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God as Father: The imagery of Unmerited Relationship with God, Seen from Haya-African and Christian Perspectives

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Abstract

The paper explores and analyses the fatherhood model of God that is, God as Father with special emphasis on an imagery of unmerited relationship with God from both African and Christian perspectives. It seeks a religious and theological models for an appropriate interpretation of the fatherhood of God from both African and Christian perspectives. It involves articulating salient questions relating to Christology and theology and how both could enable us to further perceive and experience God as the Father. It entails relationship with God the Father which cannot be attained or sustained by human effort. To enhance this the study applies a Haya-African threefold model of God, along being strongly its invocation of the Deity in a . threefold form that is, *Kazoba Aka Ishe Ruhanga Aka Tata Ntangaire* (literary, *Kazoba of Ruhanga* (or of *Ruhanga's* father) of my Father *Ntangaire*). It incorporates the aspects of the deity Father, Son and Spirit of the Deity, of which all are the key to understanding both the Haya-African and Christian concept of God. Hence, it applies a working hypothesis. The Haya-African perceptions of a moral universe and a moral creator had moulded their perception of a moral and personal Deity along Father-Child relationship, and is continuing to shape their Christian understanding of the fatherhood of God and relationship with him.

Introduction

The Article investigates the perception of God as the Father from Haya-African and Christian perspectives, with emphasis on an imagery of unmerited Relationship with God. It asks related, pertinent questions. Is it possible to study the African perception and experience of God as Father with of hope of it being able to illuminate

an understanding of the fatherhood model of God from a Christian perspective? Can the Fatherhood of God be attained and sustained by a merely human effort? Can Christology and a Theology of Grace lead believers to further perceive and experience God as Father in an unmerited relationship with him? Any access to answers of these questions demands knowing people's religious metaphoric imagery models that enable people to perceive and experience the reality of God. As Burden echoes, "One of the most important paradigm shifts in recent theology has been the move away from understanding theological statements as normative or dogmatic propositions" (1990:191-192). Likewise, theologians like Mc Fague, Van Huyssteen and Shorter had been seriously examining "how religious language expressed in images and metaphors [like the fatherhood model of God] become theological language" (Huyssteen 1989:158-168); and therefore an important source for uncovering African categories of thought about man, society and God (Shorter 1973:83).

The Article has been divided into five parts. Part One presents an introductory approach to the study. Part Two explores the perception of the fatherhood model of God from Haya-African perspective in the light of an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form. It involves the moral universe as well as the moral creator and the person God, who is the Father in a Father-Child relationship. Part Three explores the perception of the fatherhood model of God from a Christian perspective, involving christological and other theological concepts relating to unmerited relationship with God the Father. Part Four presents the christianisation of the Haya-African fatherhood model of God and indigenization of the Christian fatherhood model of God, for a better understanding of filial and unmerited relationship with him. Part Five concludes the Article with suggestions.

A. God as Father from Haya-African Perspectives

The section explores the Haya-African perception and experience of the Deity along the fatherhood model of God. As Cardinal Maurice Otunga strongly argues, we must seek for the "new and dynamic image" of "the seeds of the Word" already present in traditional ways, because they possess seeds that can produce flowers which have never been seen before (1993:150; Olupona 1991:22-23). Such an approach is needed bearing in mind that the learning process precedes from the known to the unknown. It points to the need for researching

on the nature of African perception and experience of the fatherhood model of God, for a better understanding of the Christian fatherhood model of God.

However, it has been strongly maintained that for doing theology in any time and in any context, one must do it differently, leading to the formulation of theology appropriate to a given people. It demands formulating and describing a God-world relationship credible to respective people according to their place, time and model of understanding the reality. It involves focusing not on demythologizing but remythologizing for identifying and elucidating primary metaphors and models of God according to people's experience of him. (Mc Fague 1987: 30-33). Its justification lies in the fact that the reality of God is not a proposition deduced by our reason, but rather an experience which confronts us everywhere, towards getting its truth and meaning in a given structure to which we conform. In no way, the reality of God or about God is either limited to scriptural documents or to religious metaphors, models, and concepts. Rather, it is perceived and experienced in and beyond them leading people to properly perceive of God, mainly his relationship with humans. Even though metaphors or models of God are not definitions of God, they are accounts of human experiences relating to relationship with him (Mc fague 1987:41-42).

On this basis, any study of the conception of God the Father should start from the view point of the imagery of God the Father being as this is experienced and lived by respective people according to their religious beliefs and experiences. Such an approach, demands applying one's experience of God in order to understand other people's experiences of God. On the conviction that we would never be able to describe the essence of other people's religion and its concept of God unless we know it from their view point (Bettis 1969:45). In Taylor's words, "you have not really understood another religion [and its concept of God] until you have been tempted by the insights of this other religion" (1963:28). Its necessity involves an African philosophy of "making a new mat while sitting on an old mat". It demands an exploration and articulation on how the fatherhood of God could be interpreted and re-interpreted in terms of indigenous perception of a threefold conception of God? Its applicability and justification lie in the fact that Haya-African applied

their fatherhood model of God to perceive and understand the fatherhood model of God according to Christianity. This verifies the argument that Haya-African response to the missionaries' version of the fatherhood model of God was not done blindly but intelligently and logically. As Oduyoye asks, "How were they to come to their own declaration of Christian faith if they were required to follow blindly? (1986: 42).

1. Perception of a Moral Universe and a Moral Creator

The Haya-Africans' perception of a moral universe has been gained mainly through observing nature, divine interventions, dreams, visions and cosmological happenings which in turn have inspired conceptual questions. What is this universe in which we live? What is its origin? What was there before creation? These questions and many others were part of Africans' perception of the reality-seeking process. Possible answers to them had enabled Haya-Africans to strongly believe that the universe does not exist on its own as a matter of chance, rather it is a created moral universe. It led them to pose questions, who is this Deity? What is his relation to the universe in general and to humanity in particular? Through a cosmological perception, Haya- Africans came to know that there was one moral creator who created the universe and brought all things into being. It implies Haya-Africans' perception of a moral universe which presupposed a moral creator. Such perception has roots in their perception of the nature of the universe as well as their role and destiny in it (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1992:4). These are the anthropological values, particularly those portrayed as a mythical narrative form, being believed to "make up human culture which give glimpse to the perception of the Deity" (Bevans 2003:55). Thus, a myth has been defined as a context of reality of what had taken place at a given time and space since the beginning of time mainly focussing on how reality came into existence (Kahakwa 2003:82). Hence, myths are regarded as the "only adequate way of speaking about God" (Shorter 1973:92-93). Accordingly, nature was the book from which the knowledge of creation and the Creator was gained (Hughes 1936:30). All over the world, the affirmation of God as Creator is an answer to the question about the meaning of belief in him (Peacocke 1978:136,145). Therefore, to speak about the created universe, first and foremost is to make an affirmation about God the

Creator. Thus, creation is regarded as a matrix for one's self-understanding, as well as his understanding of God and great events in the history (Sundkler 1980:45-46). Allen echoes,

Many religious people, without any particular philosophy or scientific knowledge, believe in God, because they believe that the world has come from somewhere...Nature becomes an extension...[which] gives indirect contact with the Creator and designer of the world" (1989:115).

It implies that the truth about God was known not only through scriptures but through "fellowship with the living Spirit of truth, who makes God known to them in their own religious experience" (Hughes 1936:30). Thus nature was the book from which the knowledge of creation and the Creator was gained. A similar experience has been reported in other societies at global level. While a German theologian and clergy Dr Martin Luther, viewed 'the world as a mask of God' and 'God as God's word', the British poet Gerard Manley Hopkins viewed it as being 'shaped by and with the grandeur of God (Bevans 2003:13).

2. Perception of Personal Deity

The Haya-African perception of a moral universe which presupposed a moral creator gave birth to a perception of the Deity, *Ruhanga* who is not an "It" but a personal God, as well as his relationship with humans. Hence, the personal Deity is a major characteristic of God, as he is the person par excellence, and therefore the Primary Source of intelligence, wisdom and of all life (Rwehumbiza 1983: 12, 225). Perception of a personal Deity led Haya-Africans to perceive him as the Father of men and master of all visible and invisible powers. Accordingly, different anthropomorphical names had been employed to identify him as a personal God. They are the means of expressing and conceptualizing images about of him of whom they know and confess. Among anthropomorphical names are, *Kabumba*, *Wangi*, *Umbumbi*, and *Kalunga*. A use of them verifies the fact that the Haya-Africans perceive God as a personal God and not an impersonal God.

Being a personal God, he is perceived as the supreme Law-Giver, he is the Supreme Judge, who rewards and blesses good men and punishes the wicked ones not only here on earth but also in the hereafter. The African perception of a person Deity depicts the reality that he never lives alone in isolation apart from his people, because he

is both the member of the communal life and the head of the entire community, thus sharing life with all members of the community. Its logic lies in the fact that since God is a personal God, he has all personhood characteristics of being either the Father or Mother. The personhood of God and relationship with him is attested in prayers and invocations in which God is addressed as the Father and therefore a personal Deity (Parratt 1995:125). If this is the case, the assertion that the Bantu lacks the concept of personal God but only a personification of man and dynamism which are technical terms of an immanent amoral and allpervasive power is not true (Rwehumbiza 1983:13-14). Alternatively, they also assert that Haya-African notion of a person Deity is incredible, as it exists and acts coincidentally rather than acting transcendently. But, for Haya-Africans "...the personhood model of God is not only the best for perceiving and experiencing the fatherhood model of God but is also the best one for strongly reflecting on God's activity in the world (Mcfague 1987: 82-83). The naming and identifying of the Deity by names which function as his attributes, verify this perception.

3. Names of God: Ruhanga/Nyamuhanga

For Haya and other Africans, the name for God is needed for experiencing and expressing God's concern and relationship with them. Accordingly, the exercise of naming God with different names has been identified as a philosophical and theological verification of people's mature experience and relationship with him. This is so since the names of God represent people's different ways of conceiving him through various experiences in their lives (Omari 1970:144). Additionally, the names for God, particularly the descriptive ones, summarize and crystallize people's various concepts and ideas about their beliefs in God, as well as his nature and activity (Harjula 1969:17) . One of God's name is *Ruhanga* or *Nyamuhanga* (*God the Creator*), meaning God who cares for and continually provides them with daily needs. He also guides and admonishes them in all situations.

Etymologically, the name *Ruhanga* and *Nyamuhanga* are the noun names which denote two concepts which depict the double notion of God who is God and Creator at the same time. Both names, *Ruhanga* and *Nyamuhanga* are derived from the verb *Kuhanga* which denotes two things, First, to create or to make carefully; secondly, to

speak but only used for God or king. It is him who only speaks and things come into existence by his very word; hence people simply call him as *Kigambo* (the Word by which he creates). When *kuhanga* is applied to God, it achieves its fullest meaning. While the former, denotes God's speech, or Word of utterance to human beings, the latter denotes the king's speech to people, as he is God's representative.

Omukama or *Omugabe* (human king) has the sense of speaking with authority; indicating that things are instantly, done by the subjects (Rwehumbiza 1983:164).

Thus, *Ruhanga* or *Nyamuhanga*, (God the Creator), is neither a philosophical concept nor an object of sheer theory. Therefore, an imagery or name for God, *Ruhanga* or *Nyamuhanga* is not an empty utterance but an expression of the Haya-African's belief in him which is, part of their reflection and experience of God. Even though, like all names for God, *Ruhanga* does not depict the whole reality of God, which transcends identification.

Names and attributes of God highlight on the manner and the importance of speaking about him meaningfully, Tribel echoes,

God is not just a term or label but a name...Speaking about God means to call his name. His name refers to his work. By calling his name God becomes present, an encounter is possible, a religious experience is made... Speaking about God is therefore meaningful only when using the name of God. [His Only reality is described through his names leading to an encounter of him] A meaningful speaking of God requires the use of his name, because the experience of God reflected in his name determines our understanding of God (Tribel paper p. 3-4).

4. God the Father: Father-Child Relationship

The notion of a moral universe which presupposes a moral creator as well as a personal Deity gave birth to the Haya-African perception of the Deity who is not only and merely a moral and personal God but also and essentially the Father, which denotes a state of having child and even children.

Seitel describes the Haya oral literature as a tool for understanding the reality (1972:68-69), in this case, the perception and experience of God as Father. A similar ancient belief is experienced in other societies, where "the idea of the Godhead who is the Father of the World and of human beings was extremely old. It

has been regarded as one of the primordial phenomena of the history of religions (Walter 1984:137), Rwehumbiza reports,

Belief in God as “the Father” of all humanity is the greatest attribute the Bantu conceive of God...It establishes a father-child relationship, which give the Bantu great filial confidence and trust in approaching God to ask him for all kinds of blessings. Thus, he is the Great Caretaker of all humankind. (1983:158)

For achieving an appropriate understanding of the fatherhood of God from African perspective, one should bear in mind the necessity of understanding Bantu religio-philosophical worldview (Rwehumbiza 1983:208-209). For them, the notions of Father and fatherhood of God both demonstrate the fact that their religion is explicit monotheism in which God is only believed and worshipped to the exclusion of any other divine beings (Rwehumbiza 1983:284). This is justified by the belief that for Africans, manhood often symbolizes intelligence, wisdom, power and authority, and the fatherhood of God being understood as dynamic, living and sacred (Parrat 1987:62-64). For expressing and describing this belief the Haya-Africans employed anthropomorphic names and titles, to depict the creation and the Deity. These contain the image of God as well as a strong sense of him as a transcendent God. Even though, models and images of God the Father do not portray a biological relationship in terms of having physical body but rather a close relationship between the Haya and the Deity, *Ruhanga*, in terms of spiritual perception (Rwehumbiza 1983:94-95).

The Haya saying, *Ruhanga / Nyamuhanga atonda tazara* (God does not biologically beget but creates) supports this belief. Therefore his status should not be taken literally to mean a biological Son, which might imply the existence of a biological mother and wife of the Deity. It led them to perceive the fatherhood of God along the lines of filial or parental relationship which gives them confidence in him. Accordingly, they “do not indulge in theorising or philosophising about the personality of God, rather, they experience his personality in terms of his actions being described in anthropomorphic terms” (Rwehumbiza 1983:105-106).

However, the Haya-Africans’ understanding of the Fatherhood of God does not mean the biological father but rather a relational Father. The fatherhood model of God depicts and presents the Father who is

accountable and responsive for his creature in general and humans in particular (Mcfague 1987:87).

However, from African point of view the word God the Father is an imagery and metaphoric depiction. This is so since "...a metaphor is normally a word or expression used in an unusual context in order to understand the unknown in terms of the known terms (Huysseeten 1989:132-133). This denotes the necessity of people's language which not only and merely represents or reflects reality but also constitutes it. It implies the fact that the father model is not an end in itself but a beginning towards deeper conceptions of God. Thus, it plays a primary role towards understanding of religious reality and their contexts (Huyssteen 1989:141).

For almost if not all Bantu people like Lunda, Tswana, Nyoro, Haya, Shona, Nkole, Kiga to mention but a few, the fatherhood of God is a basic belief. Hence, God has been strongly depicted and portrayed as God the Father, who is the creator and sustainer of all things that is, humans and other creatures. In accordance with this belief, God is also portrayed as the only Supreme Father who is the source of all the fatherhood.

The Haya-African perception of God the Father, gave birth to perception of a Father-Child relationship. It implies that God the Father has a child and even children. Such a perception, has its roots in the reasoning that since God is the Father, he should have a Son or a Daughter, which is a typical African belief (Moila 2002:72). They believe that at one time the Deity had a child or children, "some of whom were responsible for the founding of nations" (Mbiti 1969:78). It entails viewing and perceiving his status as a metaphorical and symbolic expression of the Haya-African belief in the Father-Child relationship.

Nevertheless, a similar notion of the Son of the Deity has been experienced almost in other African societies, especially among the Bantu e.g. Southern Africa. The Soth-Tswana, identify the Son of God as *Nnwana oa Modimo* (Child of God) who is believed to be the Giver of all good things on behalf of God-Modimo (Rwehumbiza 1983:136). On one hand, the Bantu concept of the fatherhood of God portrays the notion of an intimate paternal-filial relationship between people and the Deity who is named differently according to respective people's cultural milieu. It also depicts the filial relationship between

the Son of *Ruhanga* (*Kazoba*) and *Ruhanga* himself, and between *Ruhanga* and the Haya-Nyambo people on the other hand. Thus, the image of Father-Child relationship has become a Haya-Africans' custom of naming and addressing *Ruhanga*, God the creator. This reality could be reflected upon along an invocation to God in a threefold form which expresses his paternity, hence, "Oh God, Begetter of kings, Oh Creator of heaven and earth" (Rwehumbiza 1983:174).

C. God the Father in the Framework of a Threefold Invocation

However, the perception of God the Father is best perceived in its framework of an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form, which depicts aspects of *Ruhanga*, (God the creator) namely, the aspect of God the Father, (*Ruhanga*) the aspect of the Son of *Ruhanga* (*Kazoba*) and the aspect of the Spirit of *Ruhanga* (*Ntangaire*) Thus, all names of the aspects of God are incorporated in this invocation being linked and related to one another.

Twesigye describes it as a well-defined and expressed threefold concept of the Deity, similar to the classical Christian trinitarian model. He verifies his thesis by arguing,

this was the first time that I had ever come across this claim, namely that the Banyankole and the Bakiga, [Haya, Nyoro and Toro] people had a trinitarian concept of God prior to the arrival of Christianity and that it had been so well and clearly stated compared to the Christian trinitarian doctrine. (1996:202-203)

This demands a detailed description of an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form involving a description of each of the aspects of the Deity that is, Aspect of God the father, Aspect of the Son of God and Aspect of the Spirit of God.

1. Aspects of God the Father: *Ruhanga*

The aspect of God the Father is not an end in itself as it opens the way for a perception of an aspect of the Son of God. It could be well understood along ancestral idioms and models, involving articulating the aspect of God the Father according to its framework of an invocation of the Deity in a three fold form. However, the term Father has been applied by some African theologians like Twesigye, Nyamiti, Mugambi, Moila and others to develop an understanding of the fatherhood model of God along the ancestral approach. It has a basis on what Mulago describes as the Father of men and vital

participation (1969:158). Thus, Africans never question the importance and authenticity of the term Father as a model for describing the Deity, who is the greatest Father of men. Danqua in his book, “The Akan Doctrine of God”, maintains that in Africa God is perceived as the Great Ancestor, who is the source of all, including all human ancestors, hence he is perceived as the Proto-ancestor or Ancestor par excellence (Sawyer 1970:13, 95-96). For Bujo, the concept of Proto ancestor ensures not only an African understanding of God as the Great Ancestor (Magesa 1997:45), but also the unity of the past, present and future community of the descendants and their departed relatives (1992:83). Nyamiti, regards an indigenous perception of the fatherhood of God, as matrix for perceiving and experiencing the African concept of God (1978:15-20). For Twesigye the notion of the Deity, *Ruhanga* who is being perceived as the Father in a plurality of oneness is important for understanding the nature and manner of identifying him in relationship with his aspects. His thesis has a basis on Nkole, Kiga and Haya’s anthropological identification of the Deity and his aspects. It is an African way of depicting realities. The action of addressing the Deity who is the Father in his aspects as this is contained in an invocation of him in a threefold form, demonstrates that the Nkole and Kiga as well as the Haya and other Africans “knew God many years almost since their existence on earth (Twesigye 1996:185). They new and worshiiped him in his aspects that is *Ruhanga*, his Son and Spirit.

2. Aspect of the Son of the Deity: Kazoba

The perception of God the Father as it is demonstrated in an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form, led to the perception of the Son of the Deity. This means that the aspect of God the Father is not an end in itself rather, it opens the way for other two aspects of God in this case the aspect of the Son of God. Lutashobya, as reported by Bahendwa, Sundkler and Mutembei, describes *Kazoba* and how he is incorporated and invoked in an invocation to *Ruhanga* (Bahendwa 1990:25; Sundkler 1980:53). Likewise, Niwagila says, “When the Haya invoke *Kazoba aka Ishe Ruhanga aka Tata Ntangaire* (Kazoba Son (or of Father) of *Ruhanga* of (or my) Father) *Ntangaire*) they affirm that *Ruhanga* is the originator and centre of the Haya community” (1998:386).

The main source of the Haya perception of the notion of the Son of the Deity derives from creation mythical stories. According to the first mythical version of creation, *Ruhanga* is believed to have two Sons, *Rugaba* and *Kibumbi*, of whom both participated in the creation of man, through being ordered by *Ruhanga* to mould a human being from clay, of which thereafter, *Ruhanga* himself blew breath into the nostrils of created figure (Niwagila 1966:8). According to the second mythical version of creation, *Ruhanga* himself moulded the human being from clay, thereafter ordered his only begotten Son, *Kazoba* the Illuminator to breathe into the nostrils of the created figure on his behalf. He did so and immediately the created being started to breathe.

The second version is similar to the Pedi version, of which according to Moila the Deity *Kgobe*, created the world comprising animals and plants, whereas his Son, *Kgobeane*, created men” (2002:72). While *Kazoba*, the Haya Son of the Deity, *Ruhanga*, participated in the creation of the human being by breathing into the nostrils of the created figure, the Pedi Son of the Deity was involved in the entire creation of men along collaborative way.

3. Aspect of the Spirit of God: *Ntangaire* or *Sister Spirit*

Like the aspect of God the Father, the aspect of the Son of the Deity is not an end in itself, rather it led to perceive and experience the Spirit of the Deity. A perception of her was originated from Africans’ perception of a created moral universe, which presupposes a moral creator who is both a person God and Father along Father-Child relationship. Access to this perception was through mythical narrations.

According to ane myth, the Spirit of *Ruhanga* was imparted upon human beings at creation when *Amagara* (vital force or the breath, was blown into the nostrils of the created figure by the Son of *Ruhanga*. It led the Haya to conclude that the *Amagara* was a transcendent vital force of the Deity, *Ruhanga* (Rwehumbiza 1983:172) and not simply *omwoyo* (breath). Ultimately, *Amagara* was identified as *Amagara ga Ruhanga* or *Omwoyo gwa Ruhanga* (the vital force or Spirit of *Ruhanga*).

According to another mythical version, the identification of the Spirit of the Deity is believed to have been experienced at a later stage, following the *Amagara* or vital force being breathed into the

being as well as his awareness of his creation. This is justified by the name and word *Ntangaire* which by nature also implies surprise and a state of awe that a human being has concerning his creation which was followed by queries. *Ndyohi? Kandi ayangirakwo nohi?* (Who am I and Who made this to me?) As Bettis and Soderblom maintain, “the initial state of man’s mind is amazement not only for philosophy but equally for religion” (1969:57). It led the Haya to believe that the word *Ntangaire*, was the first word uttered by a human being to express his awareness of himself as a living creature.

The belief in the Deity being perceived together with his Spirit was a logical conclusion to their perception of him. In the Old Testament, the Spirit was identified as the creative breath of God, who gives life to all creatures (Migliore 1991:168; Ps 104:29-30). In other religions, the Spirit was conceived and yet is being conceived as the breath of life without distinguishment from the soul (Handry 1957:104). A justification of it lies in the conviction that “faith cannot develop any view of creation that excludes the Spirit since creation only exists in the power of the divine Spirit, which has entered into it. It would perish if God withdrew his Spirit from it” (Moltmann 1981:111; Psalms 104:29f). Hence the Spirit of the Deity has been viewed as a vital force of nature and creation. Mackey holds a similar view,

[since] breath is essential to life, by a natural extension of meaning and excluding its religious sense, spirit came to refer to life, measured as it is by the number of our breaths and thence to refer further to those particular extensions or achievements of human life. (1983:68)

Haya-Africans believe that the Spirit of the Deity, *Ruhanga*, mainly lives inside the human being, mostly in the heart, hence an idiomatic saying, *Ishenkazi omutima* (the Aunt of the heart). One’s biological Aunt usually gives wise advice on the challenges and problems of life, thus guiding and directing him or her in moral issues. Hence, she is a voice from the heart that directs one to do what is right, and not to do what is wrong. The burning issue here is, which gender does this Spirit have? Since the Haya and other Africans regard the Spirit of God as one’s Aunt, it is likely that the Spirit of *Ruhanga* is a feminine, therefore a daughter. In other African societies, according to Moila and Opuku’s observations, the Spirit of the Deity was

perceived as an active agent or One's Aunt (*Ishenkazi Omutima*) who could be addressed either as a SHE or a HE (Moila 2002:76).

This complies with Judaism-in Rabbinical texts in which the wisdom or Sophia or the torah was believed to be a feminine and thus daughter of God (Yahwel) who was related and linked with the creation (Migliore 1991) . Alternatively, since the Deity, *Ruhanga* and his Son, (*Kazoba*) were identified as masculine, the Spirit of *Ruhanga* would be identified as a feminine , and therefore, *Sister Spirit*, or *Aunt Spirit*. or *Ntangaire*

D. God as Father from Christian Perspective

This section investigates the fatherhood model of God and his relationship within himself on one hand and with humans on the other hand. It also deals with an exploration of how these models could shed light on the Haya-African interpretation of God the Father. However, any study of this nature, should start from the view point of God himself who is at the very heart of the Christian message. It entails the description of God's act or actions both in himself as Father or his models or aspects of the Son and holy Spirit, on one hand, and his relation with humans on the othe side (Karl Barth 1992:6-7).

1. Perception: An Imagery Metaphor of God the Father

A metaphor could be defined as a model of which similarity between two things can be simply stated. A model is a metaphor with staying power, having gained sufficient stability and scope so as to present a pattern for relatively comprehensive and coherent explanation.

Theological terms are the means for defining and expressing the meaning, thus have been regarded as more useful than empirical terms. Therefore, we need them for interpreting and expressing the fatherhood model of God as we can only conceive of God in human terms (Ward 1974:211), in the sense that no one can see or experience God empirically, as the realities of the world are experienced. In this regard, the metaphoric imagery of the fatherhood model of God depicts a parental model that demonstrates unmerited filial relationship and unity between parent and children (Mc fague 19887:81-82). However, a metaphoric imagery of the fatherhood of God does not insist on any gender of God, as he is genderless, but

only and essentially his genuine identity being perceived and experienced by humans, whom are required to repond essentially by taking part in the Father-Child relationship God.

The necessity for the fatherhood model of God from a Christian perspective lies in the fact that it formulates an imaginative picture of the relationship between and among God himself on one hand, and between him and the world in general and humanity in particular, on the other hand.

The Bible presents the metaphoric imagery of Father having portrayed and described in ordinary religious language of which in turn has become a dominant model for Christian statements about God and his filial relationship with humans who are his children along Father-Child relationship (Huyssteen 1989:137-138). The notion of Fatherhood opens ways to deeper understanding of God along filial relationship between Father and Children (I Cor 8;6; Eph 3:15; Heb 12:9 ; Jas 1:17). While in these cases the name applies to the triune God, it also refers more particularly to the first person, to whom the work of creation has been ascribed in Scripture. In the New Testament the name is generally used to designate the triune God who is the Father in an ethical sense of his spiritual children (Matt 5;45; 6;6;-15; Rom 8:16; John 3:1). Such a concept became the beginning of pointing to the trinitarian perception of God (John 1:14,18; 5:17-26; 8:54; 14:12,13); (Berkhof 1966:87-91). The metaphoric model of the Fatherhood of God is not intended to demythologize knowledge of God, rather it is an appropriate model for remythologizing the Christian concept of God.

However, theology is highly needed for reflecting and articulating the nature, scope as well as the meaning and significance of metaphoric imagery model of God the Father in general and Father-Child relationship in particular. To enhance this, different styles and forms of reflections and descriptions have been created with which to achieve explicit theoretical concepts, for articulating certain kinds of knowledge about God (Huyssteen 1989: 144). Huyssteen echoes,

Theological models are always a unique combination of metaphoric and theoretic language, providing us with filters to interpret the essential implications of the basic biblical metaphors. The theological doctrine of the Trinity of God, for example, is not a

conceptual construction designed to describe God's essential being in an absolutist literal and final sense; [rather] its purpose is to unlock the essential implications of the basic biblical metaphor with the aid of a number of further metaphoric models from the Bible (Father, Son Holy Spirit) (Huyssteen 1989:142).

The use of theological models could be related to God's self identification in which he was and yet is understood as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and the God of Israel of which all depict the notion of the fatherhood of God. It also depicts the notion of on going filial communion and relationship between the Father and his children in an unmerited manner. Furthermore, it depicts an absolute sense of an eternal transcendent creator who associates not only with himself as well as the history to which he is the author but also his humans who are his children, having been created in his image. It is on this ground that the imagery of the fatherhood model of God gets its roots towards the formulation of christological theology.

Likewise, the New Testament reveals to us the meaning of God the Father along the lines of a personal God from whom all things exist (ICor 8:6); Vo Allmen 1961:147-149). While, the Old Testament essentially addresses God as the Lord; the New Testament essentially speaks of him as Father, hence it portays a sense of interpersonal relationship (Forell 1960 83-88).

Among the well-known imagery metaphors of the Fatherhood model of God are: God who is often described as Father; Jesus who is identified as the Christ, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, Redeemer, Saviour, as well as the Holy Spirit being is identified as Comforter (Huyssteen 1989:158). On this basis, God is seen and identified as Father and therefore, the father of human beings who are his children. It led to the regard of such models of God as depicting the Christian faith (Mc Fague 1987:33-34). The relational nature, scope and significance of these models are portrayed by both biblical and doctrinal theology. Accordingly, the Father is neither begotten by, nor proceeds from any other person; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity; as well as enabling believers to perceive and invoke God the Father by saying *Abba*. Jesus is the begotten Son of God through whom also we became the sons of God and therefore brothers of Jesus Christ.

Along this line of thought, while generation belongs to the Father, filiation belongs to the Son; and procession belongs or can only be ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the Christian concept of the fatherhood of God demonstrates not only the notion of intimate relationship along the lines of Father-Child filial relationship but also unity and dependence between the Father and the Son or children (Matt 26:39; Phil 2:18). He came from the Father to whom he is returning after finishing the work which brought him and he therefore receives the victorious honour. He says I am going to my Father and your Father, my God and your God (Jn 13:; 17:11; 20:17). In him and through him God reveals the true meaning of his fatherhood along the lines of a Father-Child relationship. Accordingly, God remains the Father who sits on his throne, whereby his Son sits on his right hand and thus prays for us to his Father endlessly. Such a state demonstrates and presents Jesus as one who is in harmonious contact with the will of the Father, and therefore denotes unity between Father and Son (Jn 14:1,9). It also demonstrates Christology of which aim is to bring us to the knowledge of the One God, who is a living community of fellowship. That is, the Son of God revealed the Father's love as well as the very meaning of divine Fatherhood. Additionally, he has revealed the father's name and will to the disciples (Paul 1965: 205- 230)

African theologians have been arguing that the Christian fatherhood model of God depends much on African invocations of the Deity in a threefold form. These are deep and strong verifications of the validity and necessity of the African perception of God the Father for identifying and understanding the Christian concept of God. It also demonstrates the possibility of christianizing the Haya-Africans' fatherhood model of God as it has been done already to a certain extent although it is only partial, thus demanding a fully christianization and indigenization of both an African and Christian fatherhood model of God. If this is the case, most of African theologians assert that there is no need for Africans to become Jews before becoming Christians (Rwehumbiza 1983:13-14)

2. Perception of the Son of God

The concept of God the Father cannot be properly understood when is limited to only at the fatherhood model, because it depends on the Son and Spirit of God. Therefore the perception of God the

Father should be expanded to include both of them. It entails perceiving God not only as father but the Father of Jesus Christ, who was sent into the world for the salvation of humans. Hence, Christianity is the insistence on the importance of this movement which started and reached humans along the fatherhood model of God.

We cannot speak accurately or understand the fatherhood model of God from a Christian perspective, unless we see clearly God's attitude and movements in this regard. While God's attitude points to his initiating plan and will for and towards humans, his movement highlights on implementation of his attitude. It entails pointing to Jesus Christ who is God's movement towards humans, otherwise, he wouldn't be God. From the Christian point of view, God is not only what he is in this movement, but also is found in this movement towards the man-Jesus and in him and through him towards other men. It entails the fact that in the man Jesus is to be found the normative model for understanding what God is and what true humanity is (Kaufman 1981:135). In this regard, the movement demonstrates God's love to humans and all creation. Moltmann echoes, that the lover communicates himself, because he is the one who communicates. "God is love" means in trinitarian terms, in eternity and out of the very necessity of his being the Father he loves the only begotten Son" (1981:57-58). In his obedience and death on the cross, Jesus was credited and accepted by God as his "Son", thus the relationship was an honour conferred on him by God (Ohlig 1996:17). Therefore, he is of higher "rank" than the angels (Psalms 2:7; 104:4; II Sam. 7:11; Hebrews 1: 1-14). Thus, Christ's Sonship to the Father is radically different from our Sonship to the same Father, in the sense that while he is the natural Son and descendant of the Father, we are sons and descendants by adoption (Nyamiti 1984:21). Accordingly, his Sonship is relational and not literal or biological as one cannot become God's Son in a natural sense. It implies that either one is God's Son in external pre-existence or one is not. However, the perception and experience of the Son of God, later led the early church to the theological and doctrinal transition from the "Son of God" to the Son who is the second Person of the Trinity (Knitter 1983:132). It entails the that the Sonship of Christ who became incarnate for humanity is a permanent Person of the Trinity. However,

the word “person” as applied to the triune God does not occur in the New Testament; but this does not mean it is erroneous or unnecessary. Alternatively the notion of person is retained in the Great Commission having named alongside of each other in (Matt 28:19; I Cor 12:4-6; II Cor 13:14; and I Peter 1:2).

Brunner, perceives God not merely as the loving one in his relation to us but rather, his entire being whose inner life is one of love. It entails that God is personal “in himself; and not only in his relation to the world” (Owen 1971:110-111). Supporting this view, Thiselton echoes, that “a solitary being cannot ‘give’ or ‘love’ unless ‘another’ enters the scene to receive and be loved” (1995:155), therefore, love characterises the very nature of God as a Trinity. It led to the assertion that if God’s nature is love he cannot find expression except in a created order or until he creates, on the conviction that his identity as God depends on his creation. God created, therefore he loves what he created, or God loves because he is the Creator (Kahakwa 2010: 179-190).

The Son is neither the Father nor a second God rather he is related to his Father in such a way that he has his own distinction from the Father in whom all indwell one another, to the extent of having one nature and one will. Yet it is the Father who does his works through the Son, and gives the words he speaks. Thus, these imagery models convey certain things about God to us. Without them, the perception of God would be beyond comprehension. Furthermore, God the Father is not only the Father of Jesus Christ his only eternal Son but also the eternal Father and Savior of men (Karl Barth 1994 :6-8). Jesus Christ’s whole ministry has been a revelation of the Father, and that those who have seen him have also seen the Father. This position of being the Sons of God is a gift and not merit oriented.

3. Perception and Experience of the Spirit of God

The early believers’ experience of God the Father and the Son of God was later developed into a threefold or trinitarian invocation of God. This followed the perception of the Spirit of God as the third component in the Trinity in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, involving reflection on the divine nature of Christ and the Spirit of God in the light of the New Testament document. It implied that the history of Jesus the Son could not be grasped except as part of the history of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, on the conviction that

God as the father or Trinity was revealed in the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Those who share in the fellowship of the Father and the Son will be given the gift that is the Spirit of God, the Paraclete, who will not leave them but rather will be with them forever. Hence, we have been called to enter into the fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit of God. On the conviction that access to God the Father opens for us access to the Son and Spirit of God. The burning issue was related to the questions about the nature, link and relationship of the Son and Spirit to God the Father. Faith in one God (Shema) was the starting – point, Hence, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone (Deut 6:4-5). Thus, from the beginning the perception of God the Father in the framework of his persons or models was the result of the believers’ awareness of God’s act in dramatic salvatory history revealed in Jesus and manifested by the Holy Spirit. Boff asserts,

From the ... binding data of faith found in the New Testament, it emerged that God is revealed as Trinity, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Starting from the Trinity as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to see, as in a glass darkly, the mystery of the very communion existing between the three persons. (1988:76)

E. Christianizing of Indigenizing the Fatherhood Model of God

The section deals with how theology in terms of the Haya-African and Christian fatherhood models of God could be christianized and indigenized for a better understanding of them in a Christian way. It investigates the question as to whether or not the state of having God who is the Father from both Haya-African and Christian perspectives demands any human merit or effort. It addresses how the African fatherhood model of God and its trinitarian perception influenced and continues to influence the Christian perception of the fatherhood model of God. It implies seeking points of contact between Haya-African and Christian experiences of God, for developing a Christian theology of the fatherhood model of God. Its practical implementation involves a dialogical interactionist model. This is so since Christianity hasn’t had its own Deity, rather it depends on concepts and models borrowed and employed from a given culture like Judaism, Greek, Asian, African to mention but a few. A use of them enables Christianity to stand and justify itself, hence it cannot stand without applying a local concept of God. On the

ground that it provides not only a conceptual foundation but also a framework for introducing, identifying and understanding a newly introduced religion. While for Africans the Deity could be identified as masculine-Father or feminine-Mother depending on respective people's culture; Christianity according to the Bible, God is depicted only as masculine and who is the spouse of his people (Parrat 1987:64-65). Furthermore, while the Christian perception of the fatherhood of God has been purely spiritual, the African concept of divine fatherhood is something that is lived as a concrete experience.

However, for achieving an appropriate christianization of the Haya-African fatherhood model of God, and an indigenization of the Christian fatherhood model of God, one should start from the view point of articulating on credentials if anything can be done by the human creature for acquiring the state of being children of God which implies a state of having him as our father. It poses the question, Does such a state acquire after undergoing human merits or efforts or vice versa? Possible answers to this question will be seen from both Haya-African and Christian perspectives of perceiving God as the Father.

1. God the Father: Unmerited Relationship from Haya-African Perspective

The Haya-African perception of God along the lines of a Father-Child relationship raises a question. Can one acquire such a state by and through human merits or efforts? Definitely the fatherhood of God does require human effort to achieve such a status, but only by God's initiatives based on his love is this filial relationship realized and sustained. Most African myths and stories narrate nothing concerning human effort through which one could secure God's Fatherhood or one's status of being his child. Some African myths narrate about status and filial relationship freely given to human beings since their creation. Upon and after his creation, a human being is reported to have been aware and surprised having undergone self understanding, as well as observing and noticing the environment around him. It led him to perceive the existence of a moral creator and father; whose filial relationship with him is entirely unmerited in nature. It entails that since creation no conditions were laid down by God with which to be fulfilled by humans in order to acquire a state of being children of God and therefore God himself becomes their Father in a Father-Child relationship. This entails the fact that humans

were created unconditionally in terms of securing the position of being his children. What a human being is required in this regard, is not a human merit but a human response to what God the Father has done and still does to human beings. Thus, it is an expression of their gratitude to God. It implies loving, respecting and serving God on one hand and loving, respecting and serving fellow humans on the other hand. Hence a Rundi saying, Imana n'abantu (God is people).

This knowledge was perceived and experienced through mythical accounts, in the form of non-verbal portrayal experience being termed as an intuitive or symbolic representation (Lubac 1996:105).

2. God as the Father: Unmerited Relationship from Christian Perspective

The Christian fatherhood model of God like an African fatherhood model of God is not obtained by human effort but only by God's initiative. It entails that being children of God the Father is a purely unmerited matter in the sense that nothing has been done or could be done by humans in order to achieve the status of being children. It is only by God's initiatives, concern and involvement. His first initiative was through creation of humans in his image as well as the precepts given to them. Upon rebelling against God's will and precepts, the state of being created in his image to a certain extent was damaged although not destroyed by sins, resulting into disharmony between God and humans as well as bitterness in life and finally death. In his second major initiative (the first being creation), God restored the fallen creation by sending his Son who was born and lived like humans in order to redeem them from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus who is the first Child of God the Father has made us God's children only by grace and not human merit or any effort. It is only by being born again by water and the Spirit of God. Hence we are justified by God only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In this regard, our concern and involvement is only to respond to God's initiatives relating to our salvation. It entails believing and accepting what God has done for us: that is, God's salvatory initiative. It implies a state of responding to this unmerited state of being sons of God the Father as well as filial relationship with him in a Father-Child relationship. Additionally, being his sons we are also heirs of eternal life. However, both the fatherhood model of God according to Haya-African and Christian perspectives demand a proper approach along

which humans at individual and communal levels could be enabled to interact with God the Father as well as dialoguing with him in a mutual and filial manner. It entails the necessity of applying a dialogical model typical not only to African religious experiences but also to other philosophical and theological disciplines world wide.

3. A Dialogical Interactionist Model

A dialogical interactionist model has been chosen as the main methodological tool for articulating the fatherhood model of God, having a basis on the following factors: First, proponents of the dialogical model assert that any truth or reality is grasped in and through engaging in a dialogical process, which involves dialoging with “life as it is actually lived”, It involves dialoguing with divine realities (Bevans 2003:93).

Secondly, any type of theology including contextual theology is always a dialogical process [whereby] even the biblical message was developed [along] dialogue together with human experience, culture, and social change (Bevans 2003:24, 33-81).

A dialogical approach is highly needed for this study not only for understanding the fatherhood model of God, but also for either christianizing or indigenizing it. Along this train of thought, a Haya-African dialogue with God the Father, *Ruhanga* in his Aspects of, *Ruhanga* (the Father), *Kazoba* (the illuminator , Son of *Ruhanga*) and *Ntangaire* (the Spirit of *Ruhanga*) will be presented as an exemplary model on how a dialogical model approach could be applied to dialogue with the Christian concept of God according to biblical and classical witnesses. It will start with God the Father to be followed by a dialogue with the Son and Sprit of God.

4. Dialogue of the Deity: God the Father

For most Haya-Africans, the best way to understand the nature and role of God as the Father, is through a dialogical model, because it portrays dramatic expressions of the Deity within himself and the universe, whereby God takes initiatives. This is based on the conviction that the Deity’s dialogue started from the view point of a self - dialogue with himself about his role in creation, thus dialoguing with his aspects, Son and Spirit on an on going process. This dialogue culminated into calling and ordering them to participate in the creation of man. It entails that his dialogue with his aspects and the

universe was extended to dialogue with humans, whereby creation was an arena. However, the Fatherhood of God has been applied by some African theologians like Twesigye, Nyamiti, Mugambi, Moila and others to develop an understanding of God along the ancestral approach. It has a basis on what Mulago describes as the Father of men and vital participation (1969:158). A similar Deity's dialogue with the universe and humans in Judaism and Christianity is extensively reported in the biblical documents (Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 1:4-19; Acts 9:3-6; 10:9-19).

5. Dialogue with the Son

The dialogue with the Deity, *Ruhanga* was extended to include his Son-*Kazoba*. Like God the Father, creation is an arena for this dialogue. The most preferred version of the creation narrative is that which depicts the only Son of the Deity, *Kazoba* the Illuminator, having participated in the creation of man. It points to a Haya-African dialogue with the Son of the Deity which results in the recognition and confirmation of his nature, role and relation to the Deity.

Responding to the need to indigenize Christianity, some African theologians had embarked on searching and formulating an ancestral christology. In turn, they were enabled to perceive and name Jesus Christ by using African idioms and christological models. That is, *Brother Ancestor*; whose ancestorship has roots in the ancestorship of God, his Father. This raises questions about the relationship between the Father and the Son, through which Jesus Christ became our Ancestor. Its biblical justification lies in Christ's Adamite origin and divine human nature of which basis he is the *Brother Ancestor* of all men (Nyamiti 19984:16,28). While "the Father's ancestorship is parental, the ancestorship of the Son is brotherly. Since he was the first born among many brethren, he becomes the Father's only Son and the elder Brother among many brethren. Thus, Christ's ancestorship comprises divine Sonship, humanity, and redemptive activity. An attributive name, "the Illuminator" given to him demonstrates to what extent the dialogue and perception of him had taken place towards illuminating the entire universe as well as his dialogue between him and *Ruhanga* in his aspects on one hand, and humans on the other hand. Twesigye describes the authenticity and validity of *Kazoba* in terms of and in relation with the logos in western religious and philosophical thought. He reports,

the African traditional conceives *Kazoba*...as the second person of the Trinity, and views him as the eternal Light...or the Logos, that enlightens and guides all human beings from error into truth and from the wrong path into the light one and protects the individuals from physical and moral or spiritual pitfalls...*Kazoba* as the transcendent, cosmic, omnipresent holy God and Light of the World (cf John 1;1-6;3:16-21), also bestows spiritual and moral insights on obedient and wise people.(1996:268-269)

Thus, any christology which depicts Jesus Christ knowingly or unknowingly as an absent and passive reality, also depicts him as less concerned or irrelevant to respective people. However, a contextual based metaphoric imagery or model of God is highly needed in our contemporary time more than ever before, due to the fact that Mission Christianity presented and portrayed Jesus Christ to the extent of appearing and seen as a spiritual, intellectual or philosophical entity, instead of being a dynamic personal reality in all life situations. Hence, he has been said to be absent in several crisis situations of the African milieu consisting of life-birth, puberty, marriage, illness and death, that is totality of one's life circle (Parrat 1987:69).

6. Dialogue with the Daughter: Sister of God

The Haya-Africans dialogue with the Deity is believed to have extended from dialoging with the Father and his Son to dialoguing with his Spirit. Like the Father and the Son, also creation is the arena of such dialogue. It has roots in the belief that the *Amagara* (vital force) or breath of *Ruhanga* was breathed into the nostrils of the human figure through his Son, *Kazoba* and made him alive. The names *Amagara* and *Ntangaire* given to the Spirit of *Ruhanga* demonstrate not only human perception of her, but also the main consequence of his dialogue with the *Amagara*. Like other aspects of the Deity (*Ruhanga*), also the dialogue with the Spirit of *Ruhanga* could be christianized. This could involve indigenization of the Christian concept of the Spirit of God. Such need of them has roots in the fact that neither christology nor trinitology is complete without pneumatology. It entails an understanding of the triune God, according to a Haya-African threefold perception of the Deity.

Since God the Father according to Haya-African perception has been christianised along an indigenization of God the Father according to Christian perception, what is needed at this stage is christianization and indigenization of both models of God according to each conceptual need. The good work that has been done so far by

African theologians to indigenize God the Father and the Son of God could not reach an integrated concept unless the whole Haya-African concept of God is christianized as well as indigenizing the whole Christian concept of God. Its theological justification lies in the conviction that the christianization of God the Father (*Ruhanga* or Father Ancestor) presupposes indigenization of both the Son of God, according to Christian belief.

7. Dialogue with Humans

Dialogue with humans has roots in the nature of God the Father who is believed to reveal, interact and dialogue with humans in this case, Haya-Africans. It entails a dialogue of God the Father and his aspects on one hand, and dialogue with humans on the other hand. While God's dialogue with humans involved creation, affirmation and precepts imparted upon them, it also caused in humans a state of surprise and awe, believing, naming and invoking God. These were implications of awareness of their existence, and that of the entire creation and the surrounding environment. Hence Africans interact, invoke and worship God in the form of dialoguing with him. Thus, dialogue with God the Father *Ruhanga*, has created an arena for dialoguing with his aspects (the Son of *Ruhanga*, Kazoba and the Spirit of *Ruhanga*, *Ntangaire*), of which approach enables a better perception of the fatherhood model of God according to both Haya-African and Christian perceptions.

Conclusion

The Article investigates the fatherhood model of God from both African and Christian perspectives. It involves a critical analysis in the light of an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form. Basing both models on the fatherhood of God, the article analysed and evaluated the Haya-African theology of the fatherhood of God in general and its trinitarian model in particular with emphasis on aspects of the Deity, *Ruhanga*. It noted that despite some differences, between African and Christian imagery of God the Father, both portray the same notion of God. It also found that having God as Father as well as being his children in no way requires any merit or human effort, as such that state is obtained only by God's initiative. It entails responding to what he has done for us only by grace through faith in his Son Jesus Christ. Thus, what matters most is not mere models or imagery depiction of

God like God the Father or God the Mother or even the Son or Daughter of God (of which all are only human expressions) but rather relationship with God along an intimate filial relationship of Father-Child relationship. In this perspective, the article asked the question relating to an appropriate understanding of them, as well as how such understanding could illuminate on an appropriate indigenization and understanding of the Christian concept of God in general and its fatherhood model in particular .

First, what do the Haya-Africans hear when the theology of the fatherhood model of God is delivered and communicated to them? Secondly, what happens when Haya-Africans are taught that the Christian God the Father has revealed himself to humans through creation, redemption and sanctification? Thirdly, upon conversion to Christianity, did the Haya-Africans understand God the Father along a trinitarian conception or did they take it for granted? Fourthly, how could the contemporary Church's perception and interpretation of God the Father be used to accelerate a paradigm shift in understanding the Trinity in Haya-African idiom and terms? Although, African perception of the fatherhood of God has been partially applied so far by Mission Christianity and Post Missionary Christianity, to a certain extent it has contributed towards indentifying and understanding the fatherhood model of God in a Christian way.

The author challenges and reminds the church to bear in mind that her central task as well as that of her theologians in every context is to interpret the text aiming at constructing a theology or doctrine, in this case the fatherhood model of God appropriate to time, context and people (Kaufman 1981:278-279). It demands, searching for meaningful Haya-African theological models with which to express the Christian faith (Oduyoye 1986:139). To enhance this, the author argues that any response to a the Fatherhood model of God from both African and Christian perspectives should start from the known experience of God towards the unknown or new experience of God. Such an approach demands dialoguing with the Deity-*Ruhanga* who is the Father (christianised *Ruhanga*) in his aspects, leading to dialoguing with his all aspects that is, the Son and Spirit of in a Christian way.

It also demands, correcting or revising theological and methodological approaches applied in the past and even in the

contemporary time on the ground that the applicability of the contextual theology depends on the applicability of appropriate methodological approaches. Hence, while the gospel stands as an inspiring message, theology stands as its model expression (theology) (Hesselgrave 1978: 87). Thus both theology and methodology are the church's instruments for presenting and interpreting the gospel and its models to people in a given context. Thus, Christian faith should be experienced in myriad of ways, according to respective people's milieu leading to contextual interpretations of essential Christian doctrines like the imagery of God the Father. It implies reflecting and articulating the Christian faith and theology in concrete ways that is, in people's language and thought forms of their time (Mcfague 1987;44-45). This involves using terms and models of contemporary time rather than those of 2,000 years ago.

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