ways. One such way is the positive response to Pentecostalism across Africa. Scholars have given different views on this; most agree that Africans are attracted to Pentecostalism because its pneumatology is holistic. In other words, it addresses both the physical and spiritual needs of desperate Africans offering a solution to all of life's problems (Anderson 1991, 103; cf. Nürnberger, 2007). While some think that it is its emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to protect them from evil spirits, which has effectively ministered to local converts. Others, however, have found Pentecostal pneumatology to be deficient in that it is not holistic (see chapter 3). This is mainly because of its emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the power of God to counteract evil powers. This has created a scenario where some challenges affecting African societies are left unattended, i.e. corruption, injustice, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. Also, it has presented the Holy Spirit as the power to overcome evil forces; in this way, it has limited the Spirit of God to mainly one area. This study has insisted that a holistic and integrated pneumatology should be helpful to address such challenges, for theology should be able to provide religious solutions to the realities affecting the people on the ground.

In chapter four, the discussion revolved around obtaining an understanding of Moltmann's view of a holistic pneumatology, with the purpose of articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology. I firstly explored Moltmann's view by analysing the concept of the experience of God's Spirit. For Moltmann, the experience of God has to do with experiencing God's power or the Spirit of God. The power of God or the Spirit of God means the reality of God himself. The experience of God's Spirit has implications, in that it creates awareness of God's presence in creation through his Spirit. This awareness became the state of being sensitive to the ever-

present Spirit in our daily life and among his creation. Moltmann insists that God's Spirit can be experienced in, with, and beneath each and every day, for God is in all things and all things are in God (Moltmann 1992, 34). However, Moltmann acknowledges some challenges towards experiencing God's Spirit. Among them he mentions the narrow reference to the modern concept of self-consciousness; so that we can discover transcendence in every experience of God and carry them into the world. Another challenge is failure to discover the cosmic dimension of the divine Spirit. Moltmann thinks this is due to Protestant and Catholic theology, which for centuries viewed the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of redemption, and limited the work of God's Spirit to the church and faith. The CCAP Nkhoma Synod inherited this pneumatology, which has proved (in part at least) ineffective; hence the call for the articulation of a holistic pneumatology. Moltmann proposes a way forward, to rediscover and acknowledge the cosmic dimension of God's Spirit based on the notion of the Hebrew tradition, *ruach*. It was observed that the notion of *ruach* as God's Spirit helps us to know and comprehend that the Spirit of Christ is the same Spirit of the Father and both of redemption and creation. The Spirit of Christ is present everywhere where Christ is present. And since Christ is the head of the whole universe, the Spirit must therefore be present in the whole universe, but as the divine energy of life animating the new creation. What we see from this is that God's Spirit permeates every part of the world. The Spirit of God as *ruach* (the wind of God) can blow anywhere and can intervene in the public life of humankind. To fully grasp the notion of *ruach* he proposes a total shift from a theocentric or anthropocentric view of the Holy Spirit to what is called a biocentric focus (Wallace, 1996). A biocentric focus is "where the Spirit of God is acknowledged as the Spirit of life, spring of life and vivifying breath for all creatures" (Wallace 1996, 220). It is this understanding that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod needs to stress and incorporate into its doctrine of the Holy Spirit to effectively minister to its members whose views are permeated by the belief in spirits. It is a holistic pneumatology for it embraces all aspects of life.

In addition, the same chapter (four) examined the aspect of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit was shown in the close communion with God's Spirit. It is fellowship with the creative energy of God; the exhibition of God's transcendence and immanence. Of noteworthy consideration is how Moltmann understands the implication of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit on daily life. He mentions several implications, including:

- Fellowship of the Holy Spirit has a divine impact on the daily life of the Christian community, and Christians are endowed with diverse gifts to serve one another.
- Fellowship of the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian community to be open with other groups for various reasons—political, economical, and ecological.
- Fellowship of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian community to become aware of the Spirit working in ordinary ways outside the church.
- Fellowship of the Holy Spirit brings us into a community of relationships with each other but also other parts of creation, i.e. nature.

Lastly, in chapter four, the challenge of an effective fellowship with the Holy Spirit was noted. In this regard, Moltmann suggests one has to break down the ecclesiastical walls. Moltmann blames both Protestant and Catholic theologies saying that for centuries they have domesticated the Holy Spirit so that he works only within the church. This is echoed by another scholar, Kilian McDonnell, cited by Kärkkäinen, who lamented that, “Protestantism and Catholicism, the doctrine of Holy Spirit, or pneumatology, has to do mostly with private and not public experience,” and therefore, pneumatology has lost connection with the rest of the world and life (Kärkkäinen 2014, 5). We are therefore encouraged to adopt the understanding of the Holy Spirit in the cosmic dimension, where the Spirit is not limited by space, and in every aspect, we can experience the presence of God Spirit around us. This is what this study insists should be incorporated and clearly explained in the proposed holistic and integrated pneumatology.

What has been said so far is that a holistic and integrated pneumatology is open and acknowledges the operation and ministry of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of human affairs, including nature. It acknowledges the unlimited presence of God’s Spirit continually transforming the morals of community members, who are empowered morally with the energy of life to go out into the world as witnesses of the light. It is a pneumatology that acknowledges the existence of other spirits including the evil spirits of witchcraft, which is not based on mere speculation but biblical evidence. A holistic and integrated pneumatology embraces the Old Testament’s notion of the reality of God’s Spirit as the confronting presence of God. This knowledge equips one to boldly face evil forces in any form. In short, the articulation of such a pneumatology may involve the process of incorporation, integration, and enculturation, which Nürnberger confirms also, happened in the Old Testament when some Canaanite and

Babylonian concepts were incorporated into the Israelite's religion, without compromising their faith (Nürnberg 2007, 97). This process is, however, not done blindly; it takes caution regarding the risks of enculturation where Christ is sometimes against culture, or Christ is above the culture, but this study supports the approach where Christ transforms the culture through the community of believers animated by the energy of life influencing the world around us (Hendriks 2004, 720). The CCAP Nkhoma Synod has the responsibility of theologizing some cultural concepts empowered by the divine energy of life, so as to realize a pneumatology that is relevant in their context. In times like this when the Malawian society is confronted by numerous challenges, the church is there to provide direction and meaning regarding these challenges through their theology, I suppose a holistic and integrated pneumatology would provide such needed help.

But the question is, "How this should be implemented in order to reach all the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod?" The following approaches are proposed:

- 1) To include a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit in their catechumen lessons. This will assist the catechists to fully grasp the essence of a holistic pneumatology.
- 2) To include a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the *Buku Lachilangizo* (book of instructions and counselling for boys and girls at puberty). This is a critical stage for the church in the sense that the boys and girls at this stage form the group where most catechists will come from. Teaching them the doctrine of the Holy Spirit prepares them to be strong church members in the future.
- 3) To teach a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the monthly lessons of the women's guild, men's guild, and youth guild. These are significant groups in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Included are the illiterate, since many congregations are located in rural areas, where illiteracy is high. This approach will also be appropriate for the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, since the Chewa culture has a strong oral aspect (Chifungo, 2013).

4) To include a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the daily guide of the Synod known as *Mlozo*, even though it is only accessed by the literate members (those who are able to read and write).

5) To include a holistic and integrated pneumatology in the *Zalamulira ndi Zopangana* (the book of rules and regulations, and church orders), which is mostly used by the lay church leaders (elders and deacons) with regards to the organization and government of the church. In fact, every elder and deacon is required to have a copy; in this way, it will reach most of the leaders in the church.

6) To use the lay training centre (in this case, we have a well-established lay training centre called Namon Katengeza Lay Training Centre), where members are trained for effective ministry. In this regard, Sunday school teachers, catechumen class teachers, Sunday school teachers and counsellors (instructors) of boys and girls would also be targeted, as well as groups from the congregation.

7) To use the annual Presbytery meetings. In this forum all the pastors from each congregation in the Presbytery and church elders attend this meeting mainly to discuss the issues affecting the church. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit would be the theme followed in a particular year.

8) Lastly, I would consider a revised doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be included in the theological training manual with the purpose of equipping newly trained pastors for effective ministry.

Here I ask, “What will the outcome of such an approach be on the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod?” In addition, “Are there any recognizable elements of this proposed holistic and integrated pneumatology in their daily life?” Furthermore, “What is expected of them if they are fully equipped with the understanding of a holistic and integrated pneumatology?” The assumption is that it will be a tool in understanding God’s Spirit working in the lives of individuals in different professions other than church. It is further assumed that if a holistic and integrated pneumatology is embraced and applied in our Christian faith, it may help the members to display their transformed characters in their everyday life. This may lead to the acknowledgement of:

- a) *Spiritual Gifts in their everyday life.* Many Christians should realize the different gifts and use them even in non-ecclesial professions such as: administration (cf. Rom 12:7-8, Gen 41:38-43, Dan 6:1-3), as health personnel, and in political circles, including business.
- b) *Charity services.* Any ordinary act of love is the manifestation of the working of the Holy Spirit and people are motivated by God's Spirit. Paul in Galatians 5:21-22 shows love as one of the fruits of the Spirit. So in all charity work, people should see the working of the Holy Spirit.
- c) *Special talents and skills.* Talented and skilled Christians should recognize the special endowment of God's Spirit through their various talents and skills (Ex 35:30-35).
- d) *Green movements.* Green movements and environmentalists are another sign of the Holy Spirit actively working to renew the creation; however, this is not commonly recognized.
- e) *Scientific and technological advancement.* The Holy Spirit has gifted people with special intellectual abilities to invent things. The Spirit is also the Spirit of creative wisdom.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Revisiting the research questions and summary of the chapters

The aim of this section is to reflect on each of the main questions posed in the previous chapters. In chapter one the main question asked were: “How can the doctrine of the Holy Spirit be articulated in such a way that it aids the effectively integration of the doctrine with the spirituality of the Chewa people, and the ministerial and organizational life of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, in everyday life?” This question was indeed addressed; it was indicated that by articulating a holistic and integrated pneumatology the reductive view of God’s Spirit among the Chewa people could be challenged, thereby leading to an articulation of Christian life where God’s Spirit is openly recognized in all aspects of life.

In chapter two, the question focused on the role of ancestral spirits in the Chewa people’s traditional beliefs and practices. This question was answered when exploring the spirituality of the Chewa people and focusing on the role of the spirits in their daily affairs. The aim was to draw a correlation between the ancestral spirits and the Holy Spirit. A number of insights were obtained regarding the way in which ancestral spirits are involved in their daily affairs, and how this relates to the biblical conception of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the daily affairs of believers.

Chapter three addressed the question of whether John Mbiti’s holistic view is relevant in the lives of African Christians. Here, I reflected on the concept of communal life, and paralleled it with the biblical image of the church as a community. This concept was further explored using Mbiti’s cardinal statement: “I am because we are, because we are therefore I am,” where life in Africa is viewed as a whole. In the course of the discussion I paralleled the concept of traditional community (from an African perspective), with the church as a community of believers with the purpose of understanding the central role of the spirits by unifying the traditional communities. In traditional communities, the spirits are regarded as the source of life and the source of moral values. Nature is to be preserved for it is believed that the spirits inhabit the natural places in the universe. This was assumed to be closer in practice to the work

of the Holy Spirit in the newly formed church communities in the African context, where traditional communal life is faced with multiple challenges. The church has therefore become an alternative place for the communal life of African Christians. Since the church is a community gathered and unified by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit is responsible for sanctifying the believers to live a morally good life, equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit. Theologically, the aim of incorporating these insights was to articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology, which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod may employ to effectively minister to the Chewa people regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in their context.

Chapter four addressed the research question of whether Jürgen Moltmann's cosmological pneumatology is universal and useful in the African context. In response to the question, the discussion focused on specific areas in an effort to explore Moltmann's pneumatology. For instance, whether it is holistic by focusing on the aspect of experiencing God's Spirit, the cosmic dimension of God's Spirit, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and its implication on the daily life of the Chewa people, as well as God's Spirit as the divine energy of life. Some contours of a holistic pneumatology were evident in Moltmann's discussions, which convincingly assert its universality and relevance in the African context. It was discovered that a holistic pneumatology, as presented by Moltmann, was open and sensitive to God's presence in all aspects of our lives. It acknowledges the Holy Spirit as the divine energy and breath of life sustaining all creation. This animates the believing community to go out into the world and be sensitive to God's activities in all areas and every vocation.

In chapter five, the question was: "How can a biblical pneumatology be holistically integrated into the daily life of believers and the church?" In response to this question, I entered into conversation with the traditional Chewa view of the spirits and traditional Christian doctrine in an attempt to articulate a biblical and holistic pneumatology by integrating some insights that emerged from this fruitful conversation. I briefly evaluated the theology of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, keeping in mind the multiple challenges currently facing the Malawian society, which has also automatically become part of the global community. The CCAP Nkhoma Synod has in this case been challenged to revise its theology, particularly its pneumatology. The challenge is that the majority of its members view life holistically. This therefore needs to be done in a sensitive manner so as to remain in line with the biblical witness.

I further saw the need to be cautious so as to avoid an ingrown mind regarding our theology, so as not to be detached from our ecumenical family, and to be canonically relevant (Hendriks, 2004), as well as to avoid falling into the trap of being syncretistic.

Chapter six contains the conclusion and further recommendations. Since the current doctrine of the Holy Spirit within the CCAP Nkhoma has shown to be deficient, this study calls for the urgent revision of its pneumatology in the effort to compose a more relevant pneumatology that will effectively minister to the local people. This study has argued that a holistic and integrated pneumatology is the forward to the realization of a relevant pneumatology. For this pneumatology to be effective it needs to integrate some traditional and cultural concepts (i.e. birth and initiation) ingrained in the worldview of the Chewa people, and theologize them into the Christian concepts of regeneration and sanctification. This is an attempt to equip the Chewa people to become mature Christians, no longer perplexed by these evil powers. This study also engaged the concept of community from an African and biblical perspective as a framework for this proposed integrated and holistic pneumatology. This involved consulting the works of John Mbiti and Jürgen Moltmann, using their insights as the basis for the articulation of a holistic and integrated pneumatology.

6.2 Further recommendations

At the end of my study I would like to make the following recommendations for the attention of the church as well as institutions of theological training:

- The CCAP Nkhoma Synod should seriously consider revisiting its doctrines especially that of the Holy Spirit. This should be done recognizing challenges faced by its members requiring clearly defined and relevant doctrine of Holy Spirit amidst numerous spiritual and physical needs in the daily lives.
- It is of great significant that universities and theological seminaries develop their curricula and take the African context seriously and allow the contributions of the local traditions by incorporating and theologizing them.
- The mainline churches should be open to Pentecostal churches and learn from them, especially regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so as to formulate a balanced pneumatology.

6.3 Conclusion

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is central to the Christian faith. Failure to clearly define and articulate this doctrine has led many Chewa Christians to experience a dilemma when faced with various challenges. The CCAP Nkhoma Synod, as one of the mainline traditions, should acknowledge its members' traditional belief in the spirits, and their attraction to a Pentecostal pneumatology. It is imperative therefore that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod reformulates its doctrine of Holy Spirit, which has been observed as being deficient, and instead articulate a holistic and integrated pneumatology. In an effort to bring forth a relevant and balanced pneumatology, it should incorporate some of their traditional concepts as well as remain biblically based.

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