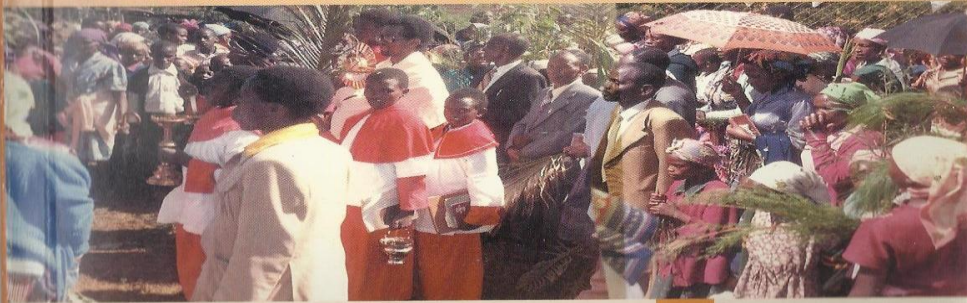


Salvation & Being Saved

An African Socio-Religio-Philosophical Touch



P.N. Wachege

"... salvation is not a game of hop, skip and jump with shouts of hurray, praise the Lord, hallelujah with prolonged AMENS and then a sudden earning of gold medals because one has decisively made it. As explained at length, it is a tedious niggling process of life-long struggle which remains ongoing so long as we are in this world. A come-ongoing coming and not an I-have-got-it syndrome owing to the devastating malevolence of devil-satan."

Dr. Wachege's book, therefore, comes in handy to provide an in-depth understanding of the doctrine of redemption and salvation with ecumenical accentuation and orientation in this era of religious pluralism and dialogue. He not only enriches his investigations and reflections from the Christian basic sources, namely the Bible and Tradition, he also distinguishes himself as a forthright African scholar by reflecting from an African socio-religio-philosophical perspective.

Indeed: " Salvation then is a kind of exodus. We journey on this road struggling towards the **PROMISED LAND**, the eternal home called heaven. That is why our way of living should be reconciled with our way of salvation. In our diaspora situation, we are essentially pilgrims."



Fr. Dr. P. N. Wachege was born in Kiambaa in Kiambu District during the Mau Mau uprising as the eldest son of Mwalimu Stephen Chege and Mama Christine Wairimu. He is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Kenya and a co-worker in the Holy Family Basilica in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. He is the author of three published books entitled JESUS CHRIST OUR MUTHAMAKI (IDEAL ELDER); AFRICAN WOMEN LIBERATION: A Man's Perspective and AFRICAN SINGLE MOTHERS; Socio-Ethical and

Religious Considerations and several published articles in diverse referred journals.

Today's sensitivity and controversy over the intricate question of "salvation" and "being saved" generate both fascination and excitement among the Christians and the non-Christians alike. The phenomenon has both historical experiences as well as eschatological promises. In the historical experiences in the Old Testament, God liberates the Israelites through His providential conjunction of circumstances and by way of human agents (2 Kings 19:34; 20:6; Gen. 45:5 Is 7:8; Ex14). The Israelites turned to God for redemption and complained when the anticipated salvation delayed or failed (Jr. 8:20). In the New Testament the theology of the economy of salvation unfolds itself and manifests itself most perfectly with the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, the ideal Saviour and Redeemer as Dr Wachege explains distinctly and clearly.

Salvation and redemption in the Christian history has thus been revealed as an essential aspect of God's absolute benevolence to human kind. *Salvation and Being Saved: An African Socio-Religio-Philosophical Touch*, captures our attention in the crucial quest and search for redemption and salvation in the dawn of the Third Millennium. Many people would contend that the answers underlying the fundamental questions on redemption and salvation are not simple. This is notwithstanding the fact that Christian denominations claim authentic understanding of redemption, salvation and being saved yet one notices religious animosity, distortions and scramble for adherents among them. Dr Wachege's book, therefore, comes in handy to provide an in-depth understanding of the doctrine of redemption and salvation with an ecumenical accentuation and orientation in this era of religious pluralism and dialogue. He not only enriches his investigations and reflections from the Christian basic sources namely, the Bible and Tradition, he also distinguishes himself as a forthright African scholar by reflecting from an African socio-religio-philosophical perspective.

Like the gospel evangelists, Dr Wachege accentuates an existential, philosophical and contextual approach to the doctrine of redemption and salvation. His approach is both inculturational and liberational.

The evangelist Luke characteristically used the cultures and philosophy of life of the Gentiles, particularly the Greek cultured, to win his readers in view of the Good News. His gospel according to the historical-critical method of biblical analysis is remarkably cultured since his readers are historically known to be highly cultured people thus making his gospel narrative relevant and acceptable to the gentiles especially the Greeks (Conzelmann, H., New York, 1961; Kummel, G. W., New York, 1966; Talbert, C. H., New York, 1984). The Matthean gospel has many Jewish characteristics since the evangelist wrote mainly for the Jewish readers drawing insights from the Jewish cultures and philosophy. St Matthew was trying to convince them that Jesus Christ is the long awaited Messiah (Gunday, R. H., Michigan, 1982; Beave, E. W., New York, 1979; Kummel, G. W., New York, 1966; Bornkamm, G., et al., London, 1963). In like manner, Dr Wachege roots himself in the African traditions, religions, cultures, thought forms and philosophy of life which were otherwise regarded as heathen and barbaric by some of the early Christian missionaries. He enriches us and helps us to comprehend more meaningfully the Christian doctrine of redemption and salvation by examining and articulating the fundamental points of interaction between the African traditio-cultural, religions and this vital Christian doctrine. To accomplish this, he gives a profound analysis of the fundamental elements of salvation imbued in the African worldview prior to Christian missionary enterprise explicating their inter-relationship and mutual enrichment with Christianity thereby encountering African philosophy, culture and religiosity with Christianity.

Dr. Wachege utilises the African conception of the doctrine of salvation to provide an African worldview of Christ and eschatological salvation which, during the missionary enterprise, was obstructed by Western civilisation and culture. Such Western scholars as Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Jacques Dupuis, Gerald O'Collins, Osca Cullmann, Avery Dulles, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Hans Kung are of international prominence in the theology of salvation. However, their invaluable insights, as the author notes, are inadequate for an African worldview and situation in

life. Therefore, this book provides a significant convergence between the western conception and the African perception. Thanks to Dr Wachege's commitment as an African priest and scholar in this rather polemic and complex issue of salvation, awareness is created that African traditions, religions, culture and philosophy of life had vital salvific characteristics prior to Christian missionary enterprise owing to general revelation. This, we must state, has been shaped by his pastoral cum academic responsibilities; the goal of his exegetical work to make available to the Church and Christians both solid and necessary understanding of the doctrine of salvation and being saved to augment Catholicity in the face of the emerging religious sects, splinter cliques, fundamentalism and fanaticism. This, we trust, will ward off the confusion shrouding salvation, religious phobia and syncretism within the context of religious pluralism through the lenses of inculturation and liberation.

Though a Catholic priest, the author accords this book an ecumenical cum liberational – inculturational orientation with a laudable objectivity and open-mindedness. He has researched among various Christian denominations, African traditionalists and western scholars in a bid to create and spur an interlocution and mutual respect in sincere understanding and respective enrichment. This is a bid, among other theologians to aggrandize ecumenism and dialogue in empowering Christians to genuine conversion, divinisation and perseverance in salvation praxis for integral liberation particularly in this Third Millennium. As such, this book is an invaluable, systematic and scholarly work on confronting the Christian doctrine of salvation and being saved with African Socio-religio-philosophical aspects.

Hence, Dr Wachege's book creates a practical inter-denominational cooperation, deeper authentic conception of salvation praxis and complementarity and comprehensive inculturation and liberation within the umbrella of global religious pluralism as the author explains. I trust that the reader will agree with me that this invaluable book is the very best and most treasurable memorial marking the author's 20th

priestly anniversary on April 20th Year 2000 which, thank God, also happens to be Holy Thursday – the feast of priests. Taking all these into account, I highly recommend this book to all.

Jane N. Kabugi
Ph.D. Candidate
Dept of Religious Studies
University of Nairobi

General Introduction