

AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY

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"African christological concepts do not exist." That statement was made in 1967 by the well-known Kenyan Anglican theologian J. S. Mbiti.¹ Now, some 20 years later, it seems timely to raise the question as to what progress, if any, has been made in the meantime. Writing in 1982, Aylward Shorter could still speak of "the failure to produce a convincing African or Black Christology."² However, in the field of African theology generally, developments are taking place all the time,³ so it is only to be expected that some of these developments should have drawn Christology into their orbit.

The notion of a regional Christology has been made familiar to us by the considerable achievements of Latin American theologians. Arising as it does from the contemporary hermeneutical orientation of theology, such an approach to Christology is one of the fruits of the more personalist notion of revelation, which was canonized for Catholics by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in *Dei verbum*.⁴ As more and more theologians in Africa take up the challenge of these new orientations in theology, they find their questions arising from two different aspects of their situation.

On the one hand, there are the questions that arise when one confronts the language and tradition of the faith with the images, culture, and traditions of a particular region. On the other hand, there are the questions that arise when one takes the problems of a particular region, not only cultural and religious, but also social, political, and economic, and reflects on them in the light of the gospel. This in turn can drive one back to the sources of the faith in a new way, with new questions and emphases, seeing what emerges from such an encounter.

In this way African Christology finds itself before two tasks. The one that emerges from the first situation described above is that of inculturation and how to communicate the faith in a more indigenous way. The task which arises from the second approach is that of praxis and how

¹ This was stated in one of the earliest essays on African Christology, "Some African Concepts of Christology," later published in *Christ and the Younger Churches*, ed. G. Vicedom (London: S.P.C.K., 1972) 51-62, at 51.

² A. Shorter, "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology," *Afer* 24 (1982) 133-37, at 134.

³ See the comprehensive survey by J. S. Ukpong, "The Emergence of African Theologies," *TS* 45 (1984) 501-36; also B. Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie in ihrem gesellschaftlichen Kontext* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1986).

⁴ Especially no. 2; cf. Ukpong, "Emergence" 507.

society can be changed through our Christianity. It is clear that sometimes the two tasks overlap. In this survey my account of the present situation of Christology in Africa will correspond to these two tasks, dividing up into two sections under the headings (1) Christologies of inculturation and (2) Christologies of liberation.

CHRISTOLOGIES OF INCULTURATION

Before taking up the various authors who will figure in our survey, I wish to make a certain division, in order to make the material more manageable. Under the heading of Christology one can distinguish reflection primarily concerned with the person of Christ from that primarily concerned with his work. The latter perspective, that of soteriology, has a special resonance in Africa, and of course it can never be totally absent from any Christological reflection.⁵ However, in order to limit the subject matter, I will omit the more systematic presentations of African soteriology. My emphasis will be on the person of Christ and how the mystery of the God-man is seen in African theology.

One possible approach to our question would be to take various titles of Christ in Christian preaching and to reflect on those which seem particularly meaningful in the light of the African tradition. For this, Mbiti has singled out Son of God, Lord, Servant of God, Savior.⁶ Not relevant in the same way are titles like Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man. That is to take traditional Christological themes with an African resonance. An opposite and more promising method also suggests itself: to take traditional African themes with a Christological resonance. This second approach is the one I will follow, and in this perspective I will treat of Christ as Master of Initiation, Healer, and Ancestor.⁷

Master of Initiation

Anselm Sanon is a Catholic bishop in Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) who has made a special study of Christ in relation to African initiation rites.⁸ In African customs there is a process of initiation

⁵ Thus C. Nyamiti, *Christ As Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo, 1984) 81, emphasizing the centrality of Christ's death for an African Christology.

⁶ Mbiti, "Some African Concepts" 58-60.

⁷ Another category sometimes spoken of is that of Christ as Chief. I omit it, partly as being less distinctive and significant, and partly for reasons of space. It is treated by F. Kabasélé, "Le Christ comme chef," *Chemins de la christologie africaine*, ed. F. Kabasélé, J. Doré, and R. Luneau (Paris: Desclée, 1986) 109-25; see also J. S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) 94-98.

⁸ A. Sanon, *Enraciner l'évangile: Initiations africaines et pédagogie de la foi* (Paris: Cerf, 1982); see also by the same author "Jésus, Maître d'initiation," in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 143-66.

associated with various stages of life—birth, puberty, marriage, death—but it is especially associated with the entry of the adolescent into adulthood within the tribe and into his appropriation of the tribal tradition. This framework is presented by Sanon as an analogy for understanding both the teaching mission of Christ and his death and resurrection, in particular making use of the idea of perfection in the Letter to the Hebrews.

Christ was himself initiated into the tradition of his people by being named, circumcised, and presented in the Temple. He was also initiated into the fulness of God's plan by being brought to the perfection spoken of in Heb 2:10, 5:9, and 7:28. This happened to him especially in his death and resurrection, which can be understood as a kind of initiatic ordeal through which one is transformed into a higher mode of existence. Indeed, without the redemptive acts of the paschal mystery, Christ's initiation process would have no more than exemplary significance; but, through their causality on our redemption, Christ's initiation is truly cause of our being initiated into a whole new mode of existence, and he is the one who leads us into the fulness of life. Thus Sanon. Benezet Bujo would want to see this process against the background of inter-Trinitarian life; it is a kind of extension into our lives of the Father's generation of the Son, by which He "initiated" the latter into the intradivine life.⁹

In this way our Lord comes to be seen as the Master of Initiation, the elder brother (Rom 8:29), at home in his Father's house (Lk 2:49), as befits a son (Jn 8:35), making others become children of the same household (Mt 23:8, 10; Mk 3:34 f.). As in the initiation process symbols are used as vehicles of the highest values of the community, so Christ leads us on through symbols, especially the sacraments. Indeed, all the various rituals and traditions of initiation are seen by Sanon as reaching perfection and fulfilment in the life of Christ's community. The people have now passed from all their complicated mysterious rituals to the one mystery of God incarnate, from all their secret words to the one Word of God, from all the trees of initiation to the one tree of the cross, from all the diverse traditions to the one tradition in Jesus.¹⁰

The value of such a presentation lies in providing the preacher with some traditional concepts and terms in which to express the significance of Christ for us. It also helps to bring into a synthesis with our image of Christ some key Christian values, such as the role of the sacraments or the place of tradition. The weakness of the model lies in that, for many

⁹ Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie* 92.

¹⁰ Sanon, *Enraciner* 183.

Africans today, initiation is no longer a living experience, and so the African theologian readily turns to other models and analogies.

Christ As Healer

This way of presenting Christ in an African context seems to have been proposed first by a Congolese writer, R. Buana Kibongi.¹¹ In English it has been taken up recently by Aylward Shorter in his book *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*, and in French by the contribution of Cécé Kolié to the symposium *Chemins de la christologie africaine*.¹² Here I follow mainly Shorter's presentation. In describing Christ as Healer, he uses the West African word *Nganga*, which might be translated witch doctor, medicine man, medium. "Healer" is perhaps the most neutral translation.

The fact of Christ's healing activity looms large in most contemporary Christologies. As Kasper wrote, "There can scarcely be a serious exegete who does not believe in a basic stock of historically certain miracles of Jesus."¹³ This is an important datum for presenting Christianity to Africans in particular, since for them this has been one of the central concerns of religion from time immemorial. The struggle for life, says Cécé Kolié, is primordial in African consciousness, and, to be credible, Christianity must be part of it.¹⁴ For the African, says Bujo, God is, above all, the God of life in its fulness, and the principal function of religion is to liberate man and woman from all that threatens their life.¹⁵ Kolié cites a survey to show how concern for health is the predominant concern among the Africans surveyed, more than employment or family life.¹⁶

Our Lord's attitude to healing, as represented in the Gospels, is marked by an integrated approach: that is to say, he heals on several levels at once, physical, emotional, psychic, social, religious. This is similar to the view taken by the traditional healers of Africa.¹⁷ In the course of time this sense of integral healing seems to have receded in Western Christi-

¹¹ R. Buana Kibongi, "Priesthood," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London: Lutterworth, 1969) 47-56. That this is the first application of the African model of healer to Christ is stated by Shorter, "Folk Christianity" 136.

¹² A. Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor* (London: Chapman/New York: Orbis, 1985). C. Kolié, "Jésus guérisseur?", in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 167-99. See also Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "Jesus Christ: Some Christological Aspects from African Perspectives," in *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology*, ed. J. S. Mbiti (Bossey: World Council of Churches, 1977) 51-65, at 57-62; A. Shorter, "The Eucharist As the Fundamental Sacrament of Christian Healing," *African Christian Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 1985) 49-59.

¹³ W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns & Oates 1976) 90.

¹⁴ Kolié, "Jésus guérisseur?" 174.

¹⁵ Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie* 31 f.

¹⁶ Kolié, "Jésus guérisseur?" 184, n. 16.

¹⁷ See E. de Rosny, *Healers in the Night* (New York: Orbis, 1985).

anity, which tends to separate the healing powers. Generally the Church's ministry has concentrated on the moral and spiritual aspects, leaving the physical to exceptional persons and places, unless of course it is simply handed over to the medical profession. It is such a separation of healing powers which is being more and more called into question today, not only in Africa but throughout the Third World. However, one can scarcely see a significant use being made of this aspect of Christ as Healer unless 'this is matched by a greater use of the healing ministry itself as a more familiar part of Church life. This title of Christ implies not only an image for preaching but a particular praxis as well.

Christ As Ancestor

Of the various themes which have emerged in African Christology, that of Christ as Ancestor seems to be at once the most distinctively African and the most profound. The notion of the ancestor is so deeply imbedded in African religious consciousness that the idea of Christ as Ancestor seems to have arisen independently in the minds of different theologians in different parts of the continent.¹⁸ The most systematic treatment of the subject to date is that by the Tanzanian theologian Charles Nyamiti in his book *Christ As Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*.¹⁹ As well as Nyamiti's work, we might also mention F. Kabasélé and B. Bujo.²⁰ A negative judgment on the whole concept has been given by Aylward Shorter.²¹

The category of ancestor is of particular interest because it focuses not just on one aspect of Christ's work but on the being of the person of Christ. We are familiar with the way our doctrine about Christ has been formed against the backdrop of our doctrine about God. In the Jewish world the exalted notion of the divinity, characteristic of Jewish faith, made the confession of Christ's divinity all the more extraordinary, in a way that was not the case in the polytheistic context of Hellenism. Contrary to the prejudices of many of the early-19th-century travelers in Africa, the African religious tradition is marked by an exalted notion of

¹⁸ Shorter, "Folk Christianity" 134, cites as the earliest mention of the idea D. Lwasa, "African Traditional Community As a Preparation for Christian Community Life," *Omnis terra* 45 (1972) 359-65. Lwasa's article is reproduced in *African Christian Spirituality*, ed. A. Shorter (London: Chapman, 1978) 141-50.

¹⁹ See n. 5 above.

²⁰ F. Kabasélé in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 127-41, 212-20; Bujo, "Afrikanische Theologie" 79-121. It is noteworthy that in his useful survey of our subject, with special emphasis on Protestant writing, P. Stadler does not treat of the aspect of ancestor: "Approches christologiques en Afrique," *Bulletin de théologie africaine* 5, no. 9 (Jan.-June 1983) 35-49.

²¹ A. Shorter, "Ancestor Veneration Revisited," *Afer* 25 (1983) 197-203.

the Supreme Being, sometimes so exalted as to represent God as distant from the world.²² In such a situation, how real is it to claim that a man is God? How can such a statement be something more than a formula of words accepted solely by an appeal to authority?

This is the context in which an appeal to the category of the exalted ancestor seems to be helpful. The ancestors, of course, are simply human beings, but they are those who have come to belong to another world. Because they are understood to exist now in a state of closeness to the Supreme Being, they are seen as mediators between heaven and earth. They have moved into the sphere of the divine and can even be the object of sacrificial cult.²³ This category, then, gives us some traditional language for speaking of the role of Christ, particularly in his capacity as exalted mediator in heaven.

However, the model of ancestor for Christ as mediator is not without its problems. While it is true that for St. Thomas Christ's mediatory role is formally attributed to his humanity,²⁴ it is also a fact that it is grounded ultimately in the union of humanity and divinity in him. Now it is precisely the divine aspect of Christ which the ancestor model scarcely does justice to. The ancestor of African tradition is clearly a human being, and his promotion to a state of nearness to God suggests, if anything, adoptionism rather than full divinity. Then there is the fact that the perception of the ancestors is not uniform throughout Africa, as Nyamiti himself admits.²⁵ Another difficulty, not sufficiently noted by the proponents of this model, is the shadowy nature of the existence sometimes attributed to the ancestors.²⁶ It seems closer to the biblical Sheol than to the Christian heaven. For reasons such as these, the writers generally fall back on pointing out that, like all analogies, the ancestor model is an imperfect comparison for Christian doctrine about Christ.²⁷ Indeed, for Aylward Shorter the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, and so he is convinced that the analogy leads to a falsification of anthropological fact; but this negative judgment has failed to gain the

²² A Kenyan theologian maintains that the African notion of God is a higher notion of divinity than that found in traditional Christianity: S. Kibicho, "Revelation in African Religion," *Africa Theological Journal* 12 (1983) 166-77.

²³ G. Guariglia, "L'Être suprême, le culte des esprits et des ancêtres et le sacrifice expiatoire chez les Igbo du sud-est Nigéria," *Cahiers des religions africaines* 4 (1970) 229-50, at 244.

²⁴ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 26, a. 2.

²⁵ *Christ As Our Ancestor* 15.

²⁶ R. Bureau, "La notion de salut dans les religions africaines," *Studia missionalia* (Rome) 30 (1981) 147-60, at 156.

²⁷ Nyamiti, *Christ As Our Ancestor* 131; Kabasélé in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 217.

support of African writers.²⁸

Of all the presentations of this question, that of Benezet Bujo seems to me the most comprehensive and the most promising.²⁹ Though so far given to us only in outline, his approach seems capable of grounding an African theological synthesis, placing the ancestor model at the centre not only of Christology but also of ecclesiology, sacramental and moral theology, and perhaps even of grace and of the theology of the Trinity. He achieves this by linking ancestorship and life. In his famous study of Bantu philosophy, Placide Tempels identified "vital force" as the decisive element for an African outlook and for African religion.³⁰ Building on this, Bujo tells us that the God of the African is the God of life, possessing life in its fulness.³¹ However, he interprets this in a thoroughly Christian way, taking as starting point the mystery of inter-Trinitarian life and the eternal generation of the Son of God. In African tradition, ancestors are related to the communication of life, and good relations with them are essential to the well-being of their descendants. However, Bujo cuts away from the African model, and from the notion of physical descent that goes with it, when he centres our relationship to Christ as ancestor on the divine sonship of Christ as source and basis of our being born of God.³² As Son of God, Christ is ancestor in a unique sense, and Bujo insists on this uniqueness by always referring to Christ as "Proto-ancestor."

Añ Proto-ancestor, Christ becomes for us the unique source of life.³³ Our new birth in Christ is a new creation, which infinitely transcends the world of African ancestors, but does in fact embody that salvation and life for which Africans have always yearned. Christ as Proto-ancestor is the perfection and fulfilment of the ideals which the God-fearing ancestors have always sought and stood for.³⁴ In this way Bujo does justice to the divine sonship of Christ and presents it not just as a qualifying afterthought to the notion of Christ as Ancestor, but as the very centre and source of the whole reality.

One of the special advantages of this model for Christology lies in the way it helps to make more understandable the relationship of Christ the

²⁸ Shorter, "Ancestor Veneration" 198 f.

²⁹ *Afrikanische Theologie*. See also his articles: "Nos ancêtres, ces saints inconnus," *Bulletin de théologie africaine* 1 (1979) 165-78; "A Christocentric Ethic for Black Africa," *Theology Digest* 30 (1982) 143-46.

³⁰ P. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959; French original, Elisabethville: Editions Lovania, 1945).

³¹ Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie* 22 and 31.

³² On this point Bujo notes a difference between himself and Nyamiti: *ibid.* 100, n. 40.

³³ Bujo, *ibid.* 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 86.

Head to the whole body of the Church. C. F. D. Moule once put it that St. Paul's teaching on this point "challenges the mind to discover a doctrine of personality which will make conceivable this combination of the universal and the particular in a single person."³⁵ For Moule, Christ is an example of what he calls "inclusive personality."³⁶ This is an idea which is surely very difficult to convey in a popular and pastoral way to Western congregations today, so penetrated is our society with its individualism. Not so in Africa.

The notion of African ancestor and lineage-head seems capable of answering the challenge to which Moule refers. For Africans, ancestorship is inseparable from the idea of the clan and of the unity of the ancestor's descendants. From the ancestor they have received life, and only as integrated with the ancestors and the clan do the individuals possess their true identity. In this way the notion of Christ as Ancestor speaks immediately and in a popular way of such difficult ideas as the Mystical Body and even, as Bujo puts it, of the *gratia capitis*.³⁷ Consequently, it seems suited to become the basis of what the same author refers to as "the African mystical body" and "a genuine African ecclesiology."³⁸

Finally, we might note that Bujo's presentation suggests certain pastoral implications of his approach. As in the case of Christ as Healer, the notion of Christ as Ancestor also involves a pastoral practice. The sense of the ancestors and the need for relationship with them still runs so deep in many parts of Africa that religion is unthinkable without them. Once one grasps the notion of Christ as Proto-ancestor, one can more easily incorporate these concerns, and some of the rituals associated with them, into a Christian context. As being in himself the fulfilment of creation and of life, Christ can lead the ancestors into the fullness of life. Through the Holy Spirit he can bestow on them a new vitality and a new joy in life, and so unite them with God in a definitive way, as the completion of their salvation history.³⁹

This concludes our survey of the Christologies of inculturation. From all that has been said it should be clear that, so far, they are largely an exercise in hermeneutics. Only time will tell how truly significant they are and, in particular, how effective they are in promoting a new African consciousness within Christianity. To the theologians of the next group which we will consider, these efforts in inculturation sometimes seem an

³⁵ C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1967) 41.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 24.

³⁷ Bujo, *Afrikanische Theologie* 101.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 136.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 92.

irrelevancy in relation to the enormous political and social problems of African Christians.

CHRISTOLOGIES OF LIBERATION

As Justin Ukpong has shown, there is such a thing as African liberation theology.⁴⁰ Though not as developed nor as comprehensive as its Latin American counterpart, it does represent a significant development within liberation theology generally, capable of putting forward its own distinctive ideas.

Here one must distinguish between theology in South Africa and that on the rest of the continent. In South African theology the distinctive influence to notice is that referred to as "black theology." The sources of this movement are basically Protestant in inspiration and have their origin in the black theology of North America.⁴¹ Radical, aggressive, and revolutionary, this theology can sometimes seem excessively political, if not racist. Thus Justin Ukpong wrote: "Black theology eschews the spiritualizing concept of redemption, whereby Christ is conceived as having died to save souls."⁴² This statement, however, is perhaps too sweeping, based on the more fervid expressions of some black theologians. One of them can write more carefully as follows: "When the black man speaks of liberation, he is not thinking of himself only. . . . He also wishes that each human being be freed completely from sin, and that our political, social, economic and personal life be redeemed."⁴³

Nevertheless, this theology is developing a forceful and striking Christology of the black Christ, the black Messiah. Black theologians are to be "iconclasts of the white God,"⁴⁴ and this approach is to be followed up in figurative representations in art.⁴⁵ Despite the apparent racialism of

⁴⁰ Ukpong, "Emergence" 521-29.

⁴¹ While acknowledging black theology's indebtedness to the black theologians of North America, Alan Boesak would insist that the latter were only giving expression to the way oppressed Africans, both in America and in Africa, have always believed "that the gospel and Jesus Christ were all about liberation" (*Farewell to Innocence* [New York: Orbis, 1977] 37).

⁴² "Emergence" 523.

⁴³ S. Gqubule, "Théologie noire sud-africaine," *Spiritus* 20 (1979) 105-9, at 107; my translation. See also Justin Bukasa Kabongo in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 305. Even C. Boshoff, in an article critical of black theology, admits the same point: "Christ in Black Theology," *Missionalia* (Pretoria) 9 (1981) 107-25, at 119.

⁴⁴ E. de Carvalho, "What Do the Africans Say That Jesus Christ Is?" *Africa Theological Journal* 10, no. 2 (1981) 17-25, at 21.

⁴⁵ Kabongo in *Chemins de la christologie africaine* 307. With this Shorter disagrees, noting that the idea of representing Christ as black is "too esoteric for the average African Christian, who stubbornly points out that in actual historical fact Christ was not black" ("Folk Christianity" 135).

such language, the central point in such statements is a dramatic affirmation of the doctrine of the Incarnation. "This theology," writes S. Gqubule, "seeks to interpret the incarnation as Christ taking root in the chaos which is the black man's lot. It sees in the crucifixion of Christ the image of the crucifixion of the blacks in the shanty towns, at the gates of the towns and cities of this country, where every hovel is a Calvary."⁴⁶

A rare voice from Angola carries the same message beyond the borders of South Africa, reflecting at the same time the spirit of resistance to Portuguese colonialism.

For us, Jesus Christ is not a "dead Christ" of the processions or of Holy Week. He is not the effeminate Christ, the passive Jesus, that makes us also passive to slavery and suffering. This kind of Jesus is a contradiction to our African heritage and to our fighting as a people. Jesus Christ, for us, is an active, militant, liberating Jesus, because only by being a Jesus of the oppressed, can the Gospel of the liberation of the oppressed be relevant to us.⁴⁷

When we speak of theology from South Africa, we should also bear in mind the work of the small group of Catholic theologians in that country. The best-known name here is that of the white South African Dominican friar Albert Nolan with his book *Jesus before Christianity*.⁴⁸ While the confessional basis of this book brings it closer theologically to the work of the Latin Americans than to that of black theology, the author's concern for justice is clearly a product of the same situation as that of black theology. Nolan's book has been well received internationally. It takes its place with those of other liberation theologians in bringing theology back to the historical Jesus and to the sociopolitical dimensions of his public life.

When we move away from South African into the newly independent countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the situation of liberation theology is significantly different. The ruling establishment in these countries is African, and generally they are still legitimated before their countrymen by an aura of nationalism. This does not prevent injustices from arising, sometimes of an extreme kind, such as in Amin's Uganda, but it does complicate the situation of protest which is central to liberation theology. Nevertheless, a theologian like Jean Marc Ela of the Cameroons will insist that the main task for African theology today is "to discover in

⁴⁶ "Theologie noire sud-africaine" 106; my translation.

⁴⁷ De Carvalho, "What Do the Africans Say?" 18. This writer is a bishop of the Methodist Church in Angola. He has also written "Who Is Jesus Christ for Africa Today?" *Africa Theological Journal* 10, no. 1 (1981) 27-36.

⁴⁸ New York: Orbis, 1978.

Jesus Christ the God who liberates and transforms life in solidarity with people."⁴⁹

As we have noticed, African liberation theology is developing its own way, but when we come to ask about Christology in particular, then one has to admit that so far, except perhaps in South Africa, little has been achieved of a distinctive kind. Generally, the theologians to whom we refer, e.g. those mentioned by Justin Ukpong,⁵⁰ have latched on to the contributions of others. In Africa there have as yet been no Christological studies comparable to those of Sobrino, Segundo, or Boff.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to survey recent developments of Christology in Africa in the context of the growing phenomenon of African theology generally. By way of summary, one can say that, of the two main issues in African Christology, i.e. inculturation and liberation, the most developed studies so far have been concerned with the first rather than with the second. One could also point out, with Aylward Shorter,⁵¹ that up to now the achievements of African Christology have been too much a matter among scholars, and not enough progress has been made in influencing the corresponding pastoral scene. Of the various conceptions we have dealt with, it seems to me that those concerned with Christ as Healer and as Ancestor are the ones most adapted to immediate pastoral application, being also the ones of greatest theological development and promise. In the future, the gap between theory and practice will certainly be bridged more and more, and one can only expect that as a result the theology of these matters will grow in significance and influence both in Africa and abroad.

⁴⁹ J.-M. Ela, "La foi des pauvres en acte," *Telega* 9, no. 3 (1983) 45-58, at 56.

⁵⁰ "Emergence" 525-29.

⁵¹ "Folk Christianity" 135.