

CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY OF THE BLOOD IN GHANAIAN CHRISTIANITY

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Holy Communion, blood, Charismatic Christianity, sacrament, tokens, African Christianity

Introduction

There are several independent Charismatic churches in contemporary West Africa, where worshippers carry communion wine and olive oil to be prayed upon, and sanctified as sacramental substances and tokens either for spiritual protection or for dealing with various existential problems. However, the belief in tokens is an African phenomenon and not something attributed only to a group of Christians labeled African Charismatics. It is an irony, that while the leaders of the historic mission denominations and classical Pentecostal traditions often dismissed these resources of supernatural succor as demonic and discouraging their use in their sermons and publications, most of their own members secretly visit these prophets who give them tokens and symbols like holy water, soaps, handkerchiefs, olive oil, apotropaic baths, candles, concoctions, magical rings, magical creams and many more. Sacred statements, words and songs can also be considered as tokens. Some scholarly works have been done on African Christian songs. These include Hayfron and Quayesi-Amakye.¹⁵⁵ However, their focus is not on the place of the blood of Jesus in African Christian songs.

155 D. Hayfron, "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs in Ghana: Theology and Spirituality in Prophetic Songs of Eunice Johnson," *Journal of African Christian thought* 16 (2013): 3-18; Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "God in Ghanaian Pentecostal Songs," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013): 131-151.

In order to understand the concept of blood¹⁵⁶ among Ghanaian charismatics, it is important to find out how they conceptualized the blood of Jesus and why they do so. One way by which we can find this out is by exploring some of their expressions that include blood and what these African Christians think of while at the Lord's table?" Ghanaian charismatics will agree with Kruger, that by the visible signs of sacramentals in the Holy Communion, Christ assures Christians that through the Holy Spirit they share in his true body and blood. However, my interaction with many communicants for the last thirty-five (35) years makes me conclude that their reflection at the Lord's Table includes more than the atoning function of the sacrament. Although the minister who administers the Holy Communion mentions the need to remember the work of Christ on the Cross, at the Holy Communion the focus of the Ghanaian charismatic communicant is more on the power in the sacramentals, especially, the blood.

The paucity of research in the area of African Christian haematology necessitates a new focus on blood in theological discourse. What we are dealing with here in this paper, is an African Christian worldview in which the invisible power of healing and protective power of Jesus Christ can be made available through both visible blood which is the communion wine and invisible blood "packaged in words" in ways that give the blood sacramental value. This paper examines the use of the blood of Jesus as sacramental and a token in African Christianity.

My thesis then is that the blood of Jesus is understood in African Charismatic churches as both therapeutic and apotropaic. I will explain this in the light of how some African Christians think of and manipulate the communion wine for their physical and

156 F. P. Kruger, "Participation in Christ's body and his blood during celebration of the Holy Communion as illustrated by the meaning lenses of cognition and recognition," HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies 74 (2018): 47-67, <http://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i2.4767>.

spiritual benefit. Thus, this paper is an attempt to generate a theological discourse in African Christian theology of blood, particularly, an academic conversation about the Blood of the Lamb. This study of Christian haematology (the doctrine of blood), with particular focus on the blood of the Lamb can be a starting point to offer biblical responses to the African who fear malefic effects of the ills afore-mentioned, frequent use of charms, gestures and words to ward off evil.

Ghanaians, like many other Africans, have a traditional worldview of mystical causality, which they cling so dearly to. Until such a worldview is transformed, these African Christians will continue to seek refined “Christian alternatives” to traditional resources of supernatural succor they are taught to consider evil and uncivilized. The reality is that, while their western trained ministers struggle to reconcile the African and western worldviews in conferences and debates, the so-called self-styled charismatic prophets seem to be providing solutions for the members and other seekers from the historic mission denominations and classical Pentecostal churches.

My thesis is that African Pentecostal Christians believe in therapeutic and apotropaic functions of the Blood of Jesus, and this is evident in their utterances and actions, especially in worship-scape. Any attempt to understand the African Christian haematology will be a near futile endeavor until it takes into consideration the worldview and mundane expectations of the people.

I have interacted with the Charismatic Christians in Ghana, been in their church services, prayer camps, and other religious gatherings for the last thirty-five (35) years. All these years, I have carefully observed their utterances, liturgies and other religious practices in church services and prayer meetings. Major information gathered for this research therefore come from personal observation, recent interviews with some charismatic leaders and African movies. Some of the data from popular Akan Christian songs. I also took some data from

various written sources. I have summarized some of these in the next section. In this paper, I employ the discursive and analytical approach to the topic under study.

I shall begin with a discussion of African Christian belief in tokens and sacramentals. Then we proceed to words used as tokens against evil. This will be followed by the use of the blood of Jesus as an armour. This will lead to a discussion on the sacramentality of the communion wine and therapeutic and apotropaic way in which Ghanaian Charismatics view the blood of Jesus. Finally, we will discuss the African worldview that has facilitated such an African Christian understanding and manipulation of the Blood of Jesus and draw conclusions which will help in restructuring the emerging African Christian haematology.

Tokens and Sacramentals in African Christianity

Defining tokens and sacraments

Asamoah-Gyadu defines signs and tokens as “physical substances that in the hands of religious functionaries, acquire sacramental value.”¹⁵⁷ Some independent African Charismatics use tokens as the prophet gives specific directions. These tokens include salt, water, oil, lime, etc. Some even believe the Bible can be a token placed under a pillow, put beside the head of a newly born baby or pointed at a suspected demonic agent to ward off or subdue satanic power.

A sacramental is a material object, thing or action set apart or blessed to manifest the respect due to the Sacraments and so to stimulate pious thoughts and to increase devotion. Sacramentals used by many Christians in mainline churches include sacred objects such as holy water, blessed candles, blessed palms, blessed ashes often placed on believers’ foreheads, blessed salt, holy cards and Holy Rosary, cross necklace and even an action - the sign of the cross. Some of these are recognized by

157 Kwabena J. Asamoah-Gyadu, “Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts: Religious Symbolism and Sacramentality in Non-Western Christianity,” *Studia Liturgica* 48 (2018): 127-146.

the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches. Therefore, the use of sacramentals, tokens and symbols by African Independent Churches should not come to us as a surprise. Neither should the belief of African Charismatic Christians.

In Asamoah-Gyadu's discussion of sacramentals, he focuses on religious tangibility which he defines as "the institutionalization and deployment of visible substances for the mediation of religious power."¹⁵⁸ However, I dare to include in the range of sacramentals, religious intangibles like power packed utterances, prayers (both in speaking in tongues and understandable language) and songs designed to ward off evil or establish healing and other expected breakthroughs.

Intangible tokens: Words against evil

African Christians believe that words, though tangible in written form but intangible in spoken form, can be used as tokens. Thus, words, both tangible and intangible, can be thought of as tokens. Reciting portions of Scripture, spiritual songs, prayers and faith pronouncements written or spoken are all believed to be imbued with miraculous power to heal, exorcise and to secure protection. Portion of the Psalms, particularly Psalms 23, 91 and 124 are recited for their protective power while some imprecatory Psalms are employed in invoking judgment or curses upon one's enemies, for e.g., Psalm 69 and 109. One popular Akan Christian apotropaic utterance heard in Charismatic churches and prayer camps is the statement:

Mebɔ ɔbonsam tuo 'pee pee', me tiatia ɔbonsam so, meaning,
"I gun down the devil, greatly (with my gunshot sounding
'pee! pee!') I trample on the devil (under my feet)."

One wonders whether those who make such utterances believe the devil can be wounded or killed. The following are the lyrics of a common imprecatory song sang with jumping in Akan-speaking churches:

158 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts," 127-146.

*Metia əbonsam so, Metia əbonsam so
Mehuru makə soro, Metia əbonsam so
Metia əbonsam so, Metia əbonsam so
Mehuru makə soro, soro, soro; metia əbonsam so.*

Meaning in English:

*I stamp the devil under my feet, I stamp the devil under my feet
I'll jump up high, I'll stamp the devil under my feet.
I stamp the devil under my feet, I stamp the devil under my feet
I'll jump up high, higher, higher; I'll stamp the devil under my feet.*

These African Charismatic Christians' Scriptural support for this song is Romans 16:20, where Paul says, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

*Another song in Gã (of southern Ghana) says:
Abonsam ni gbaa mina, Matswia le tso,
Ayε ko ni gbaa mina, Matswia le tso,
Matswia le tso,
Madame Yesu sεε, Matswia le tso.*

Meaning in English:

*The devil that troubles me, I'll strike him with a stick
The witch that troubles me, I'll strike him with a stick
I'll strike him with a stick,
I'll stand behind Jesus, I'll strike him with a stick*

The Blood as Amour

For Ghanaians, "life is a battle". Malevolent spirits are always on the attack; therefore one needs one's armor readily in his reach. This explains why the blood of Jesus, as a token, is employed by Charismatics as both offensive and defensive amour. The "Blood of Jesus" could be an intangible token in the form of spoken words or a tangible token in the form of the communion wine. Whichever form it may be in, it is still potent. Like a shield, a defensive weapon, it is invoked by Ghanaian Christians to provide protection for the Christian against all sorts of potential threats to one's well-being. One often hears some Ghanaian Charismatics confessing "I hide my family under the Blood". Like an offensive weapon, the blood can be used to attack the enemy. One most popular apotropaic statement commonly heard among Ghanaian Charismatic Christians, whatever church denomination they may belong,

is *Yesu mogya nka w'anim*, meaning, "May the Blood of Jesus rebuke you" or "Be thou rebuked by the Blood of Jesus." With a gesture of pushing something away with the hands, they utter this statement in order to supplicate Christ's power over the devil. This has become an apotropaic utterance in the presence of a person suspected to be demonic or even when one feels an invisible demonic presence.

One Charismatic church elder in a personal conversation with me, said, "We believe this statement uttered in faith subdues every evil power being rebuked because of the overcoming power in the Blood of the Lamb as mentioned in Revelation 12:11." However, one contemporary Pentecostal theologian opines that, "there is no biblical justification for this statement. The Bible simply says to resist the devil and in Jude 1:9, Michael, when he was disputing with the devil did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, 'the Lord rebuke thee.'" Thus, it is difficult to find a biblical support for such application of function of the blood of Jesus. It is clearly an extension or an overstretching of the significance and functions of the blood of Jesus in Ghanaian Christian religious thought to meet the chronic crave for spiritual security.

Some of the statements made in prayers in relation to the application of the Blood of Jesus in spiritual warfare may be considered incredible. However, some Charismatic leaders who make such statements appeal to biblical precedents, such as Rev. 14:12, where we are told that we overcome the devil by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimonies.¹⁵⁹

It seems merely declaring that Jesus has overcome the power of malevolent spirits, e.g., witches and curses, will do little to dissipate the African Charismatic's perception and fear. I have heard uncountable times, charismatics ending their services after the Grace, "I plead the Blood of Jesus, to cover me, shelter me and protect me all the days of my life. Amen." Recently, I boarded a bus in which a man preaching to the passengers,

¹⁵⁹ This discussion, however, will not go into the exegesis of that passage

ended his prayer with the words, "I insure this car with the Blood of Jesus." In fact, the statement, "Blood of Jesus," is printed on some vehicles to secure them from accidents. In a conversation with a leading Charismatic on such strange uses of the blood in prayer, asked with much surprise: "Do we really need to re-enforce the Blood of Jesus with broken bottles and nails to render it more efficacious?" He explained, with an anecdote that:

In 1993, I attended a prayer meeting held by some members of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in a home in Dansoman, Accra. There, I heard one woman praying in the Twi language:

Mebɔ ntumpan de ndadewa ka ho de fora Yesu mogya
no twi ɔbonsam anim, literally meaning, "I break bottles,
add nails, and mix them together with the blood of
Jesus and give the devil a scratchy-scrub on his face.'

This suggests an understanding of the function of the Blood of Jesus as an offensive weapon in their spiritual battle. This notion is a general Ghanaian Christian phenomenon and not only believed by the Charismatics. In addition to such apotropaic utterances is the biblical statement, "No weapon formed against me shall prosper, I condemn every tongue that rises against me in judgment" (Isaiah 54:17), which is also commonly used among Ghanaian Christians.

Thus, beyond the level of tangibility, the blood of Jesus is perceived as an intangible token whose power is appropriated in the form of apotropaic words or statements employed in prayers or declarations to ward off evil or attack malevolent spirits.

Therapeutic and Apotropaic Value of the Holy Communion

Despite the disagreement between Protestant and Catholics on the meanings attached to the elements of the Holy Communion, Ghanaian Charismatics believe that what is most important is the utility derived from this sacrament. In this section, we will look at a few examples regarding the Ghanaian Christian' understanding of the communion wine, where the Blood of Jesus, is perceived as medicine and an apotropaic substance.

The Holy Communion has become an important part of contemporary Pentecostal practice as one of their sacraments. For charismatics that use the wine as a sacramental, it reminds them of an underlining reality of the power of the blood that is not obvious to the senses. In West African Charismatic discourse, especially Ghana and Nigeria, therapeutic and apotropaic importance are assigned to the blood in the Holy Communion. The wine which represents the blood of Jesus is a sacramental with both therapeutic and apotropaic values. The wine as blood can be used in anointing. The anointing occurs when the communion wine is applied to the sick, accompanied by prayer. Some of these Christians refer to the blood of Passover Lamb smeared on the lintel and door post of the Israelites as a substance used to ward off the angel of death, thereby protecting the people in their house. Therefore, in their thinking, the Blood of Jesus, i.e., the Passover lamb can also be a protective substance.

There is a two-fold understanding of the communion wine as sacramental in African Charismatic discourse: firstly, the communion wine, representing the blood of Jesus, as a tangible sacramental is drunk during the communion service as medicine for healing the sick; secondly, the wine as the blood is applied to the body, usually used to draw the sign of the cross on the forehead for empowerment and fortification against supernatural evil.

The communion blood has also become a significant “point of contact” in Ghanaian Christian rituals of healing and divine interventions as found in many a Pentecostal church. In Ghanaian Christianity, the blood of Jesus serves as a means of experiencing the power of God through the wine, a visible substance consecrated for the use of congregants. Asamoah-Gyadu is right is saying, “In contemporary Pentecostalism therefore, the communion table is first and foremost a place of experiential encounter.”¹⁶⁰ In reference to the Pentecostals,

160 Asamoah-Gyadu, “Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts,” 127-146.

he explains this by saying, that through Holy Communion the power of the Spirit working through the blood of Christ is invoked to bring transformation into lives and situations.¹⁶¹

Asamoah-Gyadu strongly affirms that,

The Christological meaning of Holy Communion lay not so much in participating in Christ's suffering and having fellowship with him and the Church Militant, but rather in accessing the potential for human empowerment that comes through the breaking of the body and the shedding of the blood of Christ.¹⁶²

Asamoah-Gyadu cites Mensa Otabil, the General Overseer of one of the biggest contemporary Pentecostal churches in Ghana as telling his congregation during a communion service:

we have come to encounter the Lord... We proclaim that Satan is defeated; that every demonic harassment is broken; and if Satan has laid any sickness on your body, it is broken in the name of Jesus.¹⁶³

In most African churches the blood on the cross is imagined and uttered against in apotropaic pronouncements against evil and malevolent spirits. They therefore drink the wine and apply it to their body (usually forehead) as a mark (sign) of protection or identity. The marking on their forehead with the communion wine reminds them of the blood of the lamb that was smeared on the entrance of the Israelite houses to ward off the angel of death during the Exodus.

In a personal conversation with one lady elder in the Family Bible Church, which has branches in both Ghana and the United Kingdom, this former Methodist observed, that:

When you are unwell, and you take the communion wine by faith in the Blood of Jesus you will have instant healing. Even if you have a disease on your skin, we believe if you dip your finger into the wine and smear it on the affected part you will receive healing. This is because the blood has the power to heal, protect and do a lot of things for us. It is important for a believer to exercise his or her faith in the elements of

161 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts," 127-146.

162 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts," 127-146.

163 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Tokens and Points of Contacts," 127-146.

the communion in order to receive what he wants. When you drink the blood and after that make the sign of the cross with it on your forehead or just smear it on your forehead it wards off evil spirits-they can't even look into your face.¹⁶⁴

The Lady Elder's comment confirms Asamoah-Gyadu's observation that in Pentecostal sacramental discourses Holy Communion is a means of empowerment for healing and other breakthroughs in life. Imagining the Blood of Jesus in the communion wine, which is tangible, satisfies the African Christian who looks for a physical tangibility in identifying with and applying the power of the Blood of Jesus in daily experiences such as healing and protection.

If a token is something intended to represent another thing, then the communion wine becomes a token representing the blood of Jesus. This is the understanding many West African Charismatics have that makes them think of the communion wine as being therapeutic. The Nigerian Bishop, Oyedepo founded and leads Winner's Chapel, one of the largest Charismatic churches in Africa with many branches spread across the continent. His Church is strongly established in Ghana. Oyedepo interprets the passages in John 6:55 and Mark 14:22-24 in the following way:

When God opened my eyes to the flesh and blood of Jesus, I was so taken with it that I took it virtually every day. It answered to me in detail. All weakness and sickness in me died and life became increasingly more buoyant. This meal is designed for strength, health and longevity. If you take it with the correct spiritual perspective, expect to be strong, healthy and fulfil the number of your days.¹⁶⁵

For Oyedepo, the Holy Communion is a "supernatural meal, a balanced diet with medicinal value."¹⁶⁶ He teaches that upon eating (the flesh) and drinking (the blood) of Jesus:

164 Informant requested to remain anonymous.

165 David Oyedepo, *The Miracle Meal* (Ota: Dominion Publishing House. Canaan Land, 2002), 62-63.

166 David Oyedepo, *Signs and Wonders Today* (Ota: Dominion Publishing House. Canaan Land, 2006), 61-93.

Every zero sperm count, dead womb, dead ovaries, whatever is called dead will be quickened back to life by the power in the blood contained in this miracle meal. The power in the blood is what cured a brother's impotence—it quickened that which was dead.¹⁶⁷

Though Asamoah-Gyadu's earlier work focuses on the Pentecostals, it must be noted that the understanding of blood as therapeutic and apotropaic does belong to almost all Ghanaians Christians irrespective of the churches, whether Pentecostals or not. Until these communicants utter their thoughts in prayer one will never know what they think of the blood, whether in its tangible state in the wine or its imaginary form on the cross.

Ghanaian Charismatics approach the Lord's Table with the idea of warfare lingering in their minds. The adage *ɔbra ye ɔko*, "Life is war," pervades their thinking while they take the communion because their pastors often remind them of this in many ways. This warfare is not only physical in terms of wrestling the difficulties in life, but it is also a spiritual battle with the invisible forces who use physical agents against them.

The Fear of Evil and Search for Security

This section suggests why African Christians are prone to using religious tangibles. The reason is their worldview gives them reason to fear evil and therefore to be preoccupied with a constant search for security. African indigenous religious beliefs are concerned with God, spirits, human life, and the hereafter and perform ceremonies and festivals that embody praying, offerings, singing and dancing, eating and drinking, celebrating the birth of a child and harvest season.¹⁶⁸ In African traditional thought misfortunes and disasters have always been explained in terms activities of malevolent forces operating often through human agents, especially witches and sorcerers.

¹⁶⁷ Oyedepo, *The Miracle Meal*, 40.

¹⁶⁸ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1991), 11.

The reason is in the African worldview, in which invisible forces, both benevolent and malevolent, influence events and happenings in the physical realm, nothing happens by accident. In Africa, folk fears and beliefs, include witchcraft, sorcery, contact with persons believed to be demon-possessed, using amulet and rituals to undo the potency of curses and using negative words to cause undesired happenings or events. Field, in her analysis of witchcraft in Ghana, observed how witchcraft was rooted in the psychological reactions of those who were ill, and those who suffered misfortunes and inability to control their destinies.¹⁶⁹

In Akan thought, failure may be attributed to some invisible spiritual forces that are beyond human reasons and powers.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the fundamental question asked in the face of any misfortune, accident, ill-health sudden bankruptcy is, *Hena na ɔreyɔ me yi?* - Twi expression meaning, “who is doing this to me?” The search for the *ɔyɛfo* (in the Akan language) or *feelɔ* (in the Ga language), meaning the “doer” and the pursuit of solutions to the misfortunes, losses and spiritual attacks often lead people to the shrines of diviners and traditional priest who profess to have the answers. The question is, since Christians are forbidden to visit the shrines for solutions to their problems, where do they go?

They would rather stay in the church and begin to look again at the practices and elements in church rituals that can provide them with solutions in their search for interventions and security against the evil forces that work against them and their efforts in life. Most African Christians will not visit native doctors or traditional priests for talismanic resources and various protective substances. However, they will be at home with religious tangible tokens, worn on the body, ingested into

169 Margaret J. Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960).

170 Kwabena J. Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Africa Christian Press, 2005), 164.

the body, applied to the body or kept in their rooms or places of work. Hence the significance and relevance of symbols and tokens used by Christians.

Africans' witchcraft beliefs and their fear of them have been closely studied by several scholars.¹⁷¹ Opoku Onyinah, a prominent Pentecostal leader, rightly puts it, that among Ghanaians, like other West Africans, "the principal evil is attributed to witchcraft, since it is held that all the evil forces can be in league with witches to effect an evil act."¹⁷²

In Ghana, a *bayifo* (one who practices witchcraft) is believed to manifest in the form of a flickering ball of fire. One often hears of an old woman accused of using witchcraft to manipulate a relative. It is believed bayie (witchcraft) can be transferred from an old woman to a child through a meal. The equivalent of bayie in the Ga language is *ayɛ*. Belief in the danger of bayie or *ayɛ* is so pervasive that little lower primary school kids in Ghana are aware of their "murderous" activities. In a visit of one Education Inspector to one of the schools in rural Accra, the inspector asked a class to name an infant killer disease. The pupils mentioned malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, and measles. Then one pupil lifted his hand to say there is one more left out and that is *ayɛ*, which many adults have taught children, kill babies.

In a religious environment where people are brought up to feel under siege from evil supernatural powers all the time, worship-scape, whether in church auditorium or in the prayer camp, will become an important context for the use of 'potent' religious tokens in Ghanaian Christianity. Ghanaian

171 E. O. Parrinder, "African Ideas of Witchcraft," *Folklore* 67 (2006): 142-150; J. Parish, "The Dynamics of Witchcraft and indigenous shrines among the Akan," *Africa* 69 (1999): 427-447; F. Kakwata, "Witchcraft and Poverty in Africa: A Pastoral Perspective," *Black Theology* 16, (2017): 22-37; Opoku Onyinah, "Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplementary Series*, vol. 34, (Dorchester: Deo Publishing, 2012), xxx. DOI: 10.18251/okh.v4i1.93.

172 Opoku Onyinah, "Akan Witchcraft and the Concept of Exorcism in the Church of Pentecost," PhD diss., (The University of Birmingham, 2002), 1.

Charismatic Christians are aware of the danger of bayie and find its remedy in the invocation of the name Jesus and His blood. The Ghanaian Charismatic church attempts to give a Christian response to indigenous beliefs and the fear of malevolent spirits such as bayie. It does this by projecting in sermons, the sufficiency and applicability of the gospel in all spheres of life. Somehow, it seems this attempt has contributed to some Ghanaian Christians formulating their own theology of the Blood of Jesus to include other elements, meanings and functions apart from its atoning work on the cross.

Some Ghanaian Christians continue to hold Christian beliefs in one hand, while secretly holding on to their old indigenous religious beliefs in the other. This is evident in how many Christians still get involved in the traditional rituals involving the pouring of libation, partaking in tradition sacred rites, and many other practices that Christianity frowns upon. Until the issue of the fear of evil and the quest for security (supernatural and physical) is adequately addressed by providing tangible alternatives, many African Charismatic Christians will continue to see the gospel as inadequate for their daily living.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how the blood of Jesus has been reinvented as both therapeutic and apotropaic substance in contemporary Christianity in Ghana, particularly by Charismatic Christians. Until one looks at the African Christian beliefs and practices through the lenses of their worldview, we cannot understand or appreciate why these Christians have reinvented therapeutic and apotropaic meanings for the Blood of the Lamb. The African Christian looks for physical tangibility in identifying with and applying the power inherent in the blood of Jesus to his or her daily experiences such as healing and protection. Therefore, reducing the imaginary blood of Jesus to the level of the communion wine, which is rather tangible, appeals to the Ghanaian Charismatic Christian, who can have direct contact with it.

We considered how Ghanaian Charismatics have embraced in theory the finished work of Christ on the cross, but their praxis is still rooted in the traditional African context and worldview. For this reason, the reality of the Lord's Supper is interpreted mainly from the viewpoint of human experience while still capturing the original import of the meal – that is a thanksgiving celebration that frequently brings believers together to remember their Lord's finished work on Calvary.

The paper has demonstrated that the meaning of the saving and protective power of Christ's finished work on the cross through the shedding of the blood, will become clearer to African Christians through a culturally compatible Christian worldview. Therefore, if African Christians struggle to identify with a western formulated Christian worldview, then they will continue to seek alternative solutions to their fears and problems by looking at Christian practices through the lenses of African indigenous religious worldview. We have observed that Ghanaian Charismatic Christians see blood as possessing an apotropaic and therapeutic functions apart from its atoning significance. This conceptualization is informed by their African traditional view of life as a search for security against malevolent beings. As Christians, they find this security in Christian religious tokens and sacraments, especially where the Blood of Jesus is found.

Any future discussion of an emerging African Christian haematology will not be complete without considering the African Christian views of the function of the blood of Jesus discussed in this paper.

Abstract

The paper examines the conceptualization of the blood of Jesus and some related practices and utterances evident in Ghanaian Charismatic Christianity. It describes how these Christians view the blood from apotropaic and therapeutic point of view. This understanding of the function of the blood is important

because of the belief that life is a battle. To win the victory over the enemy, these Christians engage in the physical application and verbal use of the blood as a token to secure victory over the enemy. This paper adopts the discursive and analytical approach to the topic. It concludes that until one looks at the African Christian beliefs and practices through the lenses of their worldview, we cannot understand or appreciate why the Ghanaian charismatic Christians have reinvented therapeutic and apotropaic meanings for the Blood of the Lamb.