

Modalism and the doctrine of the Trinity in Kimbanguism: A theological and critical analysis

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this MA dissertation: Modalism and the doctrine of the Trinity in Kimbanguism: A theological and critical analysis is my own work and has not been submitted either by me or another person to any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved wife and children for all the sacrifice they consented to see me reach this level in my life. I truly owe my energy to write this work to their encouragements.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all Christian African apologists who work to save the Christian church which is being threatened by the rise or revival of various ATR doctrines in this continent.

PREFACE

I should first thank God who made this journey possible for me. Despite the battles He sustained me. I know for sure that I made it because of Him.

I am also grateful to both my supervisors, Professor R.M. Potgieter and Professor P. Williams; true scholars in whom I found a mixture of academic rigor and paternal solicitude. They have been very motivating in the way they led me to write this dissertation. Their comments and collaborative attitudes encouraged me a lot. In addition, they challenged me to think deeper.

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ABSTRACT

Kimbanguism is one of the great African Independent Churches. Therein is found a very peculiar doctrine of the trinity. This study has found similarities and differences between the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity and one of the major heresies of the early church, modalism, also known as Sabellianism. Additionally, this dissertation answered four questions. One of them is: “what is the origin of defining the trinity in that way” and, thereafter, named the trinitarian variances found. Furthermore, this study confronted or challenged the kimbanguist trinity in like manner as the early church did through creeds. To get valuable firsthand information, interviews were conducted with some kimbanguist leaders. Questionnaires were completed by some students of the kimbanguist seminary who have already been taught their peculiar theology of the trinity. Some of the students presently serve as pastors. This theological study belongs to the systematic theology for the trinitarian nature of God is at stake. Therefore, as far as the defense of the trinity is concerned, this study contains an element of apology as well.

Key concepts

Trinity, Oneness of God, Modalism/Sabellianism, Kimbanguism, theological and critical analysis

OPSOMMING

Kimbanguisme is een van die groot Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke. Hier word 'n baie eenaardige leerstelling tov die Christelike Drie-eenheid (Triniteit) gevind. Hierdie navorsing-ondersoek het ooreenkomste en verskille teëgekoms tussen die kimbanguistiese drie-eenheid en dié van een van die hoofdwalinge van die vroeë kerk: Modalisme wat bekendstaan as Sabellianisme. Daarbenewens het hierdie verhandeling vier vrae beantwoord, tov "wat is die oorsprong van die definisie van die Drie-eenheid wat só verkry word?"/ waarvandaan kom die definisie van die Drie eenheid op só 'n manier vandaan" en dan het dit die verskeie trinitêre variante/ wisselvorms gegee. Verder het hierdie studie die kimbanguistiese triniteit gekonfronteer op 'n soortgelyke manier as wat die vroeë kerk dit gedoen het deur die belydenisskrifte. Ten einde waardevolle eerstehandse inligting te bekom is onderhoude met sommige Kimbanguistiese leiers gevoer. Vraelyste is voltooi deur enkele studente van die kimbanguistiese leerskool wat reeds onderrig in sistematiese teologie ontvang het.

Sleutelsterme

Drie-eenheid, eenheid van God, Modalisme/Sabellianisme,
Kimbanguisme, teologiese en kritiese analise

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The identity of many African Independent Churches, or African Indigenous Churches, or African Initiated Churches, or African Instituted Churches¹ (AICs) is not clearly stated and consequently open to interpretations. For some specialists, many of those AICs are not Christians; while for others the debate is still open (Hoskins, 2004: 46). For this study then, a clear understanding of the core doctrines of AICs, namely, the doctrines of the trinity, salvation and others, will be key in reaching final conclusions. In fact, this exercise of assessing the AICs' doctrines is of great importance to avoid confusion between true Christianity and other AICs movements. This is important as many AICs use the Bible and Christian terminologies and vocabulary, such as trinity, Lord's Supper, and baptism. People who are not aware of AIC's complexities can easily be misguided by the confusion created by their diverse doctrines.

This diversity of doctrine often resorts to the common vocabulary reminiscent of theology in the early church. The doctrine of God: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (which was finally called "trinity") was formulated by the Church Fathers who addressed the major doctrinal heresies of the day related to the trinity. The Church in Africa today faces similar challenges and needs to be reminded of the stance of its Church Fathers. Failure to do so, particularly in dealing with the trinity, will endanger the true doctrine about God with all the consequences related to that as will become clear in this study.

Hoskins (2004:50) explains this doctrinal situation within AICs in these terms:

The place of Christ and the Christian Trinity in AICs has sometimes been controversial. The reason for this usually centers on the position of the particular movement's leader or founder. Followers revere and venerate their leaders. But they may also think of them as having a saving aspect. Most of AIC leaders will shy away from starting something like this so starkly. But among many AIC members one can hear the founder being referred to in terms that approach a salvation quality.

The above description supports and proves clearly that the doctrine of the trinity is a true problem within AIC's and in particular within Kimbanguism. It is a blend between the Christian doctrine, Church and tradition and extra-biblical revelations.

¹ These terms will be explained later in the chapter dealing with Kimbanguism where an all section is devoted to that. But for this research, the kimbanguist church falls in the category of the African

Hoskins says that many AIC leaders do not ascribe a particular status to themselves, rather they are attributed some special status by their people. Although this might be true to some extent, it is however important to be discerning. Actually some leaders do accept what the people say about them or—intentionally or not—insinuate some attitudes, words or behaviour that compel people to consider them as having some measure of insight and authority into a saving dimension.

As for Kimbangu himself, a former Baptist catechist, he became a “great” prophet in his village, Nkamba. In that local area, Kimbangu reputedly performed miracles. His ministry and influence were considered a great threat by colonial authorities, as well as both the Catholic and Protestant leaders, leading to his arrest (Nawej, 2013: 57).

At the beginning of the kimbanguist movement, its doctrines were clearly altered from those of evangelical churches. The major doctrinal aspect was all about the spiritual nature of the prophet (Diyabanza, 2014: 28). Consequently, when the church sought membership with the World Council of Churches (WCC) it underwent significant doctrinal adjustments which changes were sufficient for it to become a full member of WCC, under the leadership of Diangienda Kuntima Joseph, the spiritual chief of the church at that time (Asch, 1983: 68). But this doctrinal status quo was not maintained subsequently. The church² changed its doctrine, especially regards the trinity, provoking tensions with the WCC and other national and international Christian organizations (Kayongo, 2005: 235–236).

The kimbanguist trinity is peculiar and, in this writer’s opinion, virtually impossible to be sustained biblically. Nevertheless, it is accepted by many people³, including among intellectuals and even theologians⁴. In brief: the church’s view is that the trinity is an on-going dynamic compound of more than three persons. Closer examination of this compound of persons reveals that the process of having additions of new persons within that trinity is endless, because every new spiritual chief will be another member of the kimbanguist trinity. In that church, it is believed that each new spiritual leader should entered into the identity of being either God the Father, or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit (Diyabanza, 2014:106). This poses a theological problem with respect to orthodox Trinitarian Christianity.

² In this research, the terms “Kimbanguism”, “kimbanguist church”, or simply “church” are used interchangeably to identify the same thing unless otherwise stated.

³Nowadays, according to Prof. L. N. Kayongo, a kimbanguist scholar, the church comprises about 22 million adherents across the world.

⁴ It is true that most of kimbanguist theologians are trained in their seminary. But they often pursue postgraduate qualifications in Protestant Schools.

1.2. Problem Statement

1.2.1. Practical problem

Kimbanguism was the first independent church to be admitted as a full member of the WCC (Pedro V, 2011: 241). To get there, its doctrines went through a very long and difficult process of adjustment (Asch, 1983: 120—127). However, that doctrinal adjustment did not last. Shortly after its admission to the WCC the church reverted to its own interpretation of the trinity. In short it incorporated the views of the first born of the prophet Kimbangu, Tata Kisolokele, incorporated as God the Father; the second son, Tata Dialungana, as Jesus Christ; and Tata Diangienda, the last son of Kimbangu, as the Holy Spirit. To add to the confusion, adherents believe that Kimbangu himself was the Holy Spirit and his grand-son, who is in power today, is also the Holy Spirit. So, within this church, one can count one God the Father, one Jesus Christ, but three incorporated Holy Spirit personages (Kayongo, 2005: 232; Diyabanza, 2014: 92—95). A confusion indeed.

Today, the kimbanguist church is in trouble with WCC and other international Christian organizations because of its Trinitarian doctrines. Meetings are being organized between Kimbanguism and the WCC in order to solve the problem⁵. Kimbanguists however persist in their new way of defining the trinity. Kayongo (2005: 228) explains the tensions between Kimbanguism and its allies, notably the WCC. Roman Catholics in the DRC have already rejected Kimbanguism as a member of the national ecumenical council⁶. Mission 21, an international Christian organization, was formerly supportive of the kimbanguist faculty of theology but, because of this doctrinal matter, decided against further support until the problem is resolved.

Despite this doctrinal controversy, people are still supportive of the kimbanguist church. The number of members as well as the church's influence seems to be increasing. Apart from the DR Congo, churches and members are now present in many countries such as Congo Brazzaville, Angola, Zambia, Burundi and Kenya. The church is also represented overseas in Belgium, France, USA, Great Britain, Portugal, Swiss, Spain, Germany, Suede, Finland, Holland (Pedro V, 2005: 241; Mokoko-Gampiot, 2008: 9). Membership includes both black and white people. The fact that people are still supporting this church and its doctrine makes one to ask some important questions in order to find their motives.

⁵ Form the interview; it appears that the WCC delegates are having discussion with kimbanguist theologians in Kinshasa to try solving the doctrinal issue.

⁶ Congo-Afrique, XLIV^e année- n° 388, Octobre 2004, p. 454—455.

1.2.2. Research problem

This study seeks to know the source of the kimbanguist trinity, and suggests its resemblance with modalism. As stated above, this peculiar trinity should be analyzed first in terms of its various articulations and perceptions. Firstly, the kimbanguist trinity is seen as being dynamic and so may increase in the number of persons of its composition. Secondly, it is an accepted fact that, within Kimbanguism, the church will only be led by a member of the lineage of the prophet Kimbangu. Given that the members of that family are considered special, if not holy, the one who will take over after the predecessor has gone will become a member of that trinity.

The difficulty is not only that the successor can be either God the Father, Jesus Christ, or another Holy Spirit but also each successor will be different from the previous who ruled before him/her. To date there are already three persons taken to be the Holy Spirit. So, it is not impossible to have another God the Father, or God the Son.

Thirdly, the complexity will be even more confusing if a subsequent successor happens to be of a different gender than the former spiritual chief. This is very possible because kimbanguists believe in woman ministry and leadership. Therefore, the same trinitarian role—God the Father, Jesus Christ or Holy Spirit— can then be exercised by a male or female leader. Consequently their trinity might then be made up, but can also be made up of persons of different gender. One has to infer that the differences between persons constituting the trinity will become more prominent.

There is no doubt that this doctrine of the trinity is very peculiar. Then ways to describe the kind of the trinity under study are to be found. Thereafter, it should be qualified and named. Again, the doctrine of the kimbanguist trinity will be compared with the modalism of the early Church. As it was done at the time of the early Church, the next step will be about this question: “how to address this trinity?” The questions research are to be built from all the observations made here and in the above section.

1.2.3. Research purpose

To answer the major research question, this study will trace the origin of the kimbanguist trinity⁷ and to compare it with the modalism of the early Church.

⁷ It is important for this work to discover the sources of the trinity under study because some people hold Kimbangu as a true Christian who cannot be the cause of the current doctrine. Therefore they say that the doctrine of the trinity as it is known today is the work of his sons and the believers. Then responsibilities should be ascribed to each generation of leaders, beginning from Kimbangu himself.

Historically, modalism was a very great challenge in the early Church because it touched the nature of the trinity. Within Kimbanguism, the biblical concept of trinity is interpreted in very particular ways, destroying the inherent nature of the biblical trinity. For that reason modalism and the kimbanguist trinity are doctrines intimately related to the nature of the godhead. With that established they may then be compared and clearly distinguished from one another. Finally, this work will reveal what Christians can learn from kimbanguists.

1.2.4. Research questions

Given the complexity presented by the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity, the need is to employ methods to better understand it so as to clarify whether or not it reflects some consistency with the Christian doctrine of the trinity. In order to answer this central question, this study will explore four lines of inquiry:

1. What are the sources for the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?
2. How can the African traditional religion (ATR), especially the Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), help to better understand the historical and cultural context of the kimbanguist trinity?
3. How can the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity be better understood in light of early Christian debates about modalism, particularly in the form of Sabellianism?
4. How can the systematic theology and the provided resources, namely the Apostles' Creed drawn from the debates about the early Christian modalism, be used to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?

From these four research questions are drawn four research problem areas, which are:

1. The kimbanguist arguments concerning the sources of the trinity
2. The relations between the kimbanguist trinity and the Bakongo concept of God, the kimbanguist trinity and the biblical concept of the trinity, that trinity and modalism
3. Theological particularities and problems of the kimbanguist trinity
4. A coherent creedal critique of the kimbanguist trinity

The theological contribution of this study will be to identify the relation of the kimbanguist trinity to Christian doctrine. The aim is to make Christians aware of the fact that Kimbanguism might not be a Christian movement despite its use of the Bible and Christian terminologies: Trinity, Baptism, Holy Communion, and so on. This is of great importance, for many Christians attribute their definitions to Kimbanguism and are so misled by that church.

Furthermore, this work wants to be a prophetic Christian voice among kimbanguists in order to help them re-think their trinitarian doctrine. Therefore, the present research can be considered by the Christian Church as a tool to evangelize kimbanguists and to follow up new converts, especially those coming from Kimbanguism and similar AICs.

1.2.5. Aims and Objectives of the research

This study is pursuing five major aims/objectives

1. To discover the sources of the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity and the reasons and arguments for the kimbanguists to drastically change their doctrine of the trinity already well accepted by the WCC.
2. To find out the relationships between the kimbanguist trinity and the Bakongo concept of the spirit world by exploring the influence of tradition on the doctrine.
3. To describe the theological particularities of the kimbanguist trinity, including names to differentiate them from other less orthodox trinitarian doctrines. Some of its features suggest that the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity is a sub-category of modalism.
4. To find ways to defeat the kimbanguist doctrine since it is assumed to be biblically not sustainable.
5. To warn those Christians who think that kimbanguists are Christians so that they can use the content of this work to help kimbanguists to come back to the true and orthodox trinity.

1.3. Central Theoretical Statement

The argument in this study is that the Word of God, the Bible, is and remains the only source of the truth. All other sources, when contradicting the Bible, should not be taken as being finally authoritative. The description of the godhead, as provided in the Scriptures, is the only way it should be understood. It is that trinity that should be worshipped, honoured and served by Christians, Africans included.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Quantitative and qualitative methods

1.4.1.1. Description and role of descriptive method

The thesis of this study is: “given the complexity presented by the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity, the need is to employ methods to better understand it so as to clarify whether or not it reflects some consistency with the Christian doctrine of the trinity”.

This study is predominantly descriptive. It will use a blend of quantitative and qualitative method. According to Smith (2008: 225):

Descriptive research, also referred to as survey research or descriptive- survey research, is key research tool for studies.... Many studies... involve fieldwork (empirical) research in which the researcher uses interviews... and questionnaires to gather original data about a church....

This study then, which also used interviews and a questionnaire to gather information about Kimbanguism, falls into the descriptive research category. Using Smith's (2008: 226) theoretical framework, this research seeks to examine the doctrine of the trinity within Kimbanguism and to use data collected through two research instruments to form the conclusions and recommendations and to describe the sources of the kimbanguist trinity and its nature. In addition, Vyhmeister (as cited by Smith, 2008: 227) is of the view that the goal of a descriptive study is to make reality known, before drawing conclusions and making decisions based on the description.

To develop theory in theological research is another function of the descriptive research. Elliston (2011: 68–69) says,

Descriptive research generally serves to develop theory. As one has described what has been or is true in a situation and then provides an explanation of the phenomena, theory is developed. Often one continues in the development of the related theory to show from the patterns of what has been described how to predict what is likely to occur in the future and to suggest basis for action based on the description of the phenomena....

As this research will provide a present and historical analysis and description of the kimbanguist theoretical trinity it will also tend to provide an explanation of this as a social phenomenon within its community. That description should provide a theological basis for refuting the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity.

1.4.1.2. Reasons for the descriptive method

Isaac and Michael (as cited by Smith, 2008: 227) give four compelling reasons for this study to choose descriptive method. They say that descriptive research serves first to collect detailed information that describes existing phenomena. Second, descriptive research serves to identify problems or justify conditions and practices. Third, descriptive research makes comparisons and evaluations. Finally, descriptive research determines what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefits from their experience in making future plans and decisions.

This research collected data to describe the kimbanguist trinity. It identified that the trinity in question is unique to Africa and kimbanguist communities. When compared to the

biblical doctrine of the trinity and to early modalism it becomes clear that while the doctrine might have certain commonalities with the Bible it relates more to early modalism.

As indicated above, this study used a mixed method, which combined “qualitative and quantitative techniques and/or data analysis within different phases of the research” (Management College of South Africa [Mancosa], 2016: 12). For Mcmillan and Schumacher (as cited by Mancosa, 2016: 7),

Recently many researchers have made use of mixed designs. A mixed method study combines characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. This mix could emphasize one set of characteristics or the other.

On the section about research instruments, this mixed method will clearly be shown. As many others, the researcher also has chosen this method for this study because

with mixed method designs, researchers are not limited to using techniques associated with traditional designs, either quantitative or qualitative. An important advantage of mixed-method studies is that they can show the quantitative result and explain why it was obtained (Mancosa, 2016: 19).

This method provides an admirable degree of freedom and helps to explain quantity by the quality. In other words, dealing with Kimbanguism, this method helps to explain why many people hold the kimbanguist trinity as the true one.

Hence, all these methods have been put into place to get data to explain the problem, to draw conclusions, to make decisions and to solve it. For that very purpose research questions were developed and the data collection instruments selected.

1.4.2. Understanding the research questions

This section explains the importance of each question in order to highlight different aspects of the problem for which the study wants to get answers.

The first research question is: “what are the sources of the kimbanguist trinity?” This question is key because the doctrine of the kimbanguist church is a problem despite its adjustment when applying for WCC membership. For a relatively long period, the church was stable with that doctrine. The aim of this question is to discover the source of this particularly kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity, including its reasons and justifying arguments.

The second research question is: “how can the African traditional religion (ATR), especially the Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), enhance our understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of the kimbanguist views on trinity?” Bruce (as cited by Noll, 2001: 25), explains the proximity of Judaism and Christianity in these terms: ‘Jewish and

Christian religions... had nevertheless sprung from the same founders; the Christians were an offshoot of the Jews....' It might be said that Kimbanguism can be seen as an offshoot of the BTR. So then, to better understand this research question, the following sub-question can be asked: "what are the BTR components that Kimbanguism inherited and how do they reflect in its doctrines?" This will allow the study to clearly identify if Kimbanguism is a Christian religion, a tribal religion, or a syncretistic version.

The third question is: "can the contemporary kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity be better understood in light of early Church debates about theology, especially the ideas labelled modalism and in particular Sabellianism?" Both the kimbanguist trinity and modalism deal with the spiritual nature of the godhead. Similarities and/or dissimilarities will be shown. The aim is to formulate a clear picture of its theological particularities.

Finally, the fourth question this study will answer is: "how can systematic theology and the creeds formulated in debates about early Christian modalism, be used to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?" Answering this question will constitute the core of the fifth chapter.

1.4.3. Research Instruments

According to Elliston (2011: 68), "some commonly used forms of descriptive research used to support church-related research include: ...survey research with questionnaire and interview... and theological research. In each of these approaches, a description of what is or has been comes into focus." On his side, the Mancosa (2016: 5) says that: "In most instances some form of measurement is used such as tests, questionnaires and interviews." To that end the researcher used two instruments: questionnaire and structured interview.

1.4.3.1. The Questionnaire

A "questionnaire is a series of written questions a researcher supplies to subjects, requesting their response" and "an interview is a series of questions a researcher addresses personally to respondents" (Smith, 2008: 161). The researcher prepared these research instruments after writing chapters two and three. The questionnaire had seven questions dealing with the source of the current trinity, the significance of the 3=1 kimbanguist conception, the biblical hermeneutics to support that trinity, and the nature of the prophet. Even though the method for the research was mainly qualitative, some questions were quantitative: four questions were open ended, two questions were close-open ended, and one was close ended.

This questionnaire was pilot-tested. Smith (2008: 235-236) recommends conducting “a pilot study to gather information about deficiencies in the questionnaire and ideas for improving it.” The questionnaire was tested with 5–10 respondents who do not form part of the main study. This ensured confidence that the questionnaire in question may be used as a valid research instrument, validating “the degree to which extraneous and confounding variables are controlled” (Mancosa, 2016: 33).

In the context of this study, six respondents constituted the team of the pilot study. Kimbanguist pastors were chosen who have completed their bachelor program in the Kimbanguist School of Theology at least five years ago; the interviews were conducted in their parishes. It seemed important to have this kind of group because the latest Kimbanguist doctrine of trinity is a new issue, which came about almost ten years ago. Diyanza (2014: 92-95) also posits that pastors are generally more knowledgeable than lay believers concerning the doctrine of the trinity.

After the pilot test, some questions were modified to finalize the instrument. Internal consistency for this questionnaire relates to the fact that all the respondents understood the questions the same way. The questionnaire was distributed to the targeted sample population, filled out and returned to the researcher within two hours of the same day they received the questionnaire.

1.4.3.2. The Interview

The second instrument used by the researcher was the interview. As far as Mancosa (2016: 109) is concerned,

Qualitative interview may take several forms: the informal conversation interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. In the interview guide approach, topics are selected in advance, but the researcher decides the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview.

The interview for this research - the guide approach - had four questions prepared well in advance.

The main questions included the attributes of God and the trinity. The aim of the first question was to discover if what Kimbangu taught was different from what he had been taught when he was a Baptist catechist. Two questions dealt with the current teaching about the trinity in the church, the seminary and the relationships between the church and WCC. Through the last question, the researcher wanted to discover if every leader of the church would at some stage be a member of the trinity.

The interview was conducted on a face-to-face basis with the interviewees. In fact,

Qualitative research is mainly interactive and uses interactive face-to-face methods, by interacting with selected people in their natural settings. Interactive data collection strategies are used primarily in the study of current social happenings.... Data collection [is] interactive and occurs in overlapping cycles... (Mancosa, 2016: 89).

The researcher recorded the answers during the interview, and they were processed the same day to avoid inaccuracies in categorizing and classifying the responses.

Apart from the interview and questionnaire, the secondary sources were of great importance for this research. These are the books and articles mentioned in the second and third chapters. Concerning the secondary sources, many authors— kimbanguists and non-kimbanguists—contradict themselves over a certain number of very important issues. These contradictions are pointed out and were taken into account before the researcher reached a conclusion. This exercise was done to assure a high degree of objectivity.

1.4.4. The Target population

The Mancosa (2016: 33) says that a population is “a group of individuals... from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized.” Leedy (as cited by Smith, 2008: 227–228) goes on stating that: ‘In descriptive research, the population for the study must be carefully chosen, clearly defined and specifically delimited in order to set precise parameters for ensuring discreteness to the population.’

For this research, the premise pointed out by Droogers (1980: 206; see also Diyabanza, 2014: 86–106) provided direction. He stipulates that though lay people do practice and believe the doctrine, they do not know the origin of it, thus they do not comprehend the true nature of it. So then, as far as a doctrinal matter is concerned, intellectuals were the population to reach out to and get data/information from since they are amongst those who fashioned that doctrine and encourage it to be believed.

This systematic and descriptive research was done through interviews with well-selected persons among the academic authorities of training institutions and church leadership within kimbanguist settings. Due to their educational background, they represent a good and authentic source of information.

The concern was to discover the current teachings in regard with the kimbanguist trinity: which biblical texts do they use to support their point of view and what is their hermeneutical interpretation of those passages. While many write on various aspects of Kimbanguism and its doctrines it is the kimbanguist theologians who justify doctrinal issues.

Books were consulted as sources of information. But since the results of the proposed interviews and questionnaire are to be taken as primary sources for this study, most of the

information from books or articles served as secondary sources. In this way the researcher was able to discover firsthand what kimbanguist doctrines actually teach.

The sampling process used to choose the respondents for the guide approach interview and the questionnaire is described below.

1.4.5. Sampling method

A sample is a “group of subjects from whom data are collected often representative of a specific population” (Mancosa, 2016: 33).

1.4.5.1. Sampling size

The Mancosa (2016: 92–93) says that:

Qualitative researchers view sampling process as dynamic, ad hoc rather than static parameters of populations. Although there are statistical rules for probability sample size, there are only guidelines for qualitative sample size. Thus qualitative samples can range from 1–40 and more. Typically, a qualitative sample seems small compared with the samples needed to generalize to a larger population. The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases. The insights generated from qualitative inquiry depend more on the information richness of the cases and the analytical abilities of the researcher than on the sample size.

Regarding the research problem, the purpose, and strategy to collect data—this study needed knowledgeable people in the matter of doctrine. The sample size was composed of sixteen people: six kimbanguist theologians— three great leaders and three teachers of the kimbanguist theological seminary— and ten students of the same institution.

1.4.5.2. Sample techniques

For this research, three subgroups were composed amongst kimbanguist intellectuals: three top leaders, who are advanced in their age. They constitute a first generation of kimbanguist theologians. The second group was made of three teachers who also serve as pastors. They are the middle/second generation of kimbanguist theologians. Finally, ten students constituted the upcoming third generation of prospective teachers/theologians. All these students had already completed their systematic theology studies.

What needs to be added is that these students went through an initiation — a kind of brainwashing— for nine months in Nkamba.⁸ During that time the kimbanguist doctrines were again revisited. For that reason they imparted first-hand doctrinal knowledge.

⁸ This information was delivered to the researcher by one of the teachers.

This way of sampling is the stratified random sampling technique where a population is divided into small groups according to the variables chosen by the researcher, and people selected from each subgroup (Mancosa, 2016: 43, 33). The variables for this choice are knowledge of the kimbanguist trinity, influence over other believers and availability/accessibility for the interview process. However, within each subgroup, the convenience sampling was used. This latter consists of “a non-probability of selecting subjects who are available or accessible” (Mancosa, 2016: 33).

Now follows a brief explanation of the persons comprising the sample interviews.

Two academic authorities—in this dissertation, the first is called AD and the second DN— and one church leader, labelled here RK (for the sake of anonymity), were interviewed. Ten current students and three teachers of the kimbanguist seminary responded to the questionnaire.

The first generation was composed of the AD, DN, and RK. These are top leaders. The first is a woman, holding a doctorate in Protestant theology, and has been a member of the church since 1979. The second also has a doctorate in Protestant theology and a member of the church since 1971⁹. The third person holds a bachelor degree in theology and a church member since 1982.

By virtue of their qualifications, positions, age, and duration in the church the researcher expected to get information other generations may or may not know during interviews.

The interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis at their university, and matters such as what is happening in the church concerning the doctrine of the trinity were broached.

The second generation consists of teachers. Their significance is related to the reception of their doctrinal knowledge from their teachers. They are familiar with what is being taught and preached about the trinity. Their average age is 49 years old.

The following generation, consists of those students and pastors, relatively young with an average age of about 42 years old. Students were either in the final academic year or would be in the next year. That class had seven students, but two were not available. So, the researcher met five of them and one was a lady.¹⁰ Their significance here is just to help discovering what they have been taught and are preaching concerning the trinity. Are they preaching what they have been taught or not? In other words, is there any difference between

⁹ These two people revealed to the researcher that they got their doctorate from the Yaoundé Protestant Faculty of Theology.

¹⁰ Among all who made the sample for this research, only two people were women.

their trinitarian preaching and the trinity taught in the seminary? Their answers give some insight into this question.

As teachers are the living link between the seminary and the church, their students are the ones who are being taught in order to perpetuate the doctrine under study.

1.4.6. The Location of the study

The geographic location of this study is Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Kinshasa, the kimbanguist church has many buildings; one university, one seminary of theology, twenty-four major parishes, and many prayer cells. The university and the seminary are not located in the same place. The university is at Bongolo, a neighbourhood within the Kalamu commune where the researcher met AD, DN, and RK. Students and teachers were met on site at their seminary located at Lutendele in the Mont Ngafula commune.

1.4.7. The Variables

A variable is “an event, category, behaviour or attitude that expresses a construct and has different values, depending on how it is used in a study” (Mancosa, 2016, 20). This study has five variables. Two of them are dependent variables and three are independent. A dependent variable is “a measured variable that is the consequence of or depends on antecedent variables. [It] is affected by the intervention”, while an independent variable is “a variable that is antecedent to or that precedes the dependent variable. [It] describes what was done... to influence the dependent variable” (Mancosa, 2016: 20, 23–24).

Regarding the topic of this study, modalism and the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity are dependent variables because they are the ones which will be considered for change if they were to be regarded as orthodox Protestant Christian doctrines. For that reason theology, the biblical hermeneutics of this study, and creeds are independent variables for this dissertation. They serve to reflect traditional Christian approaches to doctrine and so may be used to reflect upon the the kimbanguist trinity today, but, in the process remain unaffected by their subject.

McMillan and Schumacher (as cited by the Mancosa, 2016: 65) say that: ‘There is no manipulation of the independent variable in descriptive research.’ So then, these independent variables are not to be manipulated, they are stable forever, because “theological research seeks to explain both the God’s Word and his works. In both cases, the outcome is the

development of theory which aims to be both trustworthy and truthful” (Elliston, 2011: 69). The Word of God is to be kept unchangeable forever then.

1.4.8. Data analysis

To analyse data received from the quantitative questions, “the discriminant item analysis” was used. “It provides the response rate of each item” regarding the total sample size... (Smith, 2008: 241). The respondents’ answers were processed and organized without altering the central ideas of the respondents. Thereafter, the results are discussed to draw accurate conclusions, which are to be compared with the findings found through the literature.

1.4.9. Instruments to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity

The title of this study is modalism and the doctrine of the trinity in Kimbanguism: a theological and critical analysis. Therefore, it seems clearly that the methods to be used ought to cover systematic theology and the Bible. France (2000: 66, 71; see also Clark, as cited in Cowan, 2000: 2–3) argues that “in the Scripture, the Spirit testifies to the truth of the Word” and “Scripture [is] the believer’s presupposition, the believer’s standard of truth and falsity, of right or wrong.” In addition, the fourth research question insinuates that creed should be used for it is the way the early Church refuted the modalism, because creeds are the confessing church’s doctrinal declarations—in particular concerning the biblical trinity— and by and large represents the established doctrines of Christendom.

Scripture is important because kimbanguists believe and claim that they are Christians because they use the Bible. For that reason the “rational argument” (Craig, 2000: 31; France, 2000: 71), could be employed to question and debate the kimbanguist trinity. But together with the revelation of the Bible kimbanguists accept experiences as sources of inspiration. The premise for Christian theologians is however that “Christian revelation in the Scriptures is the framework through which all experience is interpreted and all truth is known” (Cowan, 2000: 11).

For a more in-depth Trinitarian understanding three main kimbanguist categories will be tested: (1) the arguments for the different sources they have for inspiration or revelation, (2) the arguments for re-incarnation and (3) their particular hermeneutics on some biblical texts. Each of these categories is critical for the building of the kimbanguist trinity. After dealing with those arguments, this research will provide a conclusion concerning the kimbanguist trinity. In so doing, the current study will attempt to expose and to oppose that understanding of the trinity and defend the traditional orthodoxy of the early creeds.

1.4.10. Ethical considerations

According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (as cited in Mancosa, 2016: 37),

Ethics are concerned with what is right or wrong from a moral perspective. Ethics are focused on what is morally proper or improper when engaged with participants or when assessing data. Hence researchers should be aware of ethical responsibilities and legal constraints that accompany the gathering and reporting of information.

Again, “the ethical guidelines include policies regarding informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and caring. Researchers, however, must adopt these principles in complex situations” (Mancosa, 2016: 98).

These insights show how the ethics side in the research is so important. In fact, without a good ethics, data might be impossible to be gathered and/or the results may be very wrong. That is why the researcher should be very attentive while collecting, through the questionnaire and interview, and analysing data.

In the case of this study, while this use of questionnaire and interview may be construed as having some risk attached to it it is not regarded as high risk or medium risk. The reason for that is that the persons interviewed are mature leaders within the kimbanguist church and the students interviewed are active in ministry in local congregations of that denomination. Questions about their stance on the trinity will not be a new experience for them and the questions used are not framed in a confrontational manner. This interview process is therefore perceived as being low risk.

Since the researcher was aware of the complexities in doctrinal matters, he did introduce himself—when needed— as a Mukongo researcher, someone who is interested in studying Kimbanguism. To be accepted, the researcher needed to be covered by an institution, ILU-Burundi, from which he got a letter. While in the office of the “président du collège”¹¹, to get permission to conduct an interview and to distribute a questionnaire, the researcher responded to an interrogatory.

Being Mukongo from the same district with the prophet, the researcher made it known in speaking in *Kikongo*. This was mainly done to get the letter allowing him to be accepted in the seminary, the parishes and the university.

However, among intellectuals, *Kikongo* was not often used. The interview was conducted in French, and the questionnaire was also written in the same language. The interviewees were called the day before, thus they knew that they would be interviewed. After the

¹¹ This one is the national representative of the spiritual chief. He is the number one of the kimbanguist church in the DR Congo while the spiritual chief is the number one across the world.

interview with each respondent, the researcher read the answers provided to make sure that what is written is what was said.

The students, because of the delicacy of the issue, were visibly very suspicious. They were told the same day that they have to respond to a questionnaire and the researcher was introduced to them by one of their teachers. While responding, sometimes students asked questions to try to discover if the researcher had a hidden agenda. In fact, at this time, the kimbanguist church is very sensitive concerning the issues around the trinity because of the pressure they are being put under by international Christian organizations, especially the WCC. Because the researcher was covered by the letter written by the national representative of the spiritual chief of the church, and having been told that some leaders have already been interviewed, all other respondents participated with some measure of confidence and felt secure.

Another ethical issue is all about the permission to cite names in the dissertation. Given the sensitivity of the subject, although the respondents accepted to provide answers to the questions, they did not want to sign a document allowing their names to be mentioned within this work. For that reason this study will use codes to specify answers from the respondents; each one of them having a specific code and so preserve anonymity.

1.5. Clarification of Concepts

The key words for this research are trinity, oneness of God, modalism, Kimbanguism, theological and critical analysis. Some of these terms constitute chapters or sections of the current research.

Trinity: This is the theological perception according to which God is one although the godhead is described as having three different persons within it; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This study does not have a particular definition to this term. Its importance here is that this work will compare the orthodox perception of trinity with that of the church under study.

Oneness of God: This is the doctrine held by those Christians who do not believe in the trinity. For them, Jesus is at the same time the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the name of God. The godhead does not have three different persons within it. This doctrine is very closer to the modalism.

Modalism: This is a doctrine which was taught by some people in the early Church. For them, the godhead is not composed by persons of the same nature. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are just modes, not different persons.

Kimbanguism: This term describes the church created by the followers of the prophet Kimbangu. The initial movement founded by Kimbangu was called *Kintuadi* by himself (Nawej, 2013: 58). It is translated as “union, unity, community.” Later on, his junior son Joseph Diangienda Kuntima changed the name of the movement and founded the church called “Church of Jesus Christ on earth by his special Envoy Simon Kimbangu.” Though Kuntima (1984: 11) defines “Kimbanguism as Christianity which results from the actions and teachings of Simon Kimbangu”, in this work, Kimbanguism will generally mean the doctrine(s) of this church, mainly the doctrine of the trinity.

Theological analysis: This expression will express the role of the systematic theology—that is, established doctrines, creed and hermeneutics— as applied to critically assess the kimbanguist trinity.

Critical analysis: The use of notions of critical and creative thinking will help to rationally assess the available data in support of this doctrine and to determine its viability in the light of the traditional view of the trinity.

1.6. Schematic Presentation

The following chart displays the correlation between the research questions, aim and objectives, and research method of this work.

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
What are the sources for the kimbanguist doctrine of trinity?	The aim of this question is to discover the sources of the kimbanguist trinity. For a time, this doctrine was fine. How come that suddenly, this church has drastically changed this Christian core doctrine. What are their reasons and arguments?	Books and journal articles are written on the kimbanguist doctrine. In addition, interviews and questionnaires also are to be conducted.
How can the African traditional religion (ATR), especially the Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), help to better understand the historical and cultural context of the kimbanguist trinity?	The aim is to find out the relationships between the kimbanguist trinity and the Bakongo concept of the spirit world. The influence of tradition will be explored.	Through readings on ATR/BTR, this doctrine will be compared with tradition. The kimbanguist trinity will also be compared to the biblical concept of trinity to illustrate differences.
How can the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity be	Here, the aim is then to describe its theological	Systematic theology and creedal expressions will be

better understood in light of early Christian debates about theology, especially the ideas labelled modalism (in particular, Sabellianism)?	particularities, including a name to differentiate it with other less orthodox trinitarian doctrines. Some of its features suggest that the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity is a sub-category of modalism	used to find particular features of the kimbanguist trinity.
How can the systematic theology and the provided resources, namely creeds drawn from the debates about the early Christian modalism, be used to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?	This is the practical contribution of this research. In fact, the assumption is that this doctrine is altogether false. Thus it should be defeated. This study is the warning voice of Christianity towards kimbanguists and those Christians who think that kimbanguists are Christians. This is a tool for evangelism as well. It even can be used to follow up new converts, coming from Kimbanguism or those coming from other churches similar to the kimbanguist church.	To use supportive notions of the systematic theological study as basic for the classical apologetic structure. In addition critical and creative thinking principles are to be called upon to oppose this doctrine.

1.7. Conclusion

This introductory chapter described the research problem and core research questions. Research methodology for a qualitative and quantitative research project with leaders among the kimbanguist church (e.g., pastors and theologians) will be based on scientific principles discussed above.

The second chapter will include a comparative theological review of contemporary evangelical interpretations of the orthodox Christian trinitarian theology and that of modalism (also known as modal Monarchianism or 'Sabellianism'). It will include an introduction to African general conceptions of divinity and Bakongo conceptions of *Nzambi* and specifically related ideas.

In a more historical anthropological approach, the third chapter introduces Simon Kimbangu, the kimbanguist movement, and the contemporary institutional church known as the Church of Jesus Christ on earth by his special envoy Simon Kimbangu.

The fourth chapter reports the results of the research while the fifth chapter constitutes the analysis of apologetic (in the sense of apologia, a defence of the faith) arguments that

Christians may use to challenge the kimbanguist theological ideas, especially regarding the doctrine of the trinity. A general conclusion, the sixth chapter, brings this research to its end.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, MODALISM, AND THE AFRICAN CONCEPT OF GOD AND THE SPIRITS

2.1. Introduction

Prior to Kimbangu, views of God and trinity were already prevalent in a variety of forms among Christians and traditional Africans. This chapter will explore the Christian doctrine of trinity and of modalism, as well as conceptions of God in African traditional religions (ATR). Of especial interest will be the Bakongo concept of God, ancestors, and reincarnation. Kimbangu, a former Baptist catechist, an African and a Mukongo, was likely to have been influenced by these various perceptions of God and the spirit world.

2.2. The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity¹²

It is worth starting by recalling that it is important to observe that the debate about the nature of the godhead is not a new issue. The story of the early Church shows that it went through difficulties to come up with a consistent biblical doctrine of the trinity. According to Kelly (1960: 109), the third century was the most controversial regarding conflicting positions on the doctrine of the nature of the godhead.

In the early Church, Christians were also preoccupied with the unity of God, to show that the Father, the Son and the Spirit as manifested in creation and redemption, were different persons but, at the same time, inseparable. The Son and the Spirit were one with the Father. They were not overly concerned with exploring the relations within the trinity, nor did they explore a suitable vocabulary to correctly express them (Kelly, 1960: 109).

Therefore, instead of stabilizing the Church, that doctrinal achievement provoked reactions in some circles for they thought that the increasing emphasis on the triplicity was imperilling the divine unity. A current of thought, to preserve that unity, was born in the West, called Monarchianism. This latter approach found opposition in the East tending towards a pluralistic view of Deity but without destroying the monotheistic nature of the trinity. The East was in agreement with the teaching stipulating that there is a distinction between the three “Persons” within eternal being of God. Unfortunately, that debate left a permanent impression on the entire Christendom, producing many “kinds” of Christian interpretations in the matter of the trinity; the nature of the godhead (Kelly, 1960: 109–110).

In the West, Monarchianism basically took on two forms, emphasizing but polarizing divine unity or *monarchia*. The first form was called the dynamic Monarchianism, also known as adoptionism. It “was the theory that Christ was a mere man upon whom God’s Spirit had descended” (Kelly, 1960: 115). The second was called modalism¹³, or simply called Monarchianism. It “tended to blur the distinctions between Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Kelly, 1960: 115).

¹² In spite of some historical events described in this section, it is important to make the reader aware that the main aim is not about the historical process of the formation of the doctrine of the trinity, but upon the conclusions. That is the trinity is made of one God composed by three different persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this work, which is a systematic one, the three persons of the orthodox trinity and those of the kimbanguist trinity have to be compared. Therefore, it is for the sake of comparison that the descriptions of these six different persons is made.

¹³ Modalism will be talked about in details later for it is one of the main subjects this dissertation is dealing with.

Another teaching touching the nature of the godhead the early Church dealt with was called Arianism. “The fundamental premises of his system are the affirmation of the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God, the unoriginate source of all reality.” (Kelly, 1960: 227) The consequences of these premises are

First, the Word must be a creature, Whom the Father has formed out of nothing by His mere fiat. Secondly, as a creature the Word must have had a beginning... prior to His generation He did not exist... there was when He was not. Thirdly, the Son can have no communion with, and indeed no direct knowledge of, His Father. Fourthly, the Son must be liable to change and even sin.

Regarding the aim, that is to preserve the unity within the godhead—these three teachings, adoptionism, modalism, and Arianism, was not accepted by the mainstream of the early Church leaders. In fact they endangered the entire process of the salvation. Without Jesus being fully God, there is no way for humankind to be saved because only in God can all the saving qualities be found. In addition, without them being different persons, the salvation process could have been made impossible.

In the New Testament, Luke 3: 21–22 tells a story of the baptism of Jesus. Young (2012: 1) says:

Here in Luke 3:21-22, we see the trinity as the Son in the water baptized and praying, the Holy Spirit descended in form like a dove, and the Father speaking from the heavenlies. The entire trinity is there at the same time in three distinct persons all equal and all eternal.

It seems clear that the two other members of the trinity have fundamental roles in the life of Jesus for the salvation of humankind: while fulfilling justice through the baptism rite, the Father is sustaining the Son by introducing Him to the present people, and the Spirit empowering the Son to fulfil the purposes of God.

Consequently, to preserve the biblical teaching over the nature of the godhead, those other teachings, namely adoptionism, modalism, and Arianism were eventually officially condemned, in the resultant Christian creeds¹⁴ (Kelly, 1960: 231–232). Clearly, touching the nature of the godhead, theological matters had been settled long time ago by the early Church. After sharing these historical facts, the next section is devoted to the definitions and the importance of the doctrine of the trinity.

¹⁴ Creeds are faith declarations which are accepted throughout the Christendom, until today. This work will talk about creeds in one of the chapters for they are instruments to evaluate the Kimbanguism.

2.2.1. Definitions of the trinity

Theologians do not all express the notion of trinity uniformly. This section provides three examples of them. Grudem (1994: 226) says: “The word trinity means ‘tri-unity’ or ‘three-in-oneness.’ It is used to summarize the teaching of the Scriptures that God is three persons yet one God.” Again for him, “three statements summarize the biblical teaching. God is three persons; each person is fully God; and there is one God” (Grudem, 1994: 231). Tonstad (2009: 10) similarly says that:

The trinitarian God is a single being who yet contains multitudes— three... yet utterly different from one another while each being identical with what it is to be God, inseparable and indivisible. In trinitarian reflection, God is always already different within Godself— God is always Father, Son, and Spirit.

For Kiesling (1986: 606), “according to Christian faith, then, there is no one God apart from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”.

To sum up these definitions, it is observed that these authors are all of the view that the word trinity describes the very nature of the godhead. It means that one and only one God exists from eternity albeit composed of three different persons. The Father, Son and the Spirit, are inseparable and yet different from one another. Tonstad expresses it through these words: “single being”, “identical with what is to be God”, “inseparable” and “indivisible” to support the oneness of the godhead. He also uses the expressions as “multitudes”, “different”, “one another” supporting the fact that the godhead is made up of more than one entity. These definitions allow for some insight into the numerical composition of the godhead.

2.2.2. The Significance of the doctrine of the trinity

The importance and the authority of the doctrine of the trinity are obvious because it is at the center of Christian faith and life. Augustine (cited by Letham, 2004: 2), talking about the trinity, said: ‘in no other subject is error more dangerous, or enquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable.’ In addition, Brunner (cited by Grenz, 2000: 53), stipulates that: ‘the ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity, established by the dogma of the ancient Church... is a theological doctrine which defends the central faith of the Bible and of the Church.’ That is why “the discussion of the triune God forms the appropriate beginning point for our delineation of the faith of the community of Christ” (Grenz, 2000: 53). On the other hand Kombo (2000: 38) declares that: “What makes the doctrine of the Trinity authoritative is the fact that it describes the way God wishes to be known.”

Indeed, any confusion in God’s trinitarian aspect is dangerous because the entire nature and work of God is described therein, and the whole Christian life depends on that. The

doctrine of the trinity is altogether biblically authoritative. Explaining a mystery is not an easy task—because it goes beyond human imagination and intelligence — but it does allow for discovering important truths about the godhead. Thus, the section below will expand over the trinitarian essence and oneness, threeness and distinctiveness.

2.2.3. The Essence and oneness of God

The Westminster shorter catechism (1648: 1) declares that “there is but one only, the living and true God. There are three persons in the godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” Edgar (2014: 117) says that: “there is no separate essence of God apart from God’s life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit who live in a communion of persons (see also Horrell: 2004: 126). Grenz (2000: 54) makes it easier: “One essence, three persons.”

For all these authors, God is made of three persons. The three are equal in their essence, power and glory. The trinity is then to be comprehended as one God, three persons but one essence. Trinitarian Christians do not believe in three gods; they are fully monotheists. They are neither tritheists nor unitarians. Actually, the oneness of God goes together with the fact that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of the same generation. Tertullian (1870: chap. V) argues that:

For before all things God was alone—being in Himself and for Himself universe, and space, and all things. Moreover, He was alone, because there was nothing external to Him but Himself. Yet even not then was He alone; for He had with Him that which He possessed in Himself, that is to say, His own Reason. For God is rational, and Reason was first in Him; and so all things were from Himself. This Reason is His own Thought (or Consciousness) which the Greeks call λόγος, by which term we also designate Word *or Discourse* and therefore it is now usual with our people, owing to the mere simple interpretation of the term, to say that the Word was in the beginning with God.

Tertullian is stating that God was alone at the beginning. However, this could not be taken in an absolute sense for, actually, he was with what is a part of Himself, namely, the Reason, the logos. Being a part of Himself and not external to Him, that Reason is of the same generation with Him who possessed Him. Here, the author is speaking of Jesus who is the logos. Therefore, Jesus is of the same generation than the Father.

Zwingli (1531:par. 3, chap. 1) echoes the same thought saying that:

Since we know that God is the Source and Creator of all things, it cannot be that we should understand that there is anything either before Him or along with Him that is not from Him. For if there could be anything which was not from Him, He would not be infinite, for He would not extend to where that other was that was outside of Him. Hence, though we see that in the scriptures God is called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these are no different creatures or gods, but these three are one, one essence, one existence, one

force and power, one knowledge and providence, one goodness and kindness, the names or persons are three, but they are all and each one and the same God.

At the very beginning God was alone. All that existed was Himself, nothing other than Himself existed at the beginning. Since God already existed as trinity, then He was there as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are of the same generation. Actually, “the Son and the Spirit are both coeternal with the Father, and one with him....” (Letham 2004: 93).

That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are of the same generation is emphasized by what Edgar (2014: 117) calls *perichoresis*. This latter “refers to ‘mutual indwelling’ or ‘interpenetration’ of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Because of their *perichoresis*, their oneness and being coeternal— that is, of the same generation— it clearly appears that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can only be but of the same nature or essence. “The trinity involves knowing God as One and Three” and “the three Persons are one God, the same in substance....” (Johnson: 2014:102, 111). Consequently, if one of them is of the divine nature, then all of them share that very same nature.

Arguing from the experience of community relationships Kiesling (1986: 606–608), insisting on the oneness of God, declares that:

The three nevertheless possess one numerically the same divine nature... The Father is ... indeed identical with the divine nature, which is the one and the same nature possessed equally by the Son and the Holy Spirit. In relating to any person of the Trinity, we relate to the whole of the divine nature, which that person possesses, shares, and is fully with the other two.... All three persons of the Trinity are equally God and equal in personal dignity. One is not subordinate to another. Nor do they exist in a temporal order, implying some chronological before or after of one person in regard to another. The three persons exist simultaneously from all eternity.

For this author, the fact that all of the trinitarian members are of the same essence, it is impossible to relate to one of them exclusively without relating to the two other persons by the virtue of being one in their essence. In other words, once one relates to one of the trinitarian members, he relates to the divine nature —thus all of them at once, because this is the nature of all of them. Their nature is “divinity or deity”¹⁵ in opposition to “humanity” which is the nature of the mankind. To conclude: the Father, Son, and Spirit are one in nature or essence, and generation.

¹⁵ According to the British dictionary definitions for divinity, divinity is the quality of being divine, divine nature. Deity is a synonym.

2.2.4. The Threeness of God

Indeed, God is one, but the traditional Christian doctrine teaches that He also is three: Father, Son, and Spirit. Grenz (2000: 66) mentions that “each of the three is deity, sharing together in, and together constituting, the one divine essence... the one God... is not undifferentiated, solitary oneness, but subsists in a multiplicity, the three members of the Trinity”. The way God is one by essence is the same way He is three as well. Threeness is the way He was/is from all eternity. There was no time where God was not one or not three. According to Grenz (2000: 66), “there is no God but the triune God; God is none other than Father, Son, and Spirit.”

The oneness of God is also expressed by the concept of essence. The threeness of God is, in turn, further understood in terms of “ontology”. The difference within the godhead is not an “essential” one but an “ontological” one. There are three different persons having just one essence or nature. All are but one God though they are ontologically singular. That singularity is made clear through the description of their distinctiveness.

2.2.5. The Distinctiveness within the trinity

Even though the members of the trinity are one and of the same nature, they have, however, some differences between them. Those differences are more evident when viewed from the perspective of their organization and authority, relationships, and their roles.

2.2.5.1. Organization and authority in the Holy Trinity

Tertullian (1870: chap. 5.1) explained that order in these terms: “I may therefore without rashness first lay this down (as a fixed principle) that even then before the creation of the universe God was not alone, since He had within Himself both Reason, and, inherent in Reason, His Word, which He made second to Himself by agitating it within Himself.” He opined that, according to their organization, the Father made the Word to be second in order.

Horrell (2014: 128–129; see also Grenz, 2000: 60, 67), explaining the organization within the godhead, declares that:

God reveals himself as three eternally distinct persons.... Many in Christian tradition affirm that... each member of the Godhead eternally indwells the other without confusion of persons.... The persons of the Trinity can be known together as one yet also identified distinctly and worshipped. As the church fathers... affirm, the Father is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. Traditionally, the Father is the unoriginate Origin, the Son is the only begotten Son (‘begotten but not made’), and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds....

Horrell expresses the traditional views of the Church as they are stipulated in the creeds. In his definition, he encapsulates two dimensions of the godhead: bottomless relationship, and

difference in their order. He pointed that their order is not dissolved in their mutual indwelling. In other words, no matter the kind of relationships within the godhead, the order will neither change nor be dissolved. According to the order, Horrell says that the Father begets the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. To describe the same reality, Kiesling (1986: 608—609) explains what he calls a “metaphysical order in the trinity.” He stipulates that:

The persons of the Trinity have their unique identities in their opposition in relationships. The Father is the Father and not the Son. The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Father is unbegotten, without origin or source, while being the source and origin of the other persons of the Trinity. Though both the Son and the Spirit have an origin, the Son’s is by generation from the Father alone, whereas the Spirit’s is by spiration from the Father and the Son. The Son proceeds from the Father by way of knowing; He is the Word of God. The Spirit, however, proceeds from the Father and the Son by way of loving and is the personalized Bond of Love between the Father and the Son. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit... possess ... the same divine nature...but... each is God in a relatively unique manner. The Father has the divine nature precisely as being the Father who begets the Son and communicates the Godhead to the Son and, with the Son, to the Spirit.... We may say, analogically, that each person of the Trinity “experiences” being the one and the same Godhead in a relatively unique way appropriate to each one’s distinctiveness as Father, Son, or Spirit. The Father who begets the Son without origin from either or both of the other persons of the Trinity and is, therefore, the first person of the Trinity. The Son, generated by the Father by way of knowledge, is the second person. The Spirit is the third, spirated by way of love by the Father and the Son.

At the beginning, as it can be understood throughout this thought, the godhead appears in the form of the Father. Once the Son was begotten, but not created, by the Father, together they spirated the Holy Spirit who already was. The Father is then considered as the first and the Son and the Holy Spirit were not created for it is not possible to create what already exists. So then, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one but different in that they are neither from the same origin nor of the same order, though being of the same generation. The Father is the first in that metaphysical order, the Son is second and the Spirit is the third.

Grudem (1994: 249) explains that organization in terms of authority. For him, “the Father directs and has authority over the son, and the son obeys and is responsive to the directions of the father. The Holy Spirit is obedient to the directives of both the Father and the Son.” Authority does not mean more important than the others. It just shows where commands are coming from, who is executing and who is the completer. But all these roles—commanding, executing and completing as described in this metaphysical order, can only be fulfilled by what is God. This is the way the trinity does function. Apart from their order and authority, their distinctiveness is also seen through their relations.

2.2.5.2. *Relationships in the Holy Trinity*

Horrell (2014: 126) states that: “In primary terms, the doctrine of the trinity affirms that the only true God eternally exists as three persons —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — one in essence, united in glory, and distinct in relations.” Then, the members of the godhead are of the same nature, live in a very close relationship, but are different in their relations. For Kiesling (1986: 605), the three members of the trinity do not exist without being in relationship with one another. They are together from eternity. As shown above, the order within the members of the holy trinity already implies the differences in their relations as well; however, those relations are so deep that it is impossible to trace an absolute demarcation between them.

Tonstad, (2009: 85—86), explains those relationships in terms of *kenosis*. For him,

Kenosis belongs first to the Father — it is the mode of his ecstatic self-possession by self-expropriation. The Son’s receptivity, the self-gift to him that constitutes his self as fully divine image, is also kenotic, since that is the content of the image of the Father. His receptivity is his acceptance of this constitution by the Father’s own kenotic self-expropriation. The Holy Spirit, in perhaps underdeveloped fashion, is breathed out as the ultimate seal of the non-self-seeking character of the Trinity, since his role is to make room for the reality of the unity of Father and Son.

The self-expropriation of the Father, the receptivity by the Son of the Father’s gift, and the non-self-seeking trinitarian character — humility— of the Holy Spirit are descriptions of the *kenosis* within the trinity. Atkinson (2014: 145) states it more concisely. Recognizing the equality within the trinity, he says: “This equality [is not] a static equality. It [is] as a dynamic interplay of *kenosis* and exaltation. Each person humbly lowers self in order to raise the other. Each person, in consequence of such self-abasement, is actually exalted as a result.” Atkinson not only defines the trinity in terms of its members being equal but also displays the “life” within the godhead. This is the way these divine persons live and behave towards one another: One chooses to humble himself in order to lift higher the two others. In return, He will receive the same glory. This cycle of self-denial or self-emptying, “*kenosis*”, and exaltation by the two other members in the trinity, is continually and eternally lived out amongst them.

Tonstad (2009: 74—76) describes the same relations in terms of “interpenetration.” “While the divine persons reciprocally interpenetrate one another... they are not interchangeable, and the real distinction between them is not threatened.... The divine hypostases know and interpenetrate each other to the very same degree that each of them opens up to the other in absolute freedom.” So, apart from the *kenosis*, interpenetration is

another word that characterizes their relationships. Differences are neither dissolved nor threatened in that interpenetration.

So then, being of the same nature and composing the same godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in “humility” and “interpenetration”¹⁶ toward one another. However, they remain genuine in their order, roles, and in the most intimate relationship to each other. Simply said, perfect humility, openness, and knowledge of each by the two others through their relationships constitute the way they live together.

Edgar (2004:127–128) analyzes matters from the perspective of Jesus’ birth as event. For him, the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible, dealt with people in very different ways; inspiring, indwelling in, and guiding them. But because of the fact that He, the Holy Spirit, is the author of the birth of Jesus surely another dimension comes into play. That is the bond or connection between Jesus and God is of another kind; a particular one, different from all other connections. This is the way he explains the relationship between Jesus and the godhead. In addition, Moltmann (1990:84) specifies that:

These nativity stories are trying to say that God is bound up with Jesus...not fortuitously but essentially.... His Fatherhood...embraces his [of Jesus] whole person and his very existence. Consequently, the messiah Jesus is essentially God’s Son. He does not become so at some point in history. He is from the very beginning the messianic Son, and his beginning is to be found in his birth from the Holy Spirit.

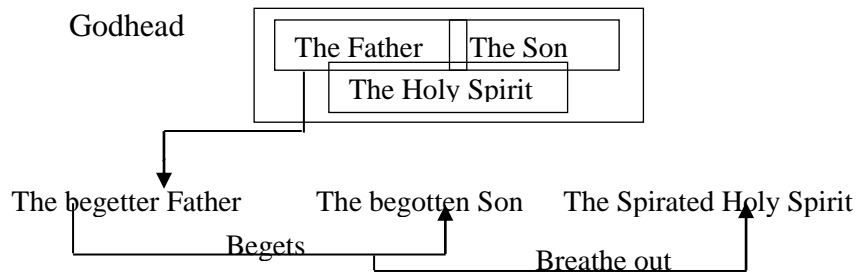
Here is described a deep connection between the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit. The fact that Jesus does not have an earthly father means that God is his Father (Edgar, 2004: 128). Whenever Jesus referred to the Father, it was with a clear declaration that the sonship He has with the Father is different from that of ours. He is divine, but men are not. He used to say “my Father and your Father”, and never “our Father”, as if He was included. Once again, the connection between Jesus and God is clearly stated here. Men are adopted and “Jesus is Son of God by nature and was so from conception” (Edgar, 2004: 128).

Their relations are apparent, not only through their *kenosis* and interpenetration, but also through the story of Jesus’ birth. This kind of relationship is filiation. That is why Jesus called the Father rightly “my Father”. That filiation reflects the order within the trinity. So then, *kenosis* and Jesus’ birth story help in understanding the way the members of the godhead do relate to one another.

¹⁶ This word simply means that each member of the trinity discloses freely, deeply, perfectly and totally to the others such that there is no “secret” between them. Thus, they know each other perfectly.

The endeavour to schematize the order and the relationships within the Holy Trinity can be drawn in the following diagram.

Figure 1: Relationships and order within the Holy Trinity



The idea is that, before the beginning of all things, the godhead already existed in the “visible” or revealed form of the Father. However, the Son and the Holy Spirit were relationally in the Father, each retaining an individual identity. The above diagram establishes that the persons of the trinity are distinct in their order — especially in their manifestation — even though they are inseparable in their relationships and share the same divine nature.

2.2.6. Roles in the Holy Trinity

So far, this work has explained the distinctiveness within the trinity in terms of organization and authority, *kenosis*, interpenetration and relationships in terms of Jesus’ birth. Yet, there are other aspects to consider while describing differences between the trinitarian members. Grenz (2000: 67) says that:

Each of the three trinitarian members fulfills a specific role in the one divine program. The Father functions as the ground of the world and of the divine program for creation. The Son functions as the revealer of God, the exemplar and herald of the Father’s will for creation, and the redeemer of the humankind. And the Spirit functions as the personal divine power active in the world, the completer of the divine will and program.

Various functions are ascribed to each member of the holy trinity. The Father is regarded as the origin of all things. The Son fulfils some specific tasks: God’s revealer, the human redeemer. Through the Son, humanity saw and heard God and came to know His will for him. Presently the Spirit also is still representing God in the world.

Grudem (1994: 249) explains those roles this way: “God the Father spoke creative words.... God the Son...carried out these creative decrees.... The Holy Spirit was active as well in different way....” Here too, roles are differently distributed. The godhead is active in the process of creation; it appears that each one person takes on a specific and unique role. In every process each of the persons of the trinity is involved but exercises a particular function.

For instance, it is theologically accepted that the Father planned redemption, the Son came and executed it, and the Holy Spirit is completing the redemptive process in the believer (Grudem, 1994: 249).

To explain their roles, Irenaeus (180: para. 3, book IV) says that: “the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made]....” Basically Irenaeus identifies the role of planner being the Father, while the Son is the executor of what is planned by the Father. The Spirit is the finisher of the plan. In that way, each fulfills what is exactly intended so that the work is perfectly done, to the satisfaction of the whole godhead.

Johnson (2014: 102) also established that difference in these practical terms:

The New Testament believers knew God in three ways: They knew the Father as the Creator, Sustainer, and Law-Giver; they knew Jesus as the one who taught them, washed their feet, died on the cross and rose again; they knew the Holy Spirit, poured out at Pentecost, who changed them within; and they knew this was one God.

Johnson again specifies the work of each member of the holy trinity, according to the view of the believers of the early Church. He explains those roles in more practical terms. He talks about what humanity saw the trinity doing among them. The Father gave the law to Moses; Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, gave food to the crowds, and healed their illness and so on. It was neither the Father nor the Spirit who did that directly to them. Again, they saw the Spirit coming upon them the day of Pentecost. They knew without any confusion that it was the Spirit who did that. So, even in the daily life of humans (of the creation as well), the trinitarian members act according to their roles.

The roles trace a practical distinctiveness within the holy trinity, at least to some extent. However, despite all these attempts, it is difficult to find clear limits between those roles within the godhead. Johnson (2014: 103) confirms this.

In an important way, all of God’s acts are the acts of three Persons. Though we customarily see creation as primarily the work of the Father, both the Son and the Holy Spirit participate in creation.... Though we usually think of redemption as the work of the Son, we often hear good, biblical sermons on the work of each of the three Persons in redemption. Nevertheless, the Bible describes the three Persons as having different roles, and these different roles are summarized in the great creeds.

This fact constitutes great proof to support their oneness. None of them fully acts independently. However, ignoring their distinctiveness simply means that God does not exist as trinity at all, and the composition of the godhead becomes questionable.

So then, from these analyses of various definitions from various authors, one can again affirm the trinitarian creeds such as the council of Nicea 325 AD.

To differentiate the persons of the godhead, some authors established a kind of specificity within the godhead and this is biblical as well. But the truth is that each member of the godhead is capable to do what one of them is capable to do. Therefore, this kind of “specialty” does not mean that others are incapable or less qualified to do what another can do. It is no wonder that it is difficult to talk about the trinity.

Letham (2004: 93, 96) states: “They share in what is exclusively a work of God” and “They work in union and harmony in creation, providence, and salvation....” Grenz (2000:67) says that: “The divine activity is characterized by cooperation among the three members of the trinity” and Berkhof (1933: 82) talks about the “works of the triune God....” Though duties are different within the trinity, all of them partake in their diverse works. That is why authors do not use the same words or even thoughts to explain their divine different roles. Sometimes, they may even differ— without being wrong— in the roles they ascribe to each of them.

Therefore, all trinitarian definitions and descriptions provided by the authors mentioned in this work tend to describe the following thought: God is one but the godhead is made up of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Separating one of them from the others or putting them together without recognizing their personal identities simply means that God does not exist as trinity at all, and the composition of the godhead, once again, is totally questionable.

This thought is encapsulated in the Nicene Creed (325AD):

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen. (Reardon, 2008: 1)

2.2.7. The Trinity in selected Biblical Expressions

All that has been described so far, concerning especially the roles and the oneness with the trinity, can relate to some trinitarian formulas in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the creation process offers a good example. The New Testament offers some other insight as well. For instance, in Matthew 28: 19, it is said: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (NIV, 1984) The trinity clearly comes to the fore in this passage as said by Henry (1987: 722). Actually, this fact can be understood because the three members of the holy trinity played a significant role in the process of salvation. Though Christ held a kind of pre-eminence, the Father and the Spirit had played also their role. Therefore, to give tribute to all they did, the Church often refers to the baptismal formula.

That formula means also that the three are equal. Henry (1987: 722) says: “Baptism is an outward sign of that inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer’s justification.” In other words, baptism is to be administered to the new believer. Repentance is actually the consequence of the work of the Father who attracts someone to Jesus. In turn, Jesus is the Word to be preached and the Spirit empowers that Word such that one is convinced of his sins and gets converted. That is why the biblical baptism can only be understood in terms of the trinity.

Another trinitarian formula is used by Paul to bless Christians. It is found in 2 Corinthians 13: 14 and says: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (NIV, 1984) Explaining the trinity from this passage, Keener (2000: 516) lets know that: “people thought of the Holy Spirit as a prophetic, divine force from God. Thus Paul to parallel Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit as he does here probably indicates ... that Jesus is also divine and that the Spirit is also a personal being like the Father and the Son”

The reader of this biblical passage can easily notice that the three members of the holy trinity are blessing the Christians. This is right because all are one God. They bestow blessing equally upon people as a divine act. However, considering the way Paul the apostle puts it, it seems that each one of the three is blessing Christians in a particular way. Grace is from

Jesus, love from the Father, and the fellowship from the Spirit. One God, in three persons is invoked in the process of blessing Christians in particular manner.

2.2.8. The Trinity today

Although early Christian theologians went a long way to settle the matter of the doctrine of the trinity the debate continues. As in the days of the early Church, nowadays groups of Christians have been variously labelled, based on how they understand the trinity. Bernard (1997: 14 –15) made it his task of describing the kinds of Christians produced by those doctrinal contradictions. He says that some Christians are trinitarian emphasizing the unity of God, but, unfortunately, they cannot clearly explain what is meant by three persons in one God. Others emphasize the threeness of the trinity, three self-conscious beings concluding with a tritheistic view of the godhead. In addition to trinitarianism, Bernard (1997: 15) says that some Christians are binitarianists. For them, the Holy Spirit is not a separate person and two persons comprise the godhead.

Apart from these first two groups of Christians—trinitarian and binitarianists, there are monarchists who think that the godhead cannot be divided into persons because this view weakens the absolute unity of God. They also can be found into two groups: on the one hand, those who assert that there is only one God, denying the full deity of Jesus, and on the other hand, those who believe that the fullness of the deity is found in Jesus who is, at once, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Bernard,1997: 15).

A brief distinction must be made essential for this study. All unitarians are monotheists, but not all monotheists are unitarians. To be precise, ‘monotheism’ is the claim that there is only one God. Christians, by definition, are monotheists. Unitarians are those Christians who emphasize the unity, the one-ness, of God and reject the multiplicity of persons in the godhead. There is no ‘orchestration’; Christians simply have disagreed about how best to interpret scripture regarding the nature of divinity, especially with regard the status of Jesus of Nazareth as the ‘Son of God.’

The next section will describe one of the major concepts this work is dealing with: modalism. The argument is that both modalism and the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity deal with the nature of the godhead, and, therefore, there may be some connections, or similarities, between these views of God.

2.3. Modalism

Discovering possible commonalities between the kimbanguist trinity and modalism is one of the aims of this work. Therefore, it seems important to get some insight about modalism. While there will be some overlap between some of the aforementioned it is necessary to clearly grasp what modalism is about as an entire chapter will deal only with Kimbanguism.

Historically modalism sought to preserve the unity of God and resist any “danger of regarding the Son and the Holy Spirit as identical to the Father...” (Letham, 2004: 108). Kelly (1960: 119) says that: “The driving-force behind it [modalism] was the twofold conviction... of the oneness of God and the full deity of Christ” and “any suggestion that the Word or Son was other than, or a distinct Person from the Father seemed to the modalists to lead inescapably to the blasphemy of two Gods.” Clearly then, for the modalists, the main concern was to maintain the unity of the godhead. While its concern was admirable its methodology led to questionable doctrine and finally to heresy.

2.3.1. Development and kinds of modalism

Even though only one kind of modalism, which was more “dangerous”, sabellianism, is more concerned in this study—and the survey seems to confirm that the kimbanguist trinity has nothing to do with the other forms of modalism—it appears prudent to just briefly show that modalism went through stages before its sabellian form.

Modalism went through many stages, producing five distinct kinds of modalism. The first kind, dynamic Monarchianism or adoptionism, is to be ascribed to Theodotus. He claimed that Jesus was like all men upon whom the Spirit or Christ came down in a strange manner when He was baptized. Consequently Jesus performed miracles without becoming a divine person. Theodotus was excommunicated by Pope Victor (186–198) (Kelly, 1960: 115–116).

Novatian, the first representative of the second stage, was of the view that the Father and the Son are different persons. But since both are God separately, then there cannot be only one God but two. How to deal with that? He proposed God’s revelation in two different modes leading to bi/ditheism. Paul of Samosata held similar views but was condemned in 268 at Antioch (Kelly, 1960: 117).

The third stage developed a view of patripassianism. For Noestus of Smyrna there is only one God, the Father, it was He who underwent the human experiences of Christ. He is the one who suffered as Father. Noestus was attacked by Tertullian and condemned by presbyters who confronted him (Kelly, 1960: 120–121).

Thereafter, a certain Praxeas took over and “taught that Father and Son were one identical Person.” The Word, Jesus, is not independent from the Father. So that it was the Father who was conceived in the womb of Mary and became His own Son. This doctrine was closer to adoptionism for Praxeas came to say that Jesus was the Son but Christ, the divine element, was the Father (Kelly, 1960: 121).

Radde-Gallwitz (2011: 233) explains another kind of modalism, which Hippolytus ascribed to Callistus. This latter viewed the Son as different from the Father, while the Father and the Spirit are identical. This modalism aspect therefore considers two kinds of modes for the same God: the Son or the mode God takes in the salvation process; the Spirit and the Father combining into one mode for all other divine activities or purposes. Although present in the early Church for a while, it seems, nevertheless, that the influence of these first four Monarchianism was not very significant.

2.3.2. Some definitions of sabellianism¹⁷

It was the last stage that was marked by the “more sophisticated modalism, sabellianism” (Kelly, 1960: 121–122). For Grenz (2000: 57), “a historically more influential form of modalism Monarchianism was attributed to Sabellius.” This doctrine was a great menace in the early Church. Kelly (1960: 119) is of the same view when he argues that: “If dynamic Monarchianism was a relatively isolated phenomenon...the same cannot be said of ...modalism. This was a fairly widespread, popular trend of thought, which could reckon, at any rate, a measure of sympathy in official circles....” So, modalism, under Sabellius (hence Sabellianism) —who was opposed by Hippolytus and condemned by Pope Callistus (217–222) —might be regarded as the major heresy against the full divine composition or nature of the godhead. This could be the reason why forms of sabellianism are still evident in Christendom despite the existence and continued acceptance of the Christian creeds.

For the sake of this work, sabellianism is form of modalism kind which most closely resembles the trinity doctrine of Kimbanguism.

To describe and define this modalism, as it was done with trinity, this section will consider a number of definitions in order to be more accurate in the understanding of this heresy as Watts (2008: par. 1) designates it. Authors define sabellianism in many ways. Letham (2004: 108) understand it as “The only God, the Father in the OT, had become the Son in the NT, and sanctified the Church as the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. The three were successive modes of the unipersonal God.” Toom (2014: 18) claims that for

¹⁷ Under this section, modalism and sabellianism will be used interchangeably.

modalism, Father and Son are but the same person, the distinctiveness between them is just nominal, and it was the Father who was incarnated. Tavast (2009: 356) adds that:

Sabellianism, also known as modalism or modalistic monarchianism, is a non-trinitarian belief.... The main idea in this heresy is that the Son and the Holy Spirit are different *modes* or *forms* of the Unitarian God, who, in fact, consists of the Father only. So there are not three distinct persons in God. Instead, one God only adopts different outward forms when acting in the world.

The idea seems to be the same. God is the Father. When He came on earth to save humankind, He went through incarnation and became the Son, and after the ascension, He came back, invisible, on earth to sanctify the Church as the Holy Spirit. The godhead does not have three different persons, but only one, changing forms throughout ages. Therefore, as long as the Church is still on earth, it should be said that God is using the mode called Holy Spirit; the Father and the Son are absent from heaven which should now be empty. Clearly this thought is not in accordance with biblical teaching.

So, since the trinity is simply defined as God being one, but composed of three different persons with the same substance or essence, modalism should be defined as one God, one person and one essence.

Radde-Gallwitz (2011: 234) puts it this way:

Sabellians...teach that he who is the Father is the same one who is the Son and the same one who is the Holy Spirit, so that there are three names in one hypostasis; or as in a human being there are body and soul, and spirit, so the Father is, so to speak, the body, the Son is, so to speak, the soul, and as the spirit belongs to the human being, so also the Holy Spirit is in the Godhead.

Modalism believes that Father, Son and Spirit are names which can be applied within a historical time scale. They are one in nature, order and authority, and roles and so strictly the same person changing modes according to the historical dispensation and projected role to be played.

Now, defining mode, Kelly (1960: 115) says that it meant successively face, expression, and role. The early significance of persona was mask which an actor could easily exchange to play another role. So, for modalism, the Father is the one and only God changing masks according to the role he decides upon.

However, an issue is to be raised here. The way Bruening and Paulsen (2001: 112) and Van Harvey (cited by Bernard, 1997: 256) define modalism and the trinity may bring confusion. The first declares that: “modalism affirms that one and only one person is God, who, nonetheless, appears in three different modes: as God the Father, as God the Son, and as God the Holy Spirit.” But then adds, a modalistic trinity “holds that in God are three

distinctions of essence, not just of activity. The names given to these three persons are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.” Two contradictory definitions which use the same terms— God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost— the former to define modalism, while the last defines or at least implies trinity.

Bernard (1997: 256) addresses the problem as follows. He defines trinity this way: “trinitarianism is the belief that there are three persons in one God. This has been stated in various ways, such as ‘one God in three persons’ and ‘three persons in one substance.’” Bernard’s stated definition of trinity uses the right terms, but then Steven (as cited by Bernard, 1997: 256), stipulating that trinity is God in three distinguished essences. Given that substance is essence this makes no sense. One substance should then be one essence, not three. Trinity is one God in three persons, also three persons in one essence, which is divinity, but trinity is not and will not be one God in three essences—which is three gods in three essences, which might be equated with tritheism. Actually, three essences should irremediably lead to that: three gods, each one of them being a god in his isolated and different way from another. Clearly this is not the classical theological understanding of how trinity is perceived and understood regardless of the usage of similar terminology.

The names God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit do not mean three essences but three different persons, the same and one God.

A similar variation is posited by Bruening and Paulsen (2001: 112) who hold that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are not names but modes or activities of the only one and same person who is God. For trinitarians, however, these are not activities but three different persons in the only one and same substance which is God. For if God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are accepted as names, then this is trinity. Finally, if God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons and three different essences, then this is thriheism, which claims that these three are different and separate gods.

To conclude, “modalism is the theological doctrine that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not three distinct Persons, but rather three modes or forms of activity under which God manifests Himself” (Kangas, 1976), and “the modalistic monarchianism... asserted that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separate realities, but ‘mode’ through which the one divine being expresses himself” (Grenz, 2000: 57). Modalism is that non-trinitarian doctrine believing that the godhead is made up of one and only one person who is God the Father with one *hypostasis*. The Son and the Spirit are not *hypostases*, rather just forms of the same God according to the role to be played, activity to be fulfilled or goal to be achieved. Grenz (2000: 57) explains

that the time of creation was the era of the Father, the era of the Son was the time of life and this Church age is the era of the Spirit.

2.3.3. Modalism today

Nowadays, according to Watts (2008:para. 9) dynamic Monarchianism, which is adoptionism is regarded as a heresy. This heretic doctrine erupted on the modern scene and is represented by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Sabellianism is still taught by some "Christians", among others the United Pentecostal Church International, also known as Oneness Pentecostals or Jesus only (Laing, 2005: 227; Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal, 2008: 1; Lang, 2002: 60), and other minuscule groups. For them, only Jesus is God. "Oneness believers see themselves as the continuation of the New Testament Church, of the Apostles' doctrine, or simply in the line of Peter and Paul" (Watts, 2008:para. 10).

Finally, trinity and modalism are two diametrically opposite doctrines which have been the subject of this study so far. These two views deal with the nature of the godhead. In other words, they try to show what God is like. But it is to be noted that the discussion thus far is mainly relative to biblical perspectives. Each culture has its own way to understand God or, better, since God has revealed Himself to every people to some extent, that cultural perception of God should be explored as well. A brief excursion analyzing this cultural aspect will serve to make this study more complete.

Africans have their ways of defining God. Long before the Gospel reached Africa, its ancestors knew God. When the Bible was introduced to this continent, it met the African culture, and soon two views of God emerged: the biblical view and the African one. For that reason we will now seek to identify the God of sub-Saharan Africa. The importance of this description is that Kimbanguism is a religious movement found in that part of the world. Actually, though this study will talk about the Bakongo concept of the spirit world— because Kimbangu, the prophet, was of that tribe —Kimbanguism might be highly influenced by some perceptions of God in Africa as it will be shown.

2.4. The African Traditional Religions' concepts of God and Spirit World

Generally, in African traditional religions (ATR), all aspects of life have spiritual significance. Even dreams, misfortunes, death, and birth require and carry spiritual connotations. The spiritual world of ATR is composed of demons, deities, dead ancestors and non-human persons. Beyond these matters however it is said is a Supreme Being. Distant, barely if involved in the daily life of the people. This causes a dilemma. How to relate to the

Supreme Being? Some communities believe that he can be directly related to; others claim that intermediaries are to be consulted, and some that lesser divinities can be reached or influenced to intercede for them. A compound of these views is not unusual (Partridge, 2004: 268).

This will now be pursued. Various definitions of ATR will be examined. While more specific notions about the African and Kongo will reveal conceptions of God, accessibility and mediation, the composition of spirit world, etc.

2.4.1. Definitions

Turaki (2006: 19; see also Gehman, 2011: 3) says ATR is not a shaped and oriented doctrinal system, with strict rules or regulations. It is an existential and experiential religion, more felt than taught and understood. For that reason its subjectivity makes it very powerful. Odowu (cited by Gehman, 2011: 3) reinforces the same idea by stipulating that ATR is a “living religion... a living reality.” It is impossible to dissociate an African from his religion. In fact, his religion is his experience, his life, and his all. Life, in each of its components, is seen under the religious prism. ATR is not taught but lived, expressing power in the life of Africans. It is simply a way to live. That is how it is passed on from one generation to the following one.

Awolalu (1991:111) is of the opinion that it:

Is the indigenous religion of Africans. It is the religion embraced by the forefathers of the present generation of Africans. In other words, it is that religion, which emerged from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present generation of Africans and which is being practised today in various forms and intensities by Africans....

ATR is then to be considered as the way African forefathers defined, viewed and worshipped God before the Gospel came in Africa. Awolalu contends that Africans are still involved in their religion, but not exactly as their fathers were. After defining ATR, this dissertation will describe the African concepts of God.

2.4.2. The African concept of God

2.4.2.1. God's revelation to Africans

God has never been a new concept in Africa, rather one that has been known by Africans' forefathers for generations. Gehman (2005: 398, see also Gyekye cited by Gouentoueu, 2000: 25) observes that: “Missionaries did not introduce God to Africans” and “all religions contain divine revelation.” Schmidt (cited by Kombo, 2000: 157) expresses that thought as follows: ‘This Supreme Being is to be found among all peoples of the primitive culture, not indeed

everywhere in the same form or the same vigour, but still everywhere prominent to make his dominant position indubitable.’ Hackett (2005: 137) says that: “Our African ancestors spoke to their God directly without... any medium....” Missionaries did not introduce God to Africans. Each African people had his way of understanding God. Africans knew God, they had names for Him, they revered Him but in a variety of ways.

Idowu (cited by Kombo, 2000: 158) points out that for Africans, God was universal, one not many revealing himself to people according to their capacity. Africans knew that the whole earth belonged to Him and had personal experiences of Him. Africans knew God. This kind of knowledge of God is called general revelation. Here, God communicates himself to all peoples at all times, wherever they are. For this kind of revelation, Creator God uses nature, history, and the inner being of the human person. Special revelation is the opposite of the general revelation. God’s particular communications at a particular time are available through certain sacred books, comprising the Bible (Erickson, 1998: 178).

The nature, history, and conscience are means used by God for the general revelation which became part of the culture of the people. The main aspect establishing the differences between revelations is the means and the content. Africans and Christians know God but not through the same means and their revelations do not and cannot have the same content. This study accepts that the fullness of the revelation of God came from the Jewish people through Jesus. Consequently, Christians hold the true revelation about God: the God of the Bible is the One true God.

2.4.2.2. The African cosmological hierarchy, the oneness and attributes of God.

2.4.2.2.1. The African cosmological hierarchy

Describing the religious hierarchy, Awolalu (1991: 111) says that: “The general pattern of the religion is... a belief in the Supreme Being, in divinities and spirits, in life after death, and in some mysterious power.” This religious pattern is true even regarding the African cosmological hierarchy, which is made of elements Africans believe in as well. Many African cosmologies have been explored, but this work retains that of Mbiti (cited by Kombo, 2000: 146), which is simple: ‘1. God as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and sustenance of man and all things, 2. Spirits, being made up of superhuman beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago, 3. Man, including human beings who are alive and those about to be born; 4. Animals and plants, or the remainder of biological life, 5. Phenomena and objects without biological life.’ It is to be noted that in any African tribe cosmology, God is the first in order. He is supreme in all.

2.4.2.2.2. *The Oneness of God*

Coming back to the Africans' God, it is worth noting that African ancestors, those who lived on earth and believed in God before they died, were monotheists, though they also knew that their God was surrounded with other spiritual beings of which He is the creator. Mbiti (1991: 59) states that:

Every African people recognize one God. According to the cosmology of some, there are, besides him, divinities and spiritual beings, some of which are closely associated with him. However, God created them all. These divinities are mainly the personifications of God's activities.... But even where people recognize other spiritual beings, they do not lose sight of the one supreme God, whom they regard in a class of his own, as the eternal Deity.

Africans were traditionally monotheists, with strong convictions of other beings of whom some are very close to God. This belief is true even in Christianity. Even so, assimilating these divine activities rightly to Christ, Spirit, archangels and other celestial beings referred to in the Bible offers some difficulties in African culture. Potgieter and Magezi (2016: 2–3) explain the fact that God is known as a universal figure for Africans, but Christ (the Holy Spirit and those biblical beings included) is foreign to them. Therefore, Africans do not see how that foreign Jesus, who is not their ancestor close to God, can save them from their daily struggle and fears. For them God's activities and spiritual powers are near to Africans and involved in their daily life, not Jesus the foreigner.

If those activities represent other faces of God but not some separate beings, then ATRs have here something to share with modalism and Arianism. In relation to modalism, which teaches that God changes "modes" according to the activity to be fulfilled, ATRs stipulate that other divinities are activities of God. In that sense these lesser divinities can be equated to modes. In relation to Arianism, which views Christ as being a creature of God, ATRs say that all other beings, lesser divinities included, are creatures of God.¹⁸ However, the thought of God being one and supreme and that He created all other mysterious beings was already well fixed in the mind of the African forefathers.

2.4.2.2.3. *The Attributes of the African God*

These following ATRs features have many similarities with Christianity, as related to God and spiritual beings. Gouentoueu (2000: 28–47), talking about shared commonalities such as the nature, works, and kingship of the African God, points out those similarities

¹⁸ If the ATRs say that all other divinities are but creatures of God, the biblical Christ is also a creature, albeit the first born of creation. This is the primary doctrine taught by Arius and his followers in the fourth century.

convincingly. He says that the biblical God is eternal, unique, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, good, compassionate, just, holy, creator. Although the content of their faith is not the same as that of trinitarian Christianity, the African forefathers believed in one God, spirits, life after death and so forth, not unlike certain aspects of orthodox Christian doctrine.

Africans had a clear understanding of their God who was and is the “Supreme Being, Creator, and Father of all that exists”, and the “ultimate source of life” (Mulago, 1991: 119–120). To express the way they comprehend their God, Africans have various names for Him. Each of those names is of great significance. “The concept of the Supreme Being [is] known by the various names in each African culture” says Hackett (2005: 136). For Africans, as Mbiti (2012: 50–58) puts it, “God is pre-eminent and great.” The Baluba of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) call Him “The Great King and invoke Him as Great God.”

To emphasize his pre-eminence, “The Zulu praise Him as *Icibi- eliomnqwazi-pezulu*, the immense Ocean whose circular headdress is the heaven [horizon].” God is also “The Self-Existent.” The Bakongo of the DRC claim that: “He is made by no other, no one beyond him is.” God is also, in the African though, a “Spirit.” “The Shona sing... to God... as... Great Spirit.” In addition, God is “the first and last cause.” The Igbo of Nigeria call Him “The Great First Cause” (Mbiti, 2012: 50–58). These are but a few of the shared attributes of the God of the Africans; who have a clear and share in some measure in a biblical description of Him. No wonder, Idowu (cited by Kombo, 2000: 159) is of the view that: ‘The names *Orise*, *Chukwu*, and *Odomankoma*... can without difficulty connect the word of Psalm 104: 29–30 and Acts 17: 28.’ So then, ‘the African experience of God comes very near to the biblical understanding’. But it must be added that the African experience does not provide the full measure of a biblical understanding of God.

2.4.2.3. God: unity and plurality

Here is a connection with Christian trinity: three in one and one in three. As for Mbiti (2012: 50–58), Africans do perceive God as “unity” and “plurality” as well. The Gikuyu of Kenya “say that God ‘is all alone’, without parents or companions.” For them, He is a unity. Concerning the Lugbara, they “believe that he is one in essence”, yet “they say that he is ‘one but many’.”¹⁹ “The Shilluk conceive of God as having many facets, which seem to refract

¹⁹ Here is found a bit of the trinitarian aspect of God or just a diffuse idea of many other spiritual creatures besides the only and one God.

him into a multiplicity of ‘beings’, a plurality but he is also One Spirit.” The African God is therefore “one but in many”.

2.4.2.4. The Transcendence and immanence of the African God

In addition, some Africans acknowledge the fact that God is “transcendent”— this determines his remoteness— and “immanent” which determines his nearness and presence. In his transcendental aspect, God—whom none can reach— is benevolent, providing rain, light and so on. In his immanent dimension, he provides food, health, and so forth, being present in the daily life of men. Under this dimension, God is very caring about mankind and He is reachable. Thus Africans consider him as “the young brother” of the transcendent God (Mbiti, 1991: 59). Here the biblical idea of the “Father” (transcendental dimension) sending the Son or the Spirit (immanent dimension) on earth to live with and to serve humankind may be extrapolated or insinuated if Christian categories are used.

However, for ATR that “young brother” is a creature of God and will live with them on earth forever. But for Christianity, the Son, Christ, did not live forever on earth, and He is God not a creature. The Spirit also, who is not a creature, will not live on earth forever. This is the difference between ATR and Christianity concerning this immanent dimension of God. Yet, the common point is that for both African ancient peoples and the Bible, the immanent dimension of God is a divinity. In the light of the Bible these perceptions of God by Africans, may echo general revelations.

2.4.3. The Composition and Functions of the African Spirit World

It is also to be noted that Africans, sometimes, consider God from a human perspective. Since He is a king, they believe that God has a wife or even wives, a child or children (Mbiti, 2012: 202–208), as it is true in the African kingship. There are some biblical equivalents here; the Bible teaches that God has a child, Jesus, and children, the believers— brothers, sisters, servants, and messengers. Here too, African cultures display some revelation. The difference between Africans and Christians is all about the content of what is believed but not about the faith, that is, the act of believing.²⁰

For the sake of this work, it is important to know what Africans say about God’s servants, messengers, and agents. Although some little nuances do exist among them, sometimes these terms may however be used interchangeably. Concerning the assistants, the Abaluyia of

²⁰ The term ‘content’ here should be considered, as what is said about that is believed. This is the all difference between the African perception of God, His children (who are brothers and sisters), His servants, and messengers and the Christian one. The faith does not differ.

Kenya believe that God was not assisted when He created the heavens. But later on, He created two assistants, and, to provide space for them to be able to work, God created the earth. According to Mbiti (1991: 204–206, see also Gehman, 2011: 171–182) the idea of Christ and the Spirit partaking in the divine activities is almost seen here.

The Ashanti have many divinities and think they are God's servants and spokesmen standing and acting between him and the creature. For some other Africans, God has "servants who are the spirits of people that died long time ago, and who now act as guardians of families and individuals." It is not surprising to notice that some Africans consider kings and chiefs as God's special agents and representatives (Mbiti, 1991: 204–206).

The functions of these assistants, servants, and messengers of God are obvious for Africans. They assist God in his various works, they are his mouth, they carry out his instructions, they are intermediaries between God and the creatures, and they execute his plans and will. They are God's representatives as well. Mbiti ascribes almost the same functions to what he calls "other divinities, demigods, spirits, culture heroes, and related beings" although some slight specificity is to be noted here and there. However, talking of spirits, Mbiti says that there are beliefs that God created some of them as such. For instance some were human beings, which, after death, became ubiquitous, though controlled by God who sends them to people as messengers (Mbiti, 1991: 206–218).

Gehman (2011: 174) testifies that Africans do deify their heroes as well. A Yoruba mythology says that *Orisa-nla* was told by *Olodumare* to create man. Unfortunately, he became drunk. Then, *Oduduwa* did that work. Thus, this latter has more honor than *Orisa-nla* and is even regarded as the ancestor of the Yorubas. His name means 'chief who created us'. *Oduduwa*, with his dominant personality, was a powerful leader. He lived and ruled in Ile-Ife the capital city. At his death, an ancestral cult centred on him.

From Mbiti (1991: 218) we are told that the Shilluk believe that their hero, the founder of their nation, is also the one who established their kingship. Regarded as coming from God or alternately appeared as his special creation, they do not believe that he died but they say that "he was lost, he went up, he went and lives." For the people, that hero separated them from all other people and gave them a culture. They say that all their kings have come from him, thus his spirit is in his descendants. That hero is taken as semi-divine or even divine. That is why they give Him their sacrifices and prayers. He is so closely associated with God that he serves as intermediary between the people and Him. It will be seen, later on, that Kimbanguism is very closer to this last description.

Therefore, the African spirit world comprises of God, His assistants, servants, messengers, agents, wife or wives, child or children, brothers, and sisters. Therein are found spirits who never had been humans, deified heroes, dead ancestors, etc. They act for the good of their people. They represent God to the tribe/clan/community for whom they intercede. But they also receive sacrifices from people when requesting particular favours (See also Turaki, 2006: 89).

2.4.4. Mediation and Access to the African Spirit World

Because ATR affects the entire African life, that is, from birth to death, and being aware that their life is controlled by external forces, Africans have a strong desire to communicate with their spiritual world (Gehman, 2011: 51 & Turaki, 2006: 73). To do so, they have a lot of means. Turaki (2006: 73–87) described them. Taboos constitute one of the means to reach that spirit world. Taboos govern the African behaviour toward aspects such as sacred places, land use, marriage and procreation, relationships with ancestors, and the roles of diverse people in the society. They are meant to maintain a cosmic harmony. If they are broken through a bad behaviour, the spirit world will react negatively.

Turaki mentions religious festivals, rituals and ceremonies which serve to regulate the religious and social life and should be strictly observed. Some of them are chronologically determined by for instance a new moon, beginning of rains or planting seasons. Sometimes, dance, chants, sacrifices and offerings, incantations, and parades in honour of deities, ancestors or heroes were practiced. Rituals were also means to gain power. Finally, Turaki (2006: 85) talked of those whom people turn to for help when trying to communicate with the spirit world for any spiritual purpose. He calls them “African specialists or professionals”. These include witchdoctors, prophets, priests, medicine men or women, and workers of evil. People believe they have kind of power to communicate with the spirit world.

Above is described the communication with and from the spirit world. Turaki (2006: 81–84) talks about dreams and visions which “are a means of receiving guidance, commands, good messages of blessing or bad omens and warnings.” Divination is another means. This latter is a way of interpreting natural phenomena and occult spirits.

2.4.5. African and Biblical Conceptions of God

Throughout all that has been said of the ATR’s perceptions of God, and the way Africans try to reach Him, this study views that the God of Africans has some commonalities with the biblical God.

Table 1: Similarities between African and Biblical Ideas of God²¹.

The African God	The biblical God	Observations/ Consequences
Is One Spirit, Creator, etc.	Is One Spirit, Creator, etc.	Africans and Christians are monotheists
Is One in many	Is One in three	The biblical God is trinity, which is almost seen in the African God
Is transcendent	Is transcendent	God is far and unreachable for Africans but reachable for Christians
Is immanent	Is immanent	God is near and reachable for both Africans and Christians.
Is worshipped through rituals and offerings	Is worshipped through rituals and offerings	The African God and the biblical God are both worshipped
Requires observance of some laws to be called upon	Requires sanctification to be called upon	The African God and the biblical God require both holiness to be reached
Has professionals as intermediaries	Has ministers as “intermediaries”, Jesus being the perfect One	The African God and the biblical God have ministers to help people.

Some differences should be highlighted. First, the God of the ATR is not known as being absolutely trinitarian, He is not called upon through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, the worship chants and songs in Christianity are meant to honour only God whereas these elements are also given to dead people in ATR. Third, the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to re-establish the relation with God, while in ATR sacrifices are meant to mollify God. Therefore, it appears clearly that the Christian God is different from the One of the ATR.

Nevertheless, considering commonalities between Christianity and ATR, one can wonder if God was already preparing Africans to embrace the Gospel. For Mbiti (cited by Kombo, 2000: 164), all these descriptions of God ‘indicate that the African concepts of God could be viewed as *preparatio evangelica*’ that is, the way God was preparing Africans to embrace the Gospel. Calvin (1545: par.1, chap.1, book 1) explains this *preparatio evangelica* in these terms:

²¹ This table, which is built from what is said about God under the current section, is just displaying similarities—between the African God and the biblical One— this work has described so far, but is not providing an exhaustive study on that subject.

Since the perfection of blessedness consists of God, he has been pleased, in order that one might not be excluded from the means of obtaining felicity, not only to deposit in our minds that seed of religion... but so to manifest his perfection in the whole structure of the universe, and daily place himself in our view, that we cannot open our eye without being compelled to behold him. His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious....

Read in the African context Calvin clearly described to some degree the evidence of God's general revelation to Africans. Calvin stresses that revelation is very important; God wants all to come to the knowledge of Him. Everywhere in the universe, men can find Him and His perfections. There is no excuse for men because, in the universe, God has revealed Himself through His obvious works. So too, Africans also received the light from God, who revealed Himself generally to them as He did to other peoples. In the words of Calvin, this revelation has already deposited a seed of religion in men.

At the same time, Calvin contends that though God gives manifestations through the mirror of His works, sinful men are so stupid and so dull than they derive no benefit from them. That is why, "not only that each nation has adopted a variety of fictions, but that almost every man has had his own god. To the darkness of ignorance have been added presumption and wantonness, and hence there is scarcely an individual to be found without idol or phantom as a substitute of Deity." He goes further in saying: "that immense flood of error with which the whole world is overflowed" is the consequence of that ignorance (Calvin, 1545: par. 11–12, chap.1, book 1).

Because of the ignorance of the true God, and being imbued with a sense of religion, Africans have a lot of non-biblical different ideas and accounts of God and the world of the spirits. All these facts show that Africans, through their religions, are looking for a God but in a very wrong way. Calvin (1545: par. 1, chap. 6, see also par. 13, chap. 5) says that, to solve the situation, "God...as creator...has added the light of His Word in order that he might make himself known unto salvation."

General revelation cannot bring salvation. The way of true salvation is only found in Jesus Christ. The encounter with and believing in that true Gospel is then the only way that brings people to salvation. In Acts 17: 16–34, Paul at the Areopagus in Athens had to bring people from general revelation to the special one. He dealt with people who knew about gods but knew nothing about the true God.

2.5. Kongo Concepts of God, Ancestors, Prophets and Reincarnation

The following premise is significant for this section. The premise is: “every African, at least the ones of the last generation, has been impacted by his tradition.” Now, the question is: “did the coming of the Gospel suppress that cultural or even religious influence in the Bakongo mind?” To answer this question, it appears necessary to know Bakongo perceptions of God, ancestors, priests, and reincarnation. These various perceptions will then be compared with the teaching of Kimbangu. In fact, as said above, Kimbangu might have been impacted by those Bakongo beliefs, for he was a mukongo.

ATR and Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), which is the very local religion Kimbangu professed before he knew the Gospel, might present some significant nuances which could have influenced him. Like all black Africans, the Bakongo²² have their own religion as well. But the BTR, being a part of the global African religion, can also present some common features with ATR.

2.5.1. Bakongo Concepts of God

The Bakongo had a name for God before the Gospel was preached to them. Van Wing (1959: 296) says that: “The name existed before the arrival of the first missionaries. The indigenous people and the missionaries use, to indicate the Christians’ God, the word ‘*Nzambi*’.”²³ The fact of having a name for God before the arrival of the Gospel is sufficient proof that the Bakongo had a God and knew Him. So, “The Kongo people believe in a Supreme Being ‘*Nzambi a mpungu*, or *Nzambi tulendo* or *Nzambi dezo*’²⁴” (Kuntukula, 1981: 26) [Author’s translation]. As it is widely true in sub-Saharan Africa, the Bakongo believe in a single supreme being and are not polytheists.

2.5.1.1. The Attributes of Nzambi

Some attributes of *Nzambi* include oneness and trinity or transcendence and immanence. Geographic locations identify the cultures which ascribe certain attributes to *Nzambi*.

For the Bakongo, God, whom they have a deep respect for, is the creator of life and the provider of all vital force. He is omnipresent, all knowing, He sees all. None can deceive Him. He protects all living beings, He is the almighty and none can be compared to Him and

²² Bakongo or Kongo people are words indicating the same people and Mukongo is a member of that tribe which is located in the southwestern region of the DR Congo and neighboring countries, especially Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and Angola.

²³ The most used name of God among Bakongo.

²⁴ All these names are virtually synonymous. Later on, this work will give some nuances among them.

His power. God exists by Himself, He is supreme and invisible. He created the first couple, the source of all humankind. In one sense this God is so remote from men than He does not care for them. However, in practice, he is also near for, in case of danger, a Kongo can shout his name “*Nzambi*” (Kuntukula, 1981: 26–27; MacGaffey, 1986: 78–82). The Bakongo believe that humankind depends on God who plays the main role in every event— life, death, misfortune, harvest, and so forth— whereas man has just a secondary role to play (Van Wing, 1959: 299).

2.5.1.2. *The Oneness and plurality of Nzambi or “trinity”*

The Bakongo, as it is true in sub-Saharan Africa, believe in a unity and plurality of God. Actually, for the Bakongo, God is one, pure Spirit, elusive and unshakeable. “The Kongo people are not idolatrous,” says Kabwita (2004: 46). They are monotheists. Kihangu (2011: 186–187) describes and tries to be more precise in his description of the trinity and unity of *Nzambi*. He says that: “the idea of a trinitarian God [is] in the Kongo tradition religion” because, according to Fumari (cited by Kihangu, 2011: 186), there are three main persons in BTR conceptions of divinity. They are *Lukankasi* or God in heaven, *Nzambi*, God on earth and *Kalunga*, God in heavens. It seems that in his description, Nsemi (cited by Kihangu, 2011: 186) is equating *Lukankasi* to *Nzambi’a Mbumba* also called *Nzambi’a Nsemi* whose attribute is intelligence. He is the creative intelligence and the omniscient God.

The God in heavens is *Nzambi’a Kongo*, also known as *Ne Kongo Kalunga*. His attribute is love and wisdom that keep the universe. He is the omnipresent God. Finally, *Nzambi’a Mpungu* also said *Nzambi’a Ngolo*, whose attribute is power, which governs the universe. He is the omnipotent God (Kihangu, 2011: 186). Talking about *Nzambi’a Mpungu*, Kihangu specifies that he is to be taken as the universal primordial energy from which all things originated. That energy is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. It can also be found in man, it is beyond him, and within all that exists in the universe. It is the principle of life, movement, and being. *Nzambi’a Mpungu*, also called the great lord *Akongo* or simply *Omakongo* does not own a body but can use all the bodies in the universe: earth-worm, bird, tree, man, angel, planet, sun, etc. Besides, to highlight the view that *Nzambi’a Mpungu*’s energy permeates all things in the universe, Fu-Kiau, (cited by Kabwita, 2004: 46), says that: ‘The Kongo think that all is life.’²⁵ [Author’s translation]

²⁵ The Kongo is not an animist. All does not have a soul but life. This is not pantheism or panentheism.

Fu-Kiau, through his description, tried ascribing specific roles to the God of the Bakongo. However, some difficulties arise: in fact, some roles attributed to *Nzambi'a Mpungu*, should pertain to *Nzambi'a Nsemi* for creative intelligence is his attribute. But Fu-Kiau says that the first is also the origin of all. He, *Nzambi'a Mpungu*, is the God on earth and yet he can use even an angel to express himself while there is a God in heavens. This is very confusing to the African mind. But maybe, like the biblical trinity, all of the members of this Bakongo trinity are able to do whatever one of them can perform. The possibility is thus entertained that *Nzambi'a Mpungu* encapsulates all what is *Nzambi*. A better interpretation would be “*Ne Mbumba, Ne Kongo Kalunga, and Ne Mpungu* are One, for they only are three attributes of the same God who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent” (Kihangu, 2011: 186-187). Curiously and erroneously, all these attributes are ascribed only to *Nzambi'a Mpungu*. It is this researcher's opinion that a more in-depth study is needed in the matter of distributing roles within the Bakongo trinity. But the above will suffice for this study.

Nzambi a Mpungu, in MacGaffey (1986: 78), “was the highest *Nzambi*. Considered as a force in human affairs he served as a last resort. Otherwise unexplained events calling for no specific course of action were attributed to him, and prayers were addressed to him when all else failed.” Might he be the greatest “form” of God comparing to the two others? The truth is that he was not often called upon as he is too remote. “There was ...no priest of *Nzambi*” and “His cult [was] thin and residual” says MacGaffey (1986: 78), talking of *Nzambi a Mpungu*. Now this question remains: Is this *Nzambi a Mpungu* of MacGaffey, who does not mention other *Nzambi*, not the same than the other *Nzambi* of other authors?

Another configuration of the trinity of the Bakongo is described by Kuntukula (1981: 29) who declares that the Bakongo believe in a savior whom they call *Mako*. His story is very close to that of Christ. *Mako* was born without a father; his mother was a virgin. He was sinless, he taught people and his teaching changed villages but was not loved by all. He was killed and rose again after three days and disappeared afterwards. Furthermore, the Bakongo believe in *Mone* who might be the equivalent of the Holy Spirit. Invisible, he talks to them in their heart and reveals the hidden things. *Mone* helps them to discern what is good or wrong. The Bakongo were aware that *Mone* saw them everywhere they were, and as such they behaved accordingly. So, *Nzambi, Mako, and Mone* make a kind of trinity though the last two are not considered as *Nzambi*.

The existence of *Mako* and *Mone* in the BTR provides a good example of the thought explained by Potgieter and Magezi (2016: 3) paraphrasing Kunhiyop. For them,

The African traditional worldview seemingly correlates with the biblical worldview concerning some antithetical categories of spiritual powers as either good or evil in their nature. Thus one should acknowledge the existence of the spirit world, since the spiritual powers exist from the scriptural perspective, and they are scripturally categorized.

Though their stories are very near to those of the holy book, these spirits should then be those antithetical spiritual powers these authors talked about. They are described in the Bible as living in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6: 12). This BTR knowledge is prior to the arrival of the western missionaries in Africa, for the read materials do not show that there was any external influence at the time of that belief.

The following description from MacGaffey (1986: 79–80) gives another understanding of the trinity. He says that: “The greatest... spirits²⁶ assume many of the attributes of *Nzambi*....” “*Bunzi*” was “a kind of superior nature spirit in charge of lightning, storms, and all kinds of unusual, bizarre, or twisted natural objects.” “*Funza*” was “the patron of twins and the originator of all charms [and] owned all twisted, stunted, or abnormal objects...often regarded as incarnations....” “*Mbumba Lwango*, the rainbow serpent” is said to be “the patron of the... initiation cult....” These spirits have some other lesser spirits in charge and even have control over some natural phenomenon.

The fact that these regional spirits or regional gods, who already have some lesser spirits under their authority, have some attributes of *Nzambi* implies that they have a special status in the Bakongo perception of them. This raises questions. Can they be the equivalent of the African demigods, or God’s assistants, or divinities, or forms of God? No one has an answer to this very open question for “the Kongo universe”, maybe the African one as well, “is not fully static” (MacGaffey, 1986: 63).

2.5.1.3. The Transcendence and immanence of Nzambi

Concerning the transcendental and immanent dimensions of God, the Bakongo believe in “*Nzambi* above and *Nzambi* below....” De Heusch (cited by Kihangu, 2011: 158), stipulates that the Bayombe, which is a clan among the Kongo, distinguish between *Nzambi* in heaven and *Nzambi* on earth. This belief is part of the BTR. The *Nzambi* above is *Tata Nzambi’a Mbumba*, and the *Nzambi* below is *Tata*²⁷ *Nzambi a Kongo*. He is a true spirit for the Kongo

²⁶The same MacGaffey also calls these spirits “regional spirits” or “regional gods”. They seem to be very near to God and have some divine roles to play as indicated by their name. They might represent God in some vast regions, acting therein with authority such that they have other spirits under them.

²⁷ *Tata* is a very respectful word Bakongo use to address or to honor an important person. It simply means father.

people. So then, the Bakongo have a belief that their God is omnipresent, He is transcendent and immanent at once, that is, remote and near. Through their belief, Bakongo display a trinitarian idea by believing that their God is a plurality of three but still the same god.

Consequently, like other Africans, the Bakongo believe that the transcendent God is remote and consequently are not very attached to Him, though in exceptional circumstances may call upon him. Kihangu (2011: 173) ascribes to him the capacity of delivering revelations to *bangunza*, namely, prophets. In fact, sometimes, to differentiate all these forms and roles of *Nzambi* tends to be confusing. The following comparative chart may serve to clarify matters to some extent.

Table 2: Comparison of various views on the trinity and unity of *Nzambi*

Location	Heaven	Heavens	Earth
Bible	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
Roles/In charge of	Lightning, Storm, etc Versus Creative Intelligence, Omniscience	Patron of initiation cult Versus Love and wisdom, Omnipresence	Patron of twins and all that is regarded as incarnations Versus governing power, Omnipotence
ATR	Demigods or divinities or God's assistants	Demigods or divinities or God's assistants	Demigods or divinities or God's assistants

Fumari	Lukakansi	Kalunga	Nzambi
Nsemi	Nzambi' a Mbumba or Nzambi' a Nsemi	Nzambi' a Kalunga or Nzambi' a Kongo or Ne Kongo Kalunga	Nzambi' a Mpungu or Akongo or Omakongo
MacGaffey	Bunzi	Mbumba Lwango	Funza

Some observations:

1. Nsemi describes one *Nzambi* in three dimensions without notions of regional spirits, as in MacGaffey. The former says that these “three” *Nzambi* are three attributes of the same and one God. This leans to the idea of one in three, the Bakongo trinity. This is not very clear in MacGaffey. He tends to insinuate more what is believed generally in Africa: one God and other beings: assistants, demigods, great spirits, messengers, and so on, than identifying the one *Nzambi*.
2. MacGaffey does not differentiate kinds of *Nzambi*. He talks of one God whom he associates with the three great regional spirits: *Bunzi*, *Mbumba Lwango*, and *Funza*, with some of God’s attributes.
3. For Fumari, the one *Nzambi* is *Lukakansi*, *Nzambi*, and *Kalunga*. It seems that the *Nzambi* on earth is not the first *Nzambi* who is the unity (of the three mentioned above).
4. The roles played by each of the *Nzambi* and regional spirits are quite different from one author to another, though location is ascribed to each “person” in *Nzambi*²⁸. The

²⁸ Heaven can be understood as the location beyond the sky, while heavens are between the earth and heaven. These are suppositions of the researcher regarding the roles played by those who are said to dwell in. For instance, regarding the omnipresence of God, an African can easily imagine that the God in heavens can see him, but not the one on earth, because they are both in the same location or stand. The one beyond the heavens cannot see him because of the sky being an obstacle. In addition, the fact the Bakongo believe in heavens deserves to be paid attention to: can this insinuate the idea of many planets in the universe?

difficulty of ascribing a specific role to each of those “persons” might be the result of the fact that they and some spirits live in the same realm—which can be either heaven or earth— and therefore are equated to one another.

5. It is very difficult to say, regarding the ATR perceptions of the spiritual realm, if these great spirits are demigods, or divinities, or God’s assistants. Their rank and roles are of great significance, nonetheless.
6. Concerning the biblical perspective, the trinity is altogether God sharing the same attributes.

2.5.2. The Bakongo concepts of ancestors

The Bakongo, like the Baganda of Uganda, “consider ancestors as dead relatives who continue to show an interest in their surviving descendants” (Mulambuzi, 1997: 9; Banze, 2014: 96–100). They still play an active role in the life of their living descendants. They know the language of God and that of their descendants. They know the future of their living relatives since they are so close to God (Mulaudzi, 2013: 88). This view is spread almost everywhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

Van Wings (1959: 309) and Kuntukula (1981: 29–35) are of the view that the *Nzambi* of the Bakongo relates with people through the ancestors. Man does not die and death does not destroy his vital force; his soul still lives after death. One becomes a “good ancestor” if, while alive, he has respected the hierarchy of his clan and followed family rules. As such, he can have a good influence over his family members, reinforcing their vital force. An ancestor, whoever she/he is: man, woman, infant, becomes white after death. These latter are in charge of managing the life God created. The ancestors are very near to God and “were in general benevolently disposed and they were expected to provide their descendants with long life, health, good hunting, good crops, and many children” and “were also able to attack witches who threatened their descendants” (MacGaffey, 1986: 67).

On the other hand, according to Kabwita (2004: 46–47), the ancestors are spirits in BTR. They are, in turn, subdivided into two: the heroes known as *bisimbi*, and the *bakulu*. The first are those who died by violence, maybe in a war. They live near the rivers or in the fields. The second are the dead people who reside under the ground of the clan. The Kongo people believe that the *bakulu* maintain their earthly life, their rank, and their personality. Then, they are their intercessors near *Nzambi’a Mpungu*.

In the subject relating to the Bakongo concepts of the spiritual realm, Kihangu (2011: 182–186) seems to be more detailed, especially when he talks of the *Bundu dia Kongo*

(BDK)²⁹ description of the ancestors. In fact, BDK says that every seen city, inhabited by the living people has its mimetic equivalent, the invisible one, inhabited by the ancestors which is called *simu kongo*. A mysterious river separates the two cities: the visible and the invisible.

Nsemi (cited by Kihangu, 2011: 183) points out that in Kongo tradition, ancestors are classified into two categories: the first comes from the *Kakongo* planet³⁰. They are the *simbi biansemi*, that is, genius creator. Nzala Mpanda is one of the most important in this category. He is the one, coming from *Kakongo* planet, brought the civilization on earth. The second category of ancestors is the Bakongo deceased. They also are subdivided into two groups. The first is made of ordinary ancestors and the second by the divinized ones. These latter are those ancestors who did something very great while they were alive. They are *simbi* (angels) or the envoys of the great lord *Akongo* to the Bakongo. They are spiritual protectors as well. Simon Kimbangu is in this group and is to be considered as the most important messenger of God to the Kongo people (Kihangu, 2011: 184).

Talking of the ancestors, Mulambuzi (1997: 8) says that:

Generally, the attitude of the ancestors to the living is parental, protective, corrective and aimed at the welfare of the whole group. But their authority and power is significantly greater than that of the living, for they are able to observe both their actions and their thoughts. The ancestors serve thus as a collective conscience for the group.

Mulambuzi describes the way ancestors are viewed in BTR. The kongo ancestors, especially the divinized ones, being the intermediaries between God and the people with various roles described above, constitute what is called *mwela kongo*, namely, the soul of the Bakongo. Of them, three are the most important: Nsaku Ne Vunda, Mpazu (it should be written *Mpanzu*), and Nzinga. The first is the custodian of the ancestral ground and the incarnation of the religion. To Nzinga is ascribed the political function of which she is the incarnation. Mpanzu is the incarnation of science (Kihangu 2011: 185—186).

Therefore, the Kongo ancestors are very well organized. They have their “village”.³¹ Those who are not from the category of the deceased do not live together in that village. They

²⁹ BDK is a Kongo grouping whose objective is the revival of the Kongo tradition. It is a very dangerous cult because its adherents kill Christians and burn the Bible.

³⁰ *Kakongo* planet is like the biblical heaven. This latter is to be understood as the sum of certain suns and very civilized of this galaxy. This might be the biblical equivalent of heaven where angels come from.

³¹ For the Kongo people, all the dead Kongo constitute their ancestors, especially those who carefully practised the laws of the clan before they died. They have their village under the ground of the clan, which is the correspondent of the physical village built on the ground of the clan. Those ancestors are well organised as it is the case in the living.

come from another planet; *kakongo*. Among those living in the village, the divinized ones are the most important by their roles: communicating with and protecting people.

2.5.3. The Bakongo concepts of prophets

Prophets are among those whom Turaki (2006: 85) calls “African specialists or professionals.” He says that: “These are people to turn to for help when trying to communicate with the spirit world.” Their roles are: “to use spiritual and mystical powers and life to enhance the well-being of individuals and community; to develop and conduct effective and meaningful rituals as means of ensuring the harmony, balance and peace of individuals and communities; to develop powerful and effective means of exercising control over the spirit world and human society; to develop powerful and effective means and procedures for communicating with the spirit world.”

MacGaffey (1986: 217–218), describes the modern day prophet and says that: “the Bakongo ... made it clear that a prophet earned the title by the favour of God, for which evidence was he healed the sick.... The prophet works altruistically, incorporating clients in a disciplined public order of which he is the head.... The prophet [is] solidly in opposition to the use of charms and all other works of the magician.” Of importance is to bear in mind that “what remains prominent” implies “linking man and God through the mediation of a living prophet.” This is the duty of a prophet. So, he is between two worlds: the visible one and the invisible one, he does not use charms and has a group of people of which he is the chief. He does not require money to help people. This description, as it will become evident later on, matches the work of Kimbangu.

2.5.4. The Bakongo concepts on reincarnation

Almost everywhere in black Africa and in BTR as well, reincarnation is well known. It happens “when the spirit of the dead person finds a place to stay in a newborn baby.” Often, they give to that baby the name of the person whom they think he/she is the reincarnation (Mulaudzi, 2013: 88). In the African perception, one of the most important functions of the departed elders of the family is to provide fertility, that is, children. In case of childlessness, they are called upon for help. It is also believed that the dead would like to be re-born into the same family through a baby (Mulaudzi, 2013: 88).

Mbiti (cited by Mulambuzi, 1997: 31) says that: ‘Spirits of the dead return to their families in a welcome manner through the birth of a baby, which is regarded as a partial form of reincarnation. The spirit is told: there are babies about to be born, choose for thyself one of

them, and it is enjoined to make its return to human society that way.’ This thought seems to indicate that the council of the dead elders decide the reincarnation. They enjoin some spirits to come back through their chosen baby. This is one way to understand the concept of reincarnation from an ATR perspective.

In the Eastern perception of Buddhism reincarnation is generally understood as follows.

What one experiences in the present is a consequence of past causes, and present mental states expressed as thoughts and deeds become causes which bear fruit in further existences. Conversely, what one will reap in further existences as a sentient being is the result of what was sown in the mind in his or her present life (Valea, 2015: 31–32).

Though Africans and Eastern people believe in reincarnation as an endless cycle of life, the difference is that for the former, reincarnation in the form of a person is not a consequence of what one did while alive. Very rarely is a different form adopted. In Eastern perception however, the status (or the form) in the next life, reincarnation, depends on what one did while alive, it is not an obligation but happens automatically.

However, to comprehend reincarnation in BTR, an explanation of the Bakongo cycle of life is provided. For MacGaffey (1986: 43–44), “Bakongo believe and hold it true that man’s life has no end, that it constitutes a cycle, and death is merely a transition in the process of change.... Death is a way of changing one’s body and location; he will continue in the cycle on earth.” Since death does not bring one’s life to its end, a mukongo sees the dead everywhere. The same person lives eternally (Kuntukula, 1981: 36). For the Kongo people death is simply another kind of life, just a step of an ever continuing life, a cycle. Man is an eternal being who only changes forms and locations. His forms depend on the kind of the body he takes. Actually, this belief is not particular to the Bakongo. It is found in numerous other African religions.

Of the cyclic aspect of life, MacGaffey (1986: 44–45) explains that the cross³² in Kongo cosmology, materializes the cycle of life. The cross did exist in Bakongo tradition before the arrival of the missionaries, and “corresponds to the understanding in their minds of their relationship to their world.” The cross then was used to explain a pathway such as the movement of the sun, which corresponds to the cycle of life in four steps described below. “Thus in Kongo thought the path of the sun and of the soul are analogous; both describe the

³² In Kongo cosmology, the cross is not a religious symbol. It was inscribed in the cosmos with the idea of dividing it into four equal segments: *ku zulu* (sky, the abode of Nzambi and spirits), *kumangongo* or *ensiafwa* (in the deep of the earth, or land of the dead), *ntoto* (the earth, corresponding to 6.00 pm), and *kalunga* (the ocean, corresponding to 6.00 am) MacGaffey (1986: 46).

periphery of a divided universe. Included in the analogical structure are the points of the transition or mediation between the visible and invisible worlds.”

As far as MacGaffey (1986: 63, 45, 53, 63) is concerned, “the dead are recycled through this world” and there are “four stages that make up the cycle of man’s life: 1) rising, beginning, birth, or regrowth; 2) ascendancy, maturity, responsibility; 3) setting, handing on, death, transformation; 4) midnight, existence in the otherworld, eventual rebirth.” Life begins at birth. Thereafter, a man reaches the mature phase of his life. Then death occurs. The next stage is the man, after transiting in the village of the dead, will come back in the city of the living. Thus “*lufwa*³³ is reversible and may happen several times to one individual. To return from the dead is therefore only remarkable rather than miraculous....” Still, some children are seen as reincarnations and get particular attention because some prohibitions are attached to them: twins, albino, children exhibiting certain behavioural patterns at birth, or a child identified by a diviner.

In addition, a baby is automatically considered as the reincarnation of someone, a parent for instance, if he/she is born the very day that parent dies, especially if he is of the same gender than that of the departed. Also, it is not rare to find a baby being taken as a reincarnation of a dead elder because of a dream, which is supposed to come from that ancestor. In other words, someone can get a dream in which a dead tells him/her that he/she is coming back very soon through a newborn baby. In that case, the baby will often be named after that ancestor.³⁴

Coming back to the significance of the cross, this Kongo teaching is totally different from the Christian one. Luther (1518: theses 19-24) talks of the “theology of the cross” of which some thoughts can be summarized this way: the cross is the place of shame, humility and death for Christ. There, He saved humankind and deeply showed the love of the Father. The cross is also a symbol of contradiction. Its enemies hate it for they prefer works and glory instead of sufferings. So then, the Christian cross is very significant both for Christ and Christians.

Kimbanguism presents a Christ—whether Kimbangu or Dialungana— without the cross. Nakah (2007: 40) explains the significance of the cross this way: “the great and glorious things of God are to be found in the cross; and that the greatest works of God can only be

³³*Lufwa* means death in *Kikongo*, which is the language of the Bakongo.

³⁴ This is not a documented thought but it is from the cultural knowledge of the researcher who is a mukongo himself.

seen through suffering and the cross; and that the great things God effects in and through believers are worked in and through the cross.” Both Christ and the cross carry all the significance of Christian life and doctrine.

Therefore, if the cross, in Kongo cosmology, portrays the cycle of the endless life, it is unlike the Christian cross. These two interpretations of the same symbol are deeply opposed: the Kongo cross is the symbol of an endless life, while the Christian cross is where the life of Christ ended and the human one started.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into trinity, modalism, the African perceptions of God, Kongo perceptions of God, ancestors, priests/prophets, and reincarnation. Concerning the trinity, it was shown that the BTR god is unlike the Christian God in crucial doctrines such as the cross.

Also, god has been described according to the ATR and BTR understandings. To get more information, some descriptions concerning the BTR views of ancestors, priests/prophets and reincarnation have been made. All these descriptions will serve to identify the kimbanguist trinity and the persons said to reside in it. The next chapter will deal with Kimbanguism.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KIMBANGUIST DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will help in describing the specific aspects of the kimbanguist trinity. Three different doctrinal waves and periods will be described below, but it is the current one that is of significance for this study.

3.2. Brief History of Simon Kimbangu (1889—1951)

No one can precisely tell when Kimbangu, who is said to be the founder prophet of the church³⁵ under study, was born. Mpangu (2004: 46) says that it may be reasonably accepted

³⁵ Actually, Simon Kimbangu never founded a church. The movement he started was called “*Kintwadi*”, meaning together, unity. So to speak, his youngest son, Joseph Diangienda Kuntima, who was the first spiritual leader of the church, is the one who founded the church. He called first that nascent church *Eglise de Jésus Christ sur la terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu* (The church of

that he was born on September 24, 1889 at Nkamba— a village located in the Cataractes district of the Kongo-Central province, in the south western Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). At the time of the birth of Kimbangu, the Baptist church was very strong in Nkamba.

It is said that the birth of Kimbangu was surrounded by prophecies. According to Chomé (2008: 22), “while pregnant, a protestant missionary said to the mother of Simon: woman, this child you are waiting for will be called to [do] greater things” [Author’s translation]. Because of this prophesy, even before Kimbangu was born, his nuclear family, namely his mother, already knew that the child to be born was not an ordinary one.

Kuntima (1984: 13) points out that some months after his birth, his biological mother died. Reasons for her demise are not known. Kimbangu, an orphan, grew under the care of his aunt, his late mother’s sister. It is believed that Kimbangu performed miracles at an early age and commanded a strange language and revealed unusual character, beyond what is expected from a child of his age (Kuntima, 1984: 17–18). For instance, at ten years old, his father praised him for making him proud in front of people. Then “Kimbangu looked at his father’s eyes and said: ‘thank you father, before you were born, I was’” (Pedro V, 2011: 134; Matondo, 2004: 77). If this is an accurate record of what took place then, Kimbangu already had knowledge of the concept of pre-existence³⁶. It was interpreted that Kimbangu meant he was older than his father. Some, however, consider it a folk tale. But not all that is said about Kimbangu should generally be accepted as folk tales because all cannot be proven to be untrue. What is commonly accepted is that he performed miracles from time to time and was therefore not like all other men. Something very strange was influencing his life.

Some of the tales about Kimbangu include the following. One day, Kimbangu fell down in the very deep hole. As he was young, he could not come out by himself. Then a strange power took him out without any effort (Chomé, 2008: 24). Even before becoming a Christian Kimbangu had many visions which recurred during his lifetime. He claimed that he saw strange men ministering to him; heard the voice of *Nzambi*; that he was miraculously healed, and had been commissioned in the ministry (Pedro V, 2011: 139–140; Chomé, 2008: 24–25; Martin, 1976: 44; Naweji, 2013: 57). It is also said that Kimbangu was able to fly from a well-protected house (Martin, 1976: 59). Naweji (2013: 58–61) wrote down a prophesy Kimbangu delivered

Jesus Christ on earth by the prophet Simon Kimbangu), and later on, to emphasize the spiritual nature of his father, he changed the name of the church to *Eglise de Jésus Christ sur la terre par son envoyé spécial Simon Kimbangu* (The church of Jesus Christ on Earth through his special envoy Simon Kimbangu).

³⁶The readings did not precise if it was an incarnation or reincarnation. It seems however, that Kimbangu was talking of his existence before his incarnation.

which, it is claimed, is being fulfilled in the present. Nawej (2013: 63) stipulates that Kimbangu was placed in a barrel containing asphyxiating products. That barrel was closed and was thrown into the Congo River. He came back to life and returned safe and sound. It was then decided to shoot him, but Kimbangu did not die. Thereafter, Kimbangu was tied to a large stone and thrown again into the same river; once again he escaped and lived.

In Katanga, during his imprisonment, “besides his daily immersion in the salted cold water, he regularly received whiplashes intended to systematically weakening him.” It was to no avail as Kimbangu remained in prison for some thirty years without weakening (Nawej, 2013: 63). In prison, Kimbangu announced the date and the hour of his death. According to Nawej, he said that he would die on October 12, 1951 at 3pm precisely. This happened (Nawej, 2013: 64). Moreover, the prophet is reported to have appeared several times in various places while he was supposed to be in his prison. Nawej (2013: 65) says that:

One day, in his cell in Lubumbashi, Kimbangu decided to take a long journey. He required of the Belgian priest present then to simply touch his clothing, which he did. Kimbangu pronounced some few words and they were at once transported in a cloud and visited thousands of families throughout the whole planet, including that of the Belgian priest. They then landed in Rome, at the Vatican, and there they saw many things. And then they returned to Lubumbashi...in prison. The Belgian priest, after reporting the journey to his superiors, was immediately and definitively repatriated to Belgium! Finally, although extradited, this priest continued to share his testimony far and wide for to have lived moment of omnipresence on the planet was strong than he, proving that the truth cannot be hidden indefinitely.

We now briefly deal with the folklore surrounding the person and ministry of Kimbangu.

It is said that some of the prophecies of Kimbangu are presently unfolding. On September 10, 1921 at Mbanza-Nsanda, he delivered a prophecy of which some aspects can be summarized as following: “the liberation of Africans through the first nominal independences of the sixties, which will be false independences, an illusion of independence; the coming to power of dictators in Africa who will serve their own interests and those of the former colonial masters; the exodus of many young africans towards the countries of the Westerners to flee oppression and misery”³⁷ (Nawej, 2013: 65). It seems that Africa is literally reflecting these prophecies.

Before moving on, a point has to be made concerning the truthfulness of the miracles and prophecies of Kimbangu. Many miracles performed by or attributed to Kimbangu might be folk

³⁷It is said that the kimbanguist church is requiring firmly that those documents be released from the safes of the Belgian authorities or the Catholic Church. Until now they are not being given unto them yet.

tales, but there are those that have been documented by eyewitnesses³⁸. Therefore, it is granted that accepting miraculous events without multiple attestation and documentation validating these claims, it is nevertheless undeniable that many claims of extraordinary or supernatural or miraculous events concerning Kimbangu are associated with his person. It is difficult to deny them all with one sweeping statement. These tales remain current within the communities. Some miracles and supernatural events were reported to have been performed in secret; others were performed openly in full public view.

These claims are often associated with Jesus' ministry. The gospels were written many years later by the eyewitness. If for some the gospels might report just folk tales, the fact that eyewitness wrote about those miracles authenticate them. Christians believe the truthfulness of the gospel accounts accepting the veracity of reports of the supernatural and miracles performed publicly or privately.

Finally, though some doubt should be maintained concerning the authenticity of the acts of power attributed to the prophet, this study accepts that Kimbangu was recognized publicly for having some supernatural power. It was this that caused people to come from far to hear him and to be healed by him.

3.2.1. Kimbangu the man and Kimbangu the spirit

To explore some of the claims to the supernatural associated with Kimbangu, it is important to talk of what happened in the Kongo kingdom concerning the name Kimbangu. An association exists between the name given to the prophet and a certain spirit Kimbangu traditionally called upon in the Kongo kingdom. The name Kimbangu means “the one who reveals the hidden”, and was a spirit the Bakongo called upon to give life to a stillborn baby or to heal a sick person. For instance, Kimpa Vita, a Kongo prophetess who lived long before Kimbangu the prophet, called upon this name to heal sick people, and the same name was also “shouted out at the birth of a child when the newborn infant would not breathe” (Martin, 1976: 42; Matondo, 2004: 77). By the very nature of Kimbangu, his birth and ministry people began to associate the possibility of some relationship with the same spirit their ancestors used to invoke. Many accept this association.³⁹

³⁸ Some of the miracles and prophecies talked about in this work were reported by eyewitness. For instance, the first son of the prophet said that he was present when his father was prophesying at Mbanza Nsanda and was performing some miracles. Some reports are also the work of eyewitness.

Two claims however question that reasoning. First, it was said above that Kimbangu declared that he existed before his father was. This second claim supports the first one. According to PedroV (2011: 135):

Approximately two hundred centuries before Kimbangu's birth... the word Kimbangu was known among the Kongo as a word with healing powers.... Later on, as a grown man, he [Kimbangu] encourages his people to seek the true meaning of his name by stating: I am the revelator of all that is hidden and Teacher of Sacred knowledge.⁴⁰

For this dissertation, these two claims or reports stimulate some consideration. Is Kimbangu equating himself to the spirit the Kongo called upon? It seems yes. He then knew who he was: the revealer of the hidden and a teacher of sacred knowledge. While the chronology of events seems to show that he was not Christian at this time, what were the hidden things and knowledge he claimed and talked about? It might be speculated to relate with his position before he was born. If so, he came on earth with a special stock of knowledge to reveal. He did so then through his prophetic work. Bakali (2011: 43) shows the relationship between Kimbangu the man and Kimbangu the spirit. In his words, the spirit Kimbangu was already the acting, living, vital and prehistory phase of the man Kimbangu.

Apart from these claims, this work does not have any other solid ground to argue that Kimbangu the man is Kimbangu the spirit as Bakali (2011: 43) did. Nevertheless, if this can be accepted, there is now an important question to answer: how did Kuyela, the father of Kimbangu, know that his child is or could be the spirit Kimbangu called upon in Kongo kingdom? The answer comes from Asch (1983: 16) who declares that the father of Kimbangu was *anganga nkisi*, that is, a witchdoctor and Kinzembo, the aunt of Kimbangu, under whom he grew up, was also practicing traditional medicine using plants and herbs. Contextually, this is some significance. Turaki (2006: 85) calls these persons "professional communicators with the Spirit World" and their major role is "to develop powerful and effective means and procedures for communicating with the spirit world".

With this in mind, the reader can now begin to understand some of the reasoning when people claim that the father of Kimbangu knew how to "manipulate" spirits which he already knew and called upon. Through spiritual processes Kimbanugu's father began to associate the relationship that his child had to the spirit Kimbangu. As consequence he named him

³⁹ As it was said in the previous chapter, this should be another good example of the spirits the Bible describes in Ephesians 6: 12. For the Christian Church, this is the explanation.

⁴⁰ Maybe the author would like to talk of two centuries, but not of two hundred centuries which seems to be too much time before the birth of Kimbangu.

accordingly. Remember, Kuyela did not react when his son, Kimbangu, told him that he did exist before him. In Kongo tradition, a child dare not speak such words to his father. It is blasphemy. In other words the testimony of Kimbangu's father added significantly to support the future claims made about his son.

3.2.2. Kimbangu the Christian and Kimbangu the Catechist

Martin (1976: 43—44) says that in July 1915, Kimbangu, as a young man, was instructed and baptized in the river Tombe. The same day, his marriage was solemnized in the church. Nkamba, the native village of the prophet, was a Baptist bastion. Being Protestants, it is accepted that Baptists teach and preach the Bible and all that is in accordance with the creed of Nicea (A.D. 325). Teachings Kimbangu would have had some familiarity with and because he was affiliated with the mission and was regarded a Christian for some years.

For a short while, he taught at the mission school (Martin, 1976: 44). Thereafter, he became a house-helper of a Baptist missionary. Since he was intelligent and of good character, Simon Kimbangu was trained and became a catechist of the Baptist Missionary Society in his village (Chomé, 2008: 22). According to Asch (1983: 98), “catechumens are taught reading, writing, arithmetic and the Bible. Missionaries do explain the mysteries of the Trinity, Christian morals, sacraments and rites” [Author's translation]. Catechists had training that enabled them to teach or preach to their compatriots.

With this basic training, they were able to read the Bible, explain its message to their people, minister to them, administer the sacraments and prayer, and teach Christian behaviour. Asch (1983:98) goes on saying that missionaries leaned on these Congolese catechists to be able to establish Christian villages. In other words, catechists were used to “win” villages to Christ, because they were easily accepted by their native people.

3.2.3. The Family of Kimbangu

As said above, Kimbangu was married. For Pedro V (2013: 141), Kimbangu had successively three sons with his wife Marie Muilu: Kisolokele Lukelo Charles (1914), Dialungana Kiangani Salomon (1916), and Diangienda Kuntima Joseph (1918). Rubango (2014: 130) says that Kimbangu was informed, even before he was married, about three sons being born in his family. These sons were to have a huge influence on the church to come in promoting Kimbanguism.

3.2.4. Date and circumstances of the calling of Kimbangu

The dates given by Nawej and Mpangu contradict one another. In the words of Nawej (2013: 57),

From 1910, Simon Kimbangu began to hear the call of Yahweh's spirit that asks him to cater to his flock. Numerous times, Kimbangu refuses to obey the call by explaining that he was not up to such a high and important mission. He even took refuge in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) to escape the voice and finds work in the oil mills there. He worked without pay, and returns home disillusioned to Nkamba ...

So, although Kimbangu started his work on April 6, 1921, he heard his calling to serve God, through preaching and healing people, long before. Initially he doubted himself and ran away from the voice calling him. Incidentally, wherever he went, nothing seemed to go right for him. Kuntima (1984: 27) says Kimbangu understood that his misfortune was from God punishing his disobedience. Thus, he returned to Nkamba. Contrary to Nawej, Mpangu (2010: 51) is of the view that Kimbangu was visited by *Nzambi a Mpungu* on March 18, 1921 (that is, eleven years later than what is said by Nawej), and on March 19, 1921, he started his ministry healing a sick village woman.

Kuntima (1984: 21–27; see also Mackay, 1987: 15) claims that Kimbangu heard Jesus talking to him in 1918 in Nkamba and met with Him. Despite the contradiction of Nawej and Kuntima the calling of Kimbangu is not doubted. What Kimbangu experienced while in Kinshasa and on his return to Nkamba is described below.

3.2.5. The Reasons for Kimbangu to start a movement

3.2.5.1. Socio-political reasons

One of the reasons must be seen to be associated with colonization. Kimbangu, still young, was told by his aunt Kinzembo about white people mistreating black people in villages. She told him how they destroyed the glory of the Kongo kingdom by devastating its capital city, Mbanza-Kongo. Kimbangu heard about wars caused by whites; unabated slavery stretching over three centuries; and about many other sufferings people suffered under colonization (Asch, 1983: 16).

As far as Kuntima (1984: 13–15), Batende (2014: 88–89), and Nawej (2013: 56) are concerned, the questionable misbehaviour of white persons, including some missionaries, led black people to consider them occupants exerting dominion over them. They used to whip the black people, whom they evangelized, to compel them to attend prayer meetings. The white behaviour led blacks feeling uncomfortable living with them. Because of the lack of modern roads, the whites compelled the blacks to carry them on chairs on their shoulders. In addition, though forbidden, slavery was still being practiced in some places. Blacks, mistreated by missionaries, felt especially abused.

Asch (1983:98) adds that: “[The] colonized people often adopted Catholicism or Protestantism, dependent upon the missionaries persuasion willed by missionaries, just to escape the hard or tiresome works, hoping for some appointment to some subordinate roles in local or government administration, to have access to rudimentary education in schools, and to be taken care of in the hospitals” [Author’s translation]. It is not hard to understand when reading Asch why black were so open to Kimbangu and his movement. But it was a conversion of convenience when they claimed to have become Christians.

3.2.5.2. Religious reasons

Black people did not perceive or regard the missionaries as siding with them in their plight. Rather, missionaries generally supported the questionable actions of political officials. Missionaries did not identify themselves with the people they were supposed to minister to. The gospel was not lived out by those who were preaching it. So, there was a big gap between what was preached and what was seen (Kuntima, 1984: 14).

In addition, black people found little relevance in what they were taught. As analyzed by Potgieter and Magezi (2016: 2–3), Jesus remained a strange person to blacks, and not associated with God or *Nzambi a Mpungu*. He was born in Israel which is an unknown country to black ancestors. The Bakongo could not comprehend how he could save the entire human race. Moreover, the Bakongo knew God and were monotheists; they had their intermediaries, and had knowledge of the life after death. There was little new to find in what they were taught (Kuntima, 1983: 14–15). Like Kimbangu, according to Batende (2014: 88), the Bakongo found this western preaching maladjusted to the black situation.

3.2.5.3. Ideological reasons

Asch (1983: 21–22) says that, while in Kinshasa, Kimbangu would have been in touch with some ideologies that changed his mind. She summarizes those ideas in these terms: “a) the black civilization is rooted in European civilization, b) black people have to break their chains in order to again become the guides of humanity in Africa, c) Christ himself was black, d) He [Christ] calls black people to create their own religion based on their traditions” [Author’s translation].

Kimbangu, enriched with all the experiences and ideologies in Kinshasa, returned to his native village transformed. At that time, there were raging epidemics, exploitation, joblessness, and famine. Despite that Kimbangu returned to his farm, but he returned a man on a mission among the Bakongo people.

3.2.5.4. *Personal frustrations*

In addition to the reasons above, Kimbangu had a bad personal experience with a white employer whom he served as a house helper despite a meagre salary. For that reason he sought more lucrative work. While in Kinshasa, his employer, a white man, did not pay him his salary for almost three months (Mpangu, 2010: 47; Asch, 1983: 21). When he returned to his native village, Kimbangu asked to be appointed as pastor. It is said that he even went to Ngombe-Lutete, where he studied in order to become a pastor. Unfortunately, he failed the test (Mpangu, 2010: 48–49). Actually, according to his teachers, Kimbangu was intelligent and curious, and it was unlikely that he failed his examinations (Mpangu, 2010: 49). In all likelihood it seems that he displeased some of his racist teachers who deliberately failed him. One reason mooted was that the teachers did not want to promote a black to the position or rank of pastor.

Frustrated with all biased treatment from colonizers and missionaries alike, Kimbangu reached a momentous decision. He decided to totally disassociate himself from the European Church, whether Protestant or Catholic and so severed all ties with them. Mackay (1987: 17, 20) is of the view that Kimbangu was “called into a work which broke out of established structures. In short, Kimbangu expressed the will of the people which was to separate themselves from any Christian church representing colonization and colonizers.”

3.3. The Start of the Kimbangu’s Movement

On March 19, 1921, while going to the Kenge market, Kimbangu visited a village named Ngombe–Kinsuka and healed a woman, Nkiantondo upon whom he laid his hands and prayed for her (Asch, 1983: 22). This miracle seems to be undisputed and recognized even by Christian Protestants. Mackay (1987: 15–16) says that:

Kimbangu’s subsequent supernatural experiences were thus explained through Cameron’s blessing, which preceded them.... Spiritual beings had access to Kimbangu.... All spiritual visitations were a continuation of that blessing. Blessings and spirits, both were different manifestations of the same essence—the power of God to which Kimbangu was open.

From the Protestant perspective then, it was claimed that the blessing of the Protestant missionary Cameron’s, led Kimbangu to what he became spiritually.

Coming back to the healing of Nkiantondo, news of the miraculous healing spread everywhere and attracted numerous crowds to Nkamba on April 6, 1921. It was then Kimbangu delivered his first public sermon and healed more sick people (Asch, 1983: 22). These powerful acts made people of all social status—peasants, house-helpers, employees,

and sick people of body and/or spirit—come from great distances to Nkamba to hear the word of God and to be healed. Asch (1983: 19) said that:

Simon Kimbangu preaches amongst his Bakongo people decimated by chore and epidemic. Amongst these later, the sleep sickness is the most killing.... It is in that context of the incapacity of European medicine and the weakening of the Belgium administration because of the first worldwide war that Simon Kimbangu is supposed to have received a godly inspired calling.... [Author's translation]

It is even said that at least five thousand indigenous people visited Nkamba daily. The time of Kimbangu had come, and the movement called *Kintuadi* (Union, Together) started (Asch, 1983: 23; Nawej, 2013: 81) as a spiritual movement which grew by leaps and bounds. Kimbangu chose and ordained twelve “apostles”⁴¹, all former catechists, and sent them to tell people throughout the villages to join his movement.

The suffering people were waiting for a “savior” to deliver them from calamities of all kinds. People forsook their work, went to Nkamba to hear the word of God and to be healed because modern medicine did not help them. Kimbangu received his people and did the work of the God who had called him. His reputation was such that the Catholic and Protestant churches felt seriously threatened. According to Mpangu (2010: 57), Kimbangu would engage openly with Protestants and Catholics. Bible in hand, Kimbangu found arguments to oppose the behavior of those who brought it to Africa. Consequently many Christians, catechists included, joined his movement.

Apart from the church, the provincial government was threatened. In fact, Jaffré (cited by Mpangu, 2010: 58) recites these words from the nascent movement. He expressed them in these terms:

The country, yes the country will change
Truly, the apostles of that idea will rise
At the day appointed by the saviour
The white people do have only the sign of the authority
But they no longer have authority
From now on the power belongs to us
It no longer belongs to them [Author's translation].

⁴¹ Apostles, in the case of Kimbangu, should be understood in the same manner with apostles in the ministry of Jesus. They were his helpers, they preached the word in other villages, and those who were not deported continued the work when Kimbangu and others were jailed. This is what the apostles of Jesus did. What Kimbangu did, that is, choosing apostles to help him, does really match with what was said about the African prophet above: they preach the word, heal the sick and choose some disciples to be and work under their leadership.

Matondo (2007: 143) talks about a prophecy given by Kimbangu. One of the segments of that prophecy declared that: “the white will become black and the black white.” Clearly, this language was much too provocative for the colonizers. Bakongo people were already dreaming of possessing power and were even chanting that one day whites will leave the country. Some observing Kimabangu’s spiritual power claimed that white have no power over him and his followers. In time a more political direction was adopted as well. White people in power could not support the thought and wanted Kimbangu and his followers arrested.

According to Matondo (2007: 143), on the day of his judgment, Kimbangu was questioned on the meaning of that sentence, because the judge chose to omit the entire prophecy so as to cite just that portion. The reason was simple: it was seen as a declaration that posed a threat to white domination and interpreted as such. Retaliation would be in the form of just actions based on an eye for an eye. Black people would do to the white people what had been done to them. For Kimbangu however, the idea was that a day will come where blacks will manage their country themselves as whites do presently.

In view of perceived threat Kimbangu was arrested. Led by the spirit of *Nzambi*, the prophet surrendered himself to his hangmen. Many of his followers were arrested as well (Kuntima, 1984: 82). After judgment, Kimbangu was condemned to death. But some people and organizations intervened in order to change that decision. They were the Attorney General, pressure due to public opinion, and some Protestant missionaries. Eventually that judgment was commuted to life imprisonment (Chomé, 2008: 89–91). He was sent in Katanga, a province situated more than two thousand kilometers from his native village. After almost six months: from April 6, 1921 to September 12, 1921, date of his arrest (Mpangu 2010: 59), Kimbangu remained silent, not issuing any statements. In 1951, after thirty years, he died in Elisabethville, currently Lubumbashi, where he was jailed. Thereafter, his remains were taken back to his native village, Nkamba⁴² on April 3, 1960 (Isidore, 2014:103).

⁴² Nkamba has become a place of pilgrimage and place of power. Every year, kimbanguists go there for one or two weeks to pray. It is the residence of the spiritual chief. The water and soil from Nkamba are taken as source of power. Since that village is on a hill, people compare it to Jerusalem such as they say “we go up to Nkamba” which they call New Jerusalem. To Kimbanguists, Nkamba is like Mecca to Muslims, Jerusalem to Jews, etc.

3.3.1. The Doctrine of the Movement (1921–1969)⁴³

The portion above was devoted to some historical facts of Kimbangu and his *Kintuadi* movement. This section will deal with the doctrine of the movement before it became accepted as an official church. In the context of this study, the doctrine and teaching of Kimbangu are important.

It is important to know that, according to Asch (1983: 98), “catechumens are taught reading, writing, arithmetic and the Bible. Missionaries explain the mysteries of the trinity, Christian morality, sacraments and rites” [Author’s translation]. Kimbangu and his disciples were basically just catechists. Therefore, they did not have the necessary training to deeply understand and interpret the Bible (Mpangu, 2010: 56).

Nevertheless these leaders began to develop doctrines which took on peculiar forms adjusted to suit their contexts. Because of their training, aspects of the trinity and other doctrines were expected to become the basis for the movement. But, as it will soon be shown the doctrines were not firmly embedded and oscillated between Christian, syncretistic, and traditional elements.

To be more accurate and analytical, three groups of authors will now serve. Firstly, authors who ascribe the calling of the prophet Kimbangu to Jesus. As such, they think kimbanguist doctrine is basically Christian. Secondly, those who regard the doctrine as syncretistic and do not base their views on the calling of the prophet as the starting point for their reasoning. Thirdly, authors who believe that Kimbangu was not called by Jesus but by *Nzambi*. For that reason they deny kimbanguist doctrines as Christian.

3.3.1.1. *The Doctrine of the movement was a Christian one*

The first group of authors are very positive about the work of Kimbangu. They even describe the movement as a true African manifestation of Christianity. For them, the starting point of their reflection is the similarities with Christianity and the Lord Jesus Christ. For that reason it was taken that Kimbangu was really called by the Lord Jesus to do His work and for that reason regard the content of his early “doctrine” as correct. Kuntima (1984: 22–24), junior son of Kimbangu, and Pedro V (2011: 139) insist on this view. They refer to the various experiential contacts Jesus had with the prophet. For them these encounters validate the work of the prophet. Martin (1971: 44) describes the calling of Kimbangu in these terms:

⁴³ It is to be noted that the doctrine underwent some changes in 1959, but those ones were just political in order to get colonial recognition. The syncretistic elements, being the true problems, remained.

“Simon Kimbangu heard a voice saying to him, ‘I am Christ, My servants are unfaithful. I have chosen you to bear witness before your brethren and to convert them. Tend My flock.’ Night after night Simon Kimbangu heard the same voice calling him, and his wife heard him answer.” Pedro V (2011: 63) reports the prophet’s own account “The Christ that missionaries have revealed to us is the Christ from which I am receiving my mission and my strength.”

So then, for this first group of authors—Kuntima, Pedro V., Martin— it was Jesus Himself who called the prophet. Consequently, Jesus gave him all the instructions for the ensuing ministry. Kimbangu preached to his people to destroy their fetishes, to abandon polygamy, and so on. He even called them to repent from their sins. The miracles he did were performed in the name of the Lord Jesus (Pedro V, 2011: 157– 158), reflective of Christian ministry all over the world. As a Christian then Kimbangu could be expected not to include any syncretistic or traditional spiritual dimensions in his rituals. For these authors then, *Kintuadi* was a Christian movement with a sound doctrine as its basis.

With that established then, the changes observed today must originate with his followers or his descendants, namely his children and grandson. The founder prophet cannot be held accountable for what took place subsequent to his death.

3.3.1.2. The Doctrine of the movement was a syncretistic one

Talking about the “early doctrine” of the movement, authors mentioned below are of the view that, at its start, the movement held to traditional components within its core principles. Mpangu (2008: 54) argues that the prophet initiated ritual and elaborated dogma where ancestors are not only worshipped but also have great significance. Chomé (2008: 36) says that: “it [the doctrine] kept the purest of tribal beliefs: the ancestral worship” [Author’s translation]. According to Balandier (cited by Mpangu, 2008: 54), ‘he [Kimbangu] does retain only one fundamental thing, the ancestral worship on which he relies’ [Author’s translation].⁴⁴

Van Wing (cited by Mpangu, 2008: 54), agrees, ‘neither Kimbangu nor another leader has ever made a call to abandon ancestral worship: their tombs are cleaned, the paths leading there are well prepared, and their coming back to life will bring the golden age’ [Author’s translation].

Mpangu seems to affirm Van Wing and Balandier’s opinion of the place of the ancestors in the kimbanguist rituals reflecting the dogma and in practices of the leaders of the

⁴⁴ In the previous chapter, it was said that Bakongo, as all Africans, do worship their dead people; ancestors. They do call upon their whenever needed. Kimbangu did it here according to these authors. He kept praying to them in his movement.

movement. So the movement leaders, that is, Kimbangu and his first disciples thought that ancestors were able to come back to life and change the situation of the country, chase away colonizers, heal people from their illness, and so forth. This is a general way Africans think about their dead people; the ancestors. Kimbangu and his disciples appear to be reacting against the maladjusted teaching of missionaries reflecting questionable behavior, and acceptance of the actions of colonizers towards the Bakongo. No wonder, they called upon ancestors for help.

Another source supporting the fact that Kimbangu kept ancestral worship is from de Queiroz (cited by Mpangu, 2010: 55). According to him:

The religion Kimbangu brought, as son of God, had Christian and native components. He condemned magic and some traditional rites but he maintained the worship of the ancestors, which he associated with baptism, practice of confession, sessions of religious songs biblically inspired [Author's translation].

“Kimbangu confronted his fellows... and challenged them to abandon some of the social and cultural traditions that were not compatible to Christian morality such as polygamy, witchcraft, dances, adultery, tobacco and alcohol” emphasizes Pedro V (2011: 163). Note the word “some”. This means that Kimbangu taught his people Christian morals, but did not tell them to abandon other beliefs, such as the belief in ancestors. It was a syncretistic movement from the beginning.

3.3.1.3. The Doctrine of the movement was a traditional one

For a third group of authors, Jesus did not participate in the calling of prophet. They rather talk about God. Asch (1983: 19) is very perceptive. She talks of a divine vision calling Kimbangu to serve Him. Naweji (2013: 57) says that: “From 1910, Simon Kimbangu began to hear the call of Yahweh's spirit that asks him to cater to his flock” and Mpangu (2010: 95) intentionally emphasizes, like Naweji, that Kimbangu was not called by Jesus but by *Nzambi a Mpungu*. Simbandumwe (1992: 3) says that Kimbangu was called by *Nzambi*, not by Jesus. Batende (2014: 88) says that: “Himself [Kimbangu] has declared that he was commissioned by *Nzambi a Mpungu* who called him to wake up asleep consciences, in order to rebuild the unity of Kongo people” [Author's translation].

Of importance is the question: “who is Jesus or God who called Kimbangu?” In other words: did the trinitarian God of the Bible, call Kimbangu or was it African God, the universal Supreme Being? This latter deity, who is the Bakongo *Nzambi a Mpungu*, is well known in sub-Saharan Africa but is without any relation to the biblical Jesus. Masanga (2010:48) is even more insistent. For him, Shakyamuni Buddha, Muhammad, Yehoshua

(Jesus), and Kimbangu are all at the same level. No one is a disciple of another and *Nzambi a Mpungu* has called all of them. So, *Nzambi* called the prophet. Jesus cannot do that for the black race for whom Jesus is not Lord, or Savior, or simply Master.

Kuntima (1984: 14) explains that the Bakongo people were monotheists and believed in the Almighty God who stands alone without Jesus. It appears that the authors of this group pondered this following thought: Jesus was, to the traditional Bakongo, not considered as savior. Their God, *Nzambi a Mpungu*, was able to save the Bakongo without an intermediary though He uses the spirits of ancestors to communicate with them. This begs the question that if the father of Jesus Christ was powerful, why should he be a trinitarian to reign? (Kuntima, 1984: 14).

Moreover, these authors know that Kimbangu was not the first man *Nzambi* called to serve him among his people. By virtue of his status he is able to call “special” people to fulfill his goals on earth as he did with other previous African prophets like Francis Kassola (1632), Kimpa Vita (1704), Mafouata (1704) and Kiyoka (1872) (Mpangu 2010: 38–43). Moreover this extends to other continents where he called some people to serve him. Jesus (for Westerners), Muhammad (for Arabs), and others are some of those special people. It is obvious, for these authors, that Kimbangu knew that the *Nzambi a Mpungu* of his people could use the spirits of ancestors. Therefore, he kept some traditional features in his first doctrine.

3.3.2. Kimbangu talks of his calling

These three groups of authors deal with the calling of the prophet which helps to determine the early doctrine of the movement. It is now important to hear Kimbangu himself on his calling. Pemberton (1993: 204–205) records Kimbangu, describing his calling. He received a vision, recorded under his supervision⁴⁵, by his secretaries: Mfinangani and Nzungu. This vision is to be taken as essential for these are purported to be the very words of the prophet:

I hid myself at home; threw myself face down on the ground and prayed. Then I had a dream and God said to me: “I have heard your prayer; people think that you need the spirit to do my work, but I will give you something even greater. I took no notice of this. But from day to day I heard the voice that told me that I would do the work of Peter and John. I would be an apostle:
“People don’t want to give you the right to teach? But I will make you an apostle.”
But I was afraid and said

⁴⁵ According to Pemberton, Kimbangu himself dictated directly the content of his vision to his secretaries. They did not write these words some years later.

“I am afraid. It is an office that is not yet known about.”

He said to me: “You have a child; if you, as a father, want to give an extra to your beloved child, would you like it if child refused your kindness?”

I: “Yes, but I don’t know this work.”

He: “Fear not, I will be your teacher.”

I replied, “Well, because You want it, and because You will help me, then I want it too.”

Kimbangu does not mention the name of Jesus as the One who called him like other authors did. He in fact opposes authors ascribing his calling to Jesus. His calling came immediately from God, Jesus being excluded. This is a very important fact having implications for his later ministry. Having been a Baptist catechist he knew the difference between God the Father and Jesus as the Son. But in his vision—described above—Jesus is not included. It could be possible that authors who support that Kimbangu was called by Jesus confuse *Nzambi* and the trinitarian biblical God. Kimbangu wanted his declarations about his calling to be taken seriously. It seems that the god here is the Bakongo equivalent of *Nzambi a Mpungu*. As to Jesus, He is not God according to Bakongo people. Naweji (2013: 82) could be right when he concludes that: “He [Kimbangu] affirmed having been contacted directly by the Supreme Being, by Yahweh the Eternal, the Lord, without the aid of anyone. The voice of the lord who asked Simon Kimbangu to start his mission, it was not Jesus, but Yahweh the eternal, Yahweh elohim.”

3.3.3. The Message of Kimbangu

3.3.3.1. Jesus was the centre of the message of Kimbangu

Analyzing his teachings, one can authenticate the doctrine of the movement and know if Kimbangu taught his people about Jesus or not. Kuntima (1984: 11–41) holds that the work of Kimbangu was done through the power given to him by Jesus. Furthermore, Pedro V (2013: 163) says that the preaching of the prophet was: “You must believe him [Jesus] and apply His teaching. You cannot continue to see him as the God of the white man, but as the son of God almighty, the creator of all.” For Martin (1976: 49; Isichei, 1995: 119), “Kimbangu...taught obedience to those in authority and love of one’s enemies—repayment of evil with good.” She adds:

He [Kimbangu] preached in the general Christian way that man was created as God’s good creature but was depraved by the Fall and can only be saved by the sacrifice of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, through faith in Him. He clung to the belief that this redemption of Christ was available to all men as a free gift through faith, for whites and blacks, inasmuch as they remained in fellowship with Christ.

Mpungu (2010: 97) stipulates that: “he [Kimbangu] preached the love of God, non-violence, moral purity, salvation and hope” [Author’s translation]. This last message can be Christian

or not. Almost all religions preach this message, even the Bakongo religion. Kimbangu did not preach something new to his people but repeated what they already knew, plus he added the miraculous element to this preaching.

On its side, the *Ecumenical Review* (cited by Mushagalusa, 2008: 284) says that though Kimbangu ‘did not leave any confessional writing, or any well-defined doctrinal teaching, according to all his witnesses, his preaching was simply orthodox, in accordance with the preaching of the Baptist pastors whom he had known.’

To go further and show how sound the doctrine of the movement was at its start, Martin (1976: 49) wrote down the daily prayer of Kimbangu:

I thank Thee, Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth. The heaven is Thy throne and the earth is Thy footstool. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Bless all peoples of the earth, great and small, men and women, whites and blacks. May the blessing of heaven fall on the whole world so that we all might enter heaven. We pray to Thee trusting that Thou dost receive us, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

The general observation of these authors is that Kimbangu preached the true gospel⁴⁶; that man was created by God, but when he has sinned, he became forever sinner. The consequence of sin is death. For Kimbangu the key to salvation is Jesus Christ, the Good News to mankind from God. Kimbangu the prophet also insisted that the salvation is available to all who accept Jesus, no matter their skin color, gender, and age. It could be concluded that Kimbangu preached what he was himself preached while he was a Baptist Christian.

Furthermore, it is observed that Kimbangu prayed to the Father in the name of his Son Jesus. These descriptions of the preaching and daily prayer of Kimbangu are indicative that he is to be taken as a true Christian, and thus a true prophet, with a sound doctrine. This is one view.

3.3.3.2. Jesus was not the centre of the message of Kimbangu

Others question the accuracy of believing that Kimbangu taught this kind of gospel through preaching to his people. Nawej (2013: 83) says that:

The prophet Kimbangu invited his people to re-read the Scriptures, and this in a way autonomous and independent of the strategic doctrines of the Latin, Western Church, and also that he encouraged them to take account of the religious design of the Negro-African people. Better, he said that he was no longer Christian even though he based his teachings on the Bible and declared that his religious movement was now going to interpret the

⁴⁶ Gospel is defined as the good news of Jesus, mainly for the total salvation of men. The message and prayer of Kimbangu show that Jesus is at the center of his ministry.

Scriptures according to the Negro-African canons and no longer according to the scale of interpretation of the white Fathers of the Church.

This is in opposition to Martin, Perdo V, and Kuntima. Suggesting that Kimbangu did not preach the gospel but preached the Kongo tradition based on the Bible.⁴⁷ In addition, the expression “no longer”, repeated, is important. It means that at some stage, Kimbangu was a Christian, but later, he changed his mind. From the above it may be taken that some authors did not hold to this change. Nawej (2013: 83, 85) argues that Kimbangu, at a given moment in his life, might have had nothing to do with Christianity to the extent that he introduced himself, during his judgment, as “redeemer and saviour of the black race” and therefore, “Kimbangu... preached a return towards authenticity, our authentic traditions and roots.”

The message of Kimbangu, described by Nawej, suggests that the prophet is no longer a Christian but a preacher of tradition, that is, the way traditional Bakongo used to worship their *Nzambi* and call upon their ancestors.

This section was devoted to trying to establish and analyze the early doctrine of the *kintuadi* movement and some aspects relating to the call of the prophet and his message. What may be said, as shown below, is that Kimbangu re-read the Bible in an “African” way, meaning that he kept some traditional elements. This was the first stage of the doctrine of the movement. It is important to show the way the movement became a full and official church and indicative of doctrinal changes to come.

3.4. From the Kintuadi Movement to the Kimbanguist Church

Together with Kimbangu a number of his followers were arrested and removed. At the time, the province was under military siege for four or five years. Nevertheless his work was very influential and the movement was increasing (Asch, 1983: 27–29) but practiced covertly mainly among families. During that difficult period Kimbangu’s wife took over leadership of the movement. People came from far to meet her to be taught moral laws, chants, and the prayers of Kimbangu. She also baptized many followers. Many nucleuses were organized throughout the province spreading the prophet’s doctrines. This included Bangu, Chutes, Matadi, Luozi, Madimba, and Kasangulu. All were functioning clandestinely under the leadership of Mwilu (Kuntima, 1984: 164; Asch, 1983: 29–31). To be able to communicate between them, a unique alphabet was put in place so that letters could not be read by colonizers. Some people were tasked with the role of postman (Asch, 1983: 36).

⁴⁷ The Bible was now read to confront and even condemn white people, mainly colonizers and missionaries, because they were not practicing its moral laws. Also, examples of God delivering his people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt are taken to support the action of the movement.

Apart from these faithful nucleuses, many other factions were created in the name of the prophet. They were led by other minor appointed prophets, Kimbangu being the only major one. Some kimbanguists rebelled against the authority of Mwilu and became members of the Salvation Army. Tensions started threatening factions and other groupings. Four main groups emerged: (1) the kimbanguists faithful to Kimbangu and his wife; (2) the ngounzists who were composed of charismatic leaders wanting to replace Kimbangu; (3) the salutists who became members of the Salvation Army; and (4) the mpadists, created by Mpadi, and a kimbanguist outgrowth. They all claimed to be disciples of Kimbangu. These developments occurred between 1921 and 1958 (Asch, 1983: 32–33; Martin, 1976: 101).

Clearly the arrest of Kimbangu and many of his disciples did not suppress their work. His teachings were adopted by people and so continued to be spread. But in the absence of its leader problems and difficulties arose. This study will focus its leadership problems: reminiscent of Jesus's disciples wrestling with future leadership issues hierarchy after Jesus's departure (Luke 9: 46–48).

In 1947 and 1948, Emmanuel Bamba, coming from the ngounzist movement, made the first attempt to reunite the movement. He started organizing renewal and revival meetings in Nkamba, the native village of the prophet and the site where he started his ministry. Bamba summoned all the kimbanguists, especially Joseph Diangienda, the last son of Kimbangu. All those who claimed to be kimbanguists came and organized themselves in collaboration with intellectuals living in Kinshasa. But Bamba's efforts were short-lived. He was arrested and sent to Katanga where he met Kimbangu (Asch, 1983: 37; Martin, 1976: 101). Asch (1983: 37) tells the instruction Bamba received from his master Kimbangu: "Before I die, listen carefully to what I say to you: when you go back to Kinshasa, you will find my children, Kisolokele Charles Daniel, Dialungana Paul Salomon and Diangienda Joseph. You will work closely with them for the sake of the church" [Author's translation], that is, to transform the movement into a church with a real and clear identity.

This shows that Kimbangu had in mind to start and establish his movement as a church of which he was the natural leader. Kimbangu never saw this happen and desired his sons to take over leadership from him.

That is why, after the death of Kimbangu, Diangienda contacted many kimbanguists whom he called to come back under the leadership of his mother Mwilu at Nkamba. Many of them obeyed. Diangienda worked hard to reunify his father's followers. With other people, namely Lucien Luntadila and Albert Yowani, they sought official recognition of the movement.

Meanwhile Mwilu ordained the first pastors (Asch, 1983: 38–39; Kuntima, 1984: 168–169; Martin, 1976: 102).

In time the colonizers accepted the existence of the movement in 1958. In the same year, the first constitution of the movement, which was not yet an official church, was promulgated. The movement was known under the name “Eglise de Jésus Christ sur Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu (E.J.C.S.K.)”⁴⁸ (Translation: Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu) (Asch, 1983: 39).

On June 22, 1958, the kimbanguists held a kind of congress at Matadi Mayo. There, Joseph Diangienda was recognized as the spiritual chief of the church to come. But, to get colonial recognition, the doctrine of the movement went through some changes. These were requirements insisted on by the colonial administration (Asch, 1983: 101). The goal of those requirements was to prune the political side of the movement. It was demanded that the movement:

1. Should swear not to play any political role. That is, its members will no longer be involved in the activities of A.B.A.K.O.⁴⁹The political side of the movement was then banished.
2. Will object the attitude of xenophobia among kimbanguists. These latter should respect other Christians and accept marriages between the kimbanguists and people from other religions.
3. Has to obey laws of the administration.
4. Should be a non-violent one, etc (Asch, 1983: 105–108).

When considering the reasons for the movement, it is understandable that it should be true that *kintwadi* was a political and religious movement. Look at this Kimbangu’s prophecy from Matondo (2007: 143):

Today we are persecuted, but at the time fixed by the Lord, the White will become Black and the Black the White, that is, we will assume the functions that they assume in our country today. Then, they will see themselves compelled to submit to our decisions. We will be the masters in our country as they are in theirs. Despite all the persecutions, we are obliged to love them, not to hate them, for this will be against the gospel [Author’s translation].

This prophecy has two main parts. First the political side; the black will assume the functions the white are assuming today. They will be the patrons of their country and whites be subservient to the decisions made by black authorities.

⁴⁸ As it has been seen, this name was changed so that the prophet may be taken as the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹ A.B.A.K.O. is an association of Kongo people which became a political party.

The second part is religious. It basically promulgated that though persecuted, we must love these colonizers, for if we do not, then we are far from the gospel. This is sufficient to establish that the movement was at once political and religious. One might therefore regard Kimbangu a political prisoner who was trying to liberate the black through religion. For that reason the colonial officials saw him and his movement as a political threat. They were far less interested in his religious message.

De Queiroz (cited by Mpangu, 2010: 71) declares that the doctrine of the movement comprised of various themes: the sad fate of blacks who are dominated by whites, and exhortations were about reacting, resisting, and fighting on one hand; observing moral precepts, awaiting a messiah and the coming of the celestial kingdom where whites will serve blacks. White colonizers knew about these doctrines and themes for that reason the political elements had to be addressed for official recognition.

Asch (1983: 105) states that by December 24, 1959, the church got its official recognition from the Belgian administration (Kuntima, 1984: 181; Asch, 1983: 40). The church was composed mainly by those from different factions who heard the call of Diangienda. In addition its member comprised of former members of the Protestant or Catholic churches or the Salvation Army (Martin, 1976: 108), which they quitted to join the new church. All these people came together to form their new church: E.J.C.S.K. The movement became a state recognized church under the leadership of the last son of the prophet: Joseph Diangienda Kuntima.

3.5. The Next Two Doctrinal Phases in Kimbanguism

3.5.1. The Second Doctrinal Phase (1969–1999)

The doctrines of the original movement were not entirely clear. What was established is that the doctrines went through changes, to be discussed in this section.

For Asch (1983: 101), three major factors influenced the church to change its doctrine. The first, already addressed was that the kimbanguist movement was looking for colonial recognition. Second, Kimbanguism, a blend of many different kimbanguist groups coming together under one leader, was looking for the World Council of Churches (WCC) membership and its accompanying recognition as a third religious force in the country (after the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant confederation known as the Church of Christ in Congo). Finally, the third factor is not relevant for this work, that is, paying allegiance to Mobutu, the long-time president of the country, in order to be supported by him.

Asch (1983: 101) states that to get WCC recognition, the church changed its doctrine to basically reflect protestant doctrine. She points out that the dogmatic role of the prophet

regarding his association with Christ and the cultural syncretism were serious issues (Asch, 1983: 63). Bernard (cited by Asch, 1983: 117) states that one of the major points—in the discussion between kimbanguists and WCC— was the nature and the role of the prophet. This early doctrine of the movement had to be addressed. The spiritual nature of the prophet and the presence of syncretistic elements in that doctrine were already suspected, consequently served as stumbling blocks.

The fact that the kimbanguist doctrine had to go through many changes before it was accepted as a full member of WCC is telling. It indicates that the doctrine was not regarded to represent Christian belief and represents doctrines already evident at the beginning of the movement, *Kintuadi*.

After changes were submitted for scrutiny Asch (1983: 127–128) explains the basic principles of the new doctrine:

To believe in God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. To consider Simon Kimbangu as in special relationship to Jesus and a model example of a true Christian. The Holy Bible is the unique document of our faith.... One ought to resolutely believe in the return of Jesus, in the existence of the new celestial Jerusalem, in the existence of hell [Author's translation].

Some authors cited above said that these changes were present elements already evident in Kimbangu's preaching. Most see this however as a new doctrine. This contradiction seems to signify that Kimbangu did not preach Jesus or a version of the gospel. Maybe he preached the Bible but, as said above, in an African way. Anyway, this new doctrinal articulation still presents a problem with Kimbangu being "in special relationship to Jesus." There seems to be an underlying African thought: the dead Kimbangu is to be regarded an ancestor who intercedes for his people. If this is not the case, why then mention his special relationship to Jesus?

That doctrinal change brought about a doctrinal contradiction within the church. It changed the doctrine held to by the church leaders, while lay believers continued to hold to the former. Two reactions were observed. First, among those who remained in the church, some did not accept or did not understand the changed doctrine. They believed in their first syncretistic doctrine. Second, those who were displeased by the change seceded and so the church split (Asch, 1983: 66). These events are telling as it shows that this changed doctrine was not the one originally believed in.

Droogers (1980: 200) states some suspicions he entertained: "One cannot help but wonder whether the cautious way of speaking about Kimbangu around the year 1969 had something to do with the procedure to become a member of WCC." With hindsight, this author wonders

if the change was authentic or just a strategy to get membership. Once again, only this element, the nature of the prophet, shows that the doctrine, though modified, had serious syncretistic problems from the inception of the movement.

Asch (1983: 115) notes that the official kimbanguist catechism, published on May 25, 1963, does not modify, or deny the conception of Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit. Two options are possible: the prophet can be whether an ancestor, as in the changed doctrine, or he can be considered as the Spirit. Presently kimbanguists are still associating their prophet with the person and work of Jesus. They just refuse to capitulate on that doctrine.⁵⁰ Even so, the church became a full member of the WCC on 16 August 1969 (Alipanazanga, 2008: 13; Kuntima, 1984: 210; Asch, 1983: 124). It means that the doctrine of the church was globally accepted with its BTR element.

So, the second doctrinal phase gave the church WCC membership but at a price. Within the church, two confusing doctrines were being used: the old one and the changed one.

3.5.2. The Third Doctrinal Phase: the Kimbanguist Trinity (1999—today)

The current kimbanguist trinity is made of Kimbangu himself, his three sons, and his grandson, the actual spiritual head of the church. As it will be seen below, this trinity is claimed to equate with the biblical trinity.⁵¹ Kayongo⁵² (2005: 232) says that:

There is a double trinity: the one which we have received from the biblical and Christian revelation, which also was the first confession of the Kimbanguist Church, and the other really new one which forcefully proclaims the three sons of Simon Kimbangu plus himself to form together the Trinity incarnate on earth.

⁵⁰ See this official catechism as an appendix.

⁵¹For the present study, this kimbanguist trinity should not be taken just as anthropological symbolism or mimetic reflection of deity here represented in bodily form on earth. Rather, it is an actual claim to deity. Here are some reasons: people pray them and in their name; to substantiate those claims, a very strange exegesis of some well selected biblical texts is made, taking into account their miracles, their fight against colonizers, and their “knowledge” of the Bible. In the case of the kimbanguist church, even the Christmas date has been transferred from 25 December to 25 May which is the date the second son of Kimbangu, Dialungana Kiangani, who is the current Jesus, was born. These trinitarian persons are not said to be the representatives of the celestial trinity but their incarnation or embodiment in a physical form. In addition, the fact they are still appearing to men makes people to consider them as ancestors close to God, or God.

⁵² Kayongo is one of the rare Kimbanguist intellectuals who opposes the current trinitarian doctrine. He was the Dean of the kimbanguist Faculty of Theology and was officially dismissed from that position because of his opposition to the current trinity.

Kayongo is talking about a double trinity⁵³. On one hand, the celestial trinity recognized from the Bible and confessed by the Christian Church. The trinity accepted by the WCC. But it seems that Kayongo is not referring to beliefs of the *Kintuadi* movement. But if he is saying that the doctrine of the *Kintuadi* movement is the “first confession” of the church received from the prophet, then Kayongo must be said to support those authors supporting that the *Kintuadi* doctrine was a Christian one.

On the other hand, Kayongo talks of the current trinity, the earthly one, which is the incarnation of the celestial one, comprising Kimbangu and his three sons. This double trinity is being confessed in the same church. The celestial one is held by very few while the earthly one is widely believed. Believers of this last group pray “in the name of Papa Kisolokele, God the Father, and Papa Dialungana, Jesus Christ, and of Papa Simon Kimbangu, the Holy Spirit” (Kayongo, 2005: 232). Kayongo does not mention another member of that “incarnate” trinity: the grandson of the prophet, Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, who is the current and living Holy Spirit of the church and the head of the church as well.

To go further concerning the investigation on the current kimbanguist trinity, this study will refer to (1) what each of those kimbanguist trinitarian members has said about himself, (2) what they say about each other, (3) the declarations of the writers, kimbanguists and non-kimbanguists, and (4) the work of Diyabanza (2014: 77–96), who presents the trinitarian viewpoints of common kimbanguists and their pastors.

3.5.2.1. The Spiritual nature and role of Simon Kimbangu

It is to be remembered that the role and the nature of the prophet were already a problem at the beginning of the church as mentioned above. To get more insight, these sources should be considered: Kimbangu, his followers, the first leader of the church, the kimbanguist or non-kimbanguist intellectuals, the kimbanguists songs, and the kimbanguist catechism.

3.5.2.1.1. Declarations of Kimbangu

For Mpangu (2010: 67): “He [Kimbangu] declares himself as a prophet, envoy of God, son of God, and Corpus Christi...He introduced himself as the savior of black people, for, he said, if there is a messiah for white people, why not a messiah for black people” [Author’s translation]. According to Nawej (2013: 83), “Simon Kimbangu established himself as

⁵³It seems from this research that the special revelation of the Bible is accepted but reinterpreted together with additional revelation as found in the person of Kimbangu and from his words, and other sources like the sons of the prophet, his grandson and intellectuals—pastors included.

redeemer and savior of the black race” and “Simon Kimbangu had announced himself as another Christ... whose mission was in a very different environment, that of the black people....”

Besides, when he was arrested, the judge asked him if he was the *mvuluzi* (savior), the prophet, he simply said: “Yes” (Chomé, 2008: 77; Batende, 2014:91). So then, Kimbangu saw himself as the saviour and prophet at once. According to these authors, these are declarations from the “very mouth” of the prophet about himself. As a former catechist, the fact that he introduced himself as such is very significant. That is, he was equal to the biblical Jesus in all his roles: redeemer, saviour, etc. For Nawej (2010: 83):

Therefore, we can easily conclude from it that it was never a question of placing Jesus of Nazareth above or below Simon Kimbangu, that those brothers are prophets at the same level, and that they are consequently one and indivisible, i.e., they are both one link of the large chain of the prophets and complementary in this.

Jesus and Kimbangu are brothers in that, they have the same agenda: saving their race. Both equal, indivisible receiving their commission from the same God. Nawej, Chomé, and Batende are among those authors who think that Kimbangu introduced himself as the saviour of the black.

But not all authors agree that Kimbangu claimed to be an equivalent of Christ but his envoy⁵⁴ (Mpangu, 2010: 95). During his trial, when asked if he was the *mvuluzi*, he answered that Jesus was the savior, not Kimbangu (Pedro V, 2011: 183). Here Kimbangu is not comparing himself to Jesus, but lowers himself before Him, calling Jesus the Saviour. It is then to be understood that there are two divergent opinions. He only said that he was the envoy of Jesus to whom he did not compare himself.

3.5.2.1.2. *Declarations of the followers of Kimbangu*

The followers of Kimbangu looked at him as a saviour, equal to Jesus. When they were praying, they started or concluded their prayer with this expression: “in the name of the father, of Simon Kimbangu and Andrew Matsoua”⁵⁵ (Nawej, 2013: 83). This was the trinity of his followers. Mpangu (2010: 52) says that for his followers, Kimbangu was God’s envoy

⁵⁴ As it was seen, Kimbangu was either prophet or savior. When he died, he became the kimbanguist support near Jesus, the African equivalent of ancestor. Later, this quality of envoy, which is the most important kimbanguists ascribe to Kimbangu today, will be given a connotation that will lead to changing the name of the church.

⁵⁵ Andrew Matsoua was a great prophet in Congo Brazzaville, at the same period with Kimbangu. They were fellows.

on earth. The explanation of the expression “God’s envoy” obviously carries a different significance than that of the authors stating that Kimbangu never claimed to be equal to Jesus. Naweji (2013: 83) says that for the followers of the prophet, like Jesus delivered the white race, Muhammad the Arabic people, Kimbangu will deliver the black race. Kimbangu’s followers are very proud to count a messiah among them (Balandier & Sinda cited by Mpangu, 2010: 52). If Kimbangu did not take himself as equal to Jesus, then there is a huge contradiction between him and his followers.

The following question should be posed: “did Kimbangu know all these claims from his followers?” Mpangu answers yes. For him, “as it can be seen, Kimbangu did not proclaim himself a messiah but his followers did... since he did not refuse those claims, can one believe that he agreed? Why not.” (Mpangu, 2010: 95) [Author’s translation].

3.5.2.1.3. Declarations of the first leader of the church

Kayongo (2005) says that: “In 1987 . . . Diangienda Kuntima, the youngest prophet’s son and the head of the church, asked . . . to proclaim publicly that Simon Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁶ In addition, Matondo (2004: 71) says that: “His eminence Papa Diangienda Kuntima has announced that Papa Simon Kimbangu is the Special Envoy of Jesus and updated the name of the church pointing out that the terms *Ntumua* [a sent], Special Envoy and Holy Spirit are synonymous concerning Papa Simon Kimbangu” [Author’s translation]. These are words from the spiritual head of the church, pronounced in 1987. For him, his father is the Holy Spirit in human form. Since the word of the spiritual leader is of great value within Kimbanguism, how can one not take this declaration as the official position of the church? The name of the church changed on the basis of the new comprehension of the term *ntumua*.⁵⁷

3.5.2.1.4. Declarations of the kimbanguist intellectuals

So far this study reflected on what is believed to be the very words of Kimbangu himself. Some views of his first followers and those of his youngest son were reflected upon. It is now

⁵⁶ The reader can easily note that there is an anomaly here. Above Kimbangu is savior, Jesus, but now relegated as envoy and the Holy Spirit. This reality of Kimbangu being equated to Jesus, Holy Spirit or Father will be recurrent in this study. It is difficult to find an explanation to that. Yet, this is the way it works in the Kimbanguism. Latter on, as one will note that Kimbangu makes, by himself, the whole trinity.

⁵⁷ The church was first called “The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu”, but it was changed into “The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu” in order to maintain that Simon Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit.

time to discuss various views kimbanguist authors have on Kimbangu. For Bakali (2011: 42–43), Kimbangu is “the messiah in black skin”. He states that:

One cannot talk about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit separately. They are not isolable realities, but one entity. We cannot talk about Simon Kimbangu... without referring to the above-mentioned personages. In other words, Simon KIMBANGU does not exist by himself, but by referring to the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ from whom he proceeds.... Some facts do confirm concretely the presence of Christ as Saviour and liberator in Simon KIMBANGU [Author’s translation].

Reasoning to this conclusion, Bakali argues from the meaning of the name of Kimbangu—which is “the one who reveals the hidden things”—and his ministry. On this basis he claims the prophet should be recognized as a Messiah alongside the Christian Messiah; Jesus. The context shows that the phrase “the presence of Christ as Saviour in Kimbangu” leads to this thought. Kimbangu is equated to Jesus. It does not mean “Christ living in Kimbangu”. It is indeed Kimbangu who is as Christ lives in his followers. But to highlight the difference between other Christians and Kimbangu, Masanga (2010: 18–20) has a section in his book with the title “the Christology of Kimbangu” arguing for proof that Kimbangu is Christ.

Furthermore, to show that Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit, Dumbi⁵⁸ (2006: 63) builds his arguments upon the similarities between Jesus and Kimbangu: their resurrection and ascension and their nature. Concerning their resurrection and ascension, Dumbi says that like Jesus, Kimbangu died, resurrected on the third day with a spiritual body, the physical one being laid in a tomb. After that resurrection, Kimbangu ascended to heaven. Then he concludes plainly that “Simon Kimbangu is of the same divine nature than the Father and the Son. Both natures [human and divine] are united in him. He is then the Holy Spirit” [Author’s translation]. Dumbi (2006: 39) adds the following: “the advent of the Holy Spirit to the world as another paraclete has to ipso facto bring both a human and a divine presence.... Papa Simon Kimbangu is the Special Envoy of our Lord Jesus-Christ, the paraclet promised by the Father” [Author’s translation]. For Dumbi then, Kimbangu is the paraclet promised by God, thus, he ought to be the Holy Spirit.

There are two major difficulties with this thought from Dumbi. First, the resurrection of Jesus was a physical fact while that of Kimbangu was a spiritual one. In that respect, there is no similarity between the two. Concerning the spiritual resurrection Grundem (1994: 701) says it is equal to the regeneration, which he describes as following: “We who were

⁵⁸ Dumbi is the current dean of the Kimbanguist faculty of theology. He holds a PhD in theology from Yaoundé faculty of theology.

spiritually dead (Ephesians, 2: 1) have been made alive to God and a very real sense we have been born again (John, 3: 3; Ephesians 2: 5; Colossians 2: 13).” The regeneration should be defined as the resurrection of a dead spirit, but not that of a body given that a dead person cannot experience the regeneration.

As human beings are born spiritually dead due to inherited sinful nature regeneration is taken to be a spiritual reality, not a physical one. The fact that Kimbangu was seen after his resurrection (Dumbi, 2006: 53) has to mean that the same body that was laid after clinical death came back to life physically. There is confusion as to spiritual and bodily resurrection here.

Furthermore, it seems that Dumbi defines the resurrection using an African view which stipulates that the dead are not dead; rather they still live among their people. Kuntukula (1981: 29–33) and Turaki (2006: 38, 48–49) do not agree with him. They explain that Africans define community as a structure made not only of “its living members but also... the community of the ancestors who now live in the past, and those still to be born”. Turaki (2006: 107) states that there have been some attempts to define the way Africans view human nature: all of those attempts “agree that a distinction needs to be drawn between the physical body that decays in the grave and the human spirit that survives death”. Again, what emerges from a dead person who did not receive a proper burial is a ghost/spirit, not a physical person. That ghost is a “visible manifestation after death but exists only for a short time. When seen by the living, a ghost is a bad omen and purification rites are required to ward off evil” (Turaki, 2006: 109).

Africans know that the temporal and dead body is different from his everlasting spirit. That is why they do believe that if a dead person is seen by the living, this ought to be his spirit but not his body. To see the spirit of a dead person, an event, believed to be temporarily possible, is ominous. For that reason it requires ceremonies to “save” the one who saw it.

Coming back to the case of Kimbangu, if he was seen, according to the African thought, at most, this would have been his spirit. But the difference with persons seeing him is that people did not undergo rites to be “saved” from the bad omen his spirit brings. Even more recent claimed appearances do not necessitate rites for cleansing (Dumbi, 2006: 53).⁵⁹ Thus,

⁵⁹ This issue is very difficult to solve. Actually, according to the African view of man, it is the spirit of Kimbangu that was being seen after what is said to be his resurrection. But this appearance cannot take long time. The fact that Kimbangu is seen by people, kimbanguists or not, until today might be whether just an imagination or—in case he was that spirit the kongo used to call upon—the spiritual form he had before he was born. However, many people did not even know him when he was alive.

Africans do not confuse resurrection, as a physical phenomenon, and an appearance of a ghost.

The comparison done by Dumbi concerning the nature of Jesus and the prophet brings about a second difficulty, the fatherhood of Jesus. Jesus did not have an earthly father, while Kimbangu did. Kuyela was his father (Matondo, 2004: 29). For that reason Kimbangu does not share the same divine nature which Jesus as God shared with the Father. Kimbangu is a man.

What was the way out? For Dumbi, supporting Kuntima and other writers cited above, Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit.

Zidi (2006: 99–100) supports that view: “God in three persons is a Spirit. He has a body and performs wonders.” Here are some scriptural verses he gave to show that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit who has a body. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit: Acts 1:8, Hebrews 3: 7; Mark 1: 9–10; and the Holy Spirit has a body: John 16: 7–14, 16–18. Then he makes the claim that “The Holy Spirit performs miracles in the third testament”. This is done without clarification as to what this third testament is. He concludes: “why then can one refuse that the Holy Spirit, the third person in God, takes on a body, a black one, as in the case of Simon Kimbangu?”

This conclusion is built upon a very peculiar exegesis—made by Zidi (2006: 99–100) — of these biblical texts, to substantiate the view of Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit. Briefly put, a spirit cannot be born as such unless it is incarnated. Jesus was not a spirit but a man though He was born under the power of the Spirit. Luke 24: 39 makes it clear that the spirit does not have any body. From this reasoning it was concluded that the prophet was then fully man, not a spirit because he was born and he had flesh and bones. If performing miracles is a reason to declare Kimbangu as the Holy Spirit, then all those evangelists performing miracles today are also the Holy Spirit. Biblically, this goes contrary to confessions of the Church and its catechisms. There is but one Holy Spirit, the One who descended the day of Pentecost.

Again, as far as Matondo (2004: 77–79) is concerned, Kimbangu is fully God the Father. To make his point, he builds his logic from three premises. First, Kimbangu is a spirit called upon in the time of our ancestors, in the Kongo kingdom, to give life to a stillborn baby. Second, he did exist before his parents. Third, his name means the one who reveals the hidden. Thereafter, he asks three questions to inversely prove that Kimbangu was God. (1) Who can bring back to life a stillborn baby? (2) Who exists before his parents? (3) Who reveals hidden thoughts or secrets and makes them known?

Maybe they might have seen his picture and once they see him, they know that it was him who appeared to them.

According to him the best way to answer these questions was to replace the name of God in the Bible with that of Kimbangu. He used a great number of bible verses from both the Old and New Testaments to substantiate the answers for these questions. This study will present only a sample. For instance, concerning the first question, he quotes I Kings 17: 21–22.⁶⁰ These verses then become: “and he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the LORD, ‘O Kimbangu my God, please let this child’s life return to him.’ Kimbangu heard Elijah’s prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived!”

Concerning the second question, Matondo quotes John 8: 58. Once again, the name of the prophet replaces that of God: “Kimbangu answered, ‘I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM.’”⁶¹ The same was done in relation to the third question. Genesis 41: 25 was manipulated and became: “Joseph responded, ‘Both of Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. Kimbangu is telling Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do.’” (Matondo, 2004: 80–89). He, Matondo (2004: 89–91), then concludes in these terms:

Kimbangu is the Eternal... the LORD God, Alpha and Omega... the First and the Last... the One who is...Eternal and the same... the only God who saves... the God of our Fathers... the Father, the LORD of heaven... the God of the heaven and earth... the God of gods, the LORD of kings... The Almighty God; the LORD of kings.

It then appears clearly that Kimbangu is really God the Father for this kimbanguist author.⁶²

In relation to the destiny of the black people, Masanga (2010: 43–44) states that Kimbangu defines himself in these terms: “I am God. Call me Kimbangu. I am God the creator. I am God. I am black. You are my people.”

Therefore, the spiritual nature of Kimbangu oscillated between Jesus Christ— to whom he was equated at the very start of the movement— and the Holy Spirit—, which is his major nature today, and God, the Father. He himself constitutes a whole trinity. The question is this: “if these thoughts are still being conveyed in the church by the spiritual leader and some prominent intellectuals, how then was the doctrine formulated at the start of the movement?” Note that at its commencement, the *Kintuadi* movement was made mainly of traditional Bakongo; intellectuals were far and few.⁶³

⁶⁰ All these verses are taken and adapted from the New Living Translation, 2004.

⁶¹ Since this I AM is only linked to the preexistence of Kimbangu, it is difficult to extend that to all other I AM’s of Jesus in the Bible. Then, if he should be taken as a Messiah, his messianic functions are very limited compared to Jesus.

⁶² Matondo is a kimbanguist pastor in France and holds a PhD in philosophy.

3.5.2.1.5. *The Kimbanguist songs (as doctrinal source)*

The songs are also very important in the discovery of the kimbanguist doctrine. The songs are said to be inspired but not composed (Makosso, 2014: 214). A well-known kimbanguist song is (E.J.C.S.K., 2007: 524):

...For he is black, for he is black, Jesus Christ sent us
The Holy Spirit is in Africa
Alleluia our God is black
Our God is Holy, he is black
Chorus
Let us go in Africa, he is in Africa
Kimbangu, the Holy Spirit is in Africa
Alleluia, our God is black
Alleluia Jesus Christ is black [Author's translation].

The observations pointed out are: (1) Jesus is black, holy and God, (2) Jesus sent Kimbangu and he is then the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Is this black Jesus the son of Kimbangu, as it will be claimed below, or Kimbangu himself? Since the second line of the chorus says that Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit, can he also be Jesus at the same time as demonstrated by the authors above? Still, it looks like Kimbangu represents the whole trinity because God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit are black and live in Africa.

Here is another song chanting the trinity within Kimbangu (E.J.C.S.K., 2007: 528):

Behold the Holy Trinity God the Father, God the Son
God the Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity
...
Chorus
The God of our ancestors *Nzambi a Mpungu*
He is... the true God
Kimbangu the Holy Spirit Kimbangu
The comforter Kimbangu the liberator
Of the oppressed people of God
He is...the true God for in him we do
Have the Trinity [Author's translation].

Further observations are: 1. In Kimbangu is found the fullness of divinity, the entire trinity, 2. He is the God of our ancestors, *Nzambi*. The BTR side of the church is clearly seen here. How can one doubt that at its beginning the church was syncretistic with these traditional BTR beliefs evident in the songs of the church? This is confirmed by Akiele⁶⁴ (1999: 191)

⁶³ Throughout this dissertation, the reader should have noticed that at the time of the *Kintuadi* movement, intellectuals were very few. The training was not thorough, basically comprising of basic Bible lessons. Even when they decided to come together to recompose the movement, those of that time, living in Nkamba, decided to seek out a few intellectuals from Kinshasa.

who declares that: “Fortunately one extraordinary, invisible comforter came, who was called Kimbangu. In Congo’s tradition, there was already a strong faith in a supernatural force, a divine power called, *Nzambi a Mpungu*, or Kimbangu.” Apparently, the Bakongo influence never left this church. So, Kimbangu is *Nzambi a Mpungu* whom kimbanguists pray to.

Songs are traditionally employed by “prophetic movements to express their theological convictions”, Simbandumwe (1992: 165), clearly stated the natures of the prophet Kimbangu. The biblical trinity is no longer professed. If at the start of the movement, the major problem was only about the role and spiritual nature of the prophet, then now, years later the situation takes on a new complexity. A new approach came about. The many spiritual functions—each being assumed by a different person— have to be considered within that kimbanguist trinity. According to Kayongo (2005: 233):

The name God is at stake. Contrary to its use in the Biblical and Christian revelation, this name is now officially attributed to Simon Kimbangu who is the Holy Spirit and to his three sons who form together the incarnated trinity on earth. Actually, the greater part of the Kimbanguist tradition says of Simon Kimbangu that he is God: Tata Simon Kimbangu: *NZAMBI*. Papa Simon Kimbangu is God. Several hymns of the Church say that he is God.

New considerations had to be taken into account. It is to be noticed that Kimbangu and his three sons are now considered as God within the church. Kayongo says that this is the tradition of a great portion of kimbanguist believers. So, Kimbangu is, at once, the Holy Spirit and God. In addition, his three sons join him to form the trinity.

Though the roles of these trinitarian members are very difficult to define, the modalism pattern is seen even here: Kimbangu is one essence and one God. Droogers (1980: 197) says that: “People pray to Kimbangu that the world be quiet in his name.” Once again, Kimbangu is God who receives prayers of his people. Here, he is not an ancestor but truly God, the *Nzambi* of the Bakongo. Even though Kimbangu is claimed to be God, it is also difficult, if not impossible, to see the true limits between the roles of Kimbangu and those of his sons. As they share the godhead because it is difficult to trace limits between the various roles of the different facets of *Nzambi* of the Bakongo. His sons are Father, Son and Holy Spirit while Kimbangu is all this. A Confusing indeed.

⁶⁴ He was the executive advisor to the spiritual leader of the kimbanguist church.

3.5.2.1.6. *The Kimbanguist catechisms*⁶⁵ (as doctrinal source)

The kimbanguist catechism, written by the second son of the prophet (Martin, 1975: 140) is another source of information. There are different versions of catechisms in the church and Kimbangu is so exalted that one may be baptized without knowing Jesus after memorizing the long history of the prophet. Catechistically Kimbangu is said to be the envoy of Jesus and to exist from the beginning with God, etc (Janzen & MacGaffey, 1974: 123–125). Matondo (2004: 69–71) clearly explains that in the context of the kimbanguist church, envoy means the Holy Spirit. So, the catechumens are being taught that Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit. No wonder the church's members consider Kimbangu as such. In addition, it is even said that Kimbangu existed from the beginning. As such, he should be God. These are the official teachings of the church.

It was due to this huge confusion on the spiritual nature of Kimbangu that the recognition of Kimbanguism in some international organizations began to be questioned. Bernard (cited by Asch 1983: 117) asserts that: 'The role of Simon Kimbangu has been revised because it was a subject of discussion in the dialogue with Protestant churches which could not accept that Kimbangu may be considered as the third person of the Trinity' [Author's translation]. Its WCC membership was in jeopardy. Evidence of the reasons for resorting to prior spiritual beliefs about the trinity was not adequately explained.

Balz (2009: 33) explains that:

Moderate teaching on the person of Simon Kimbangu on the one hand and on the divine Trinity on the other, which had been the church's official doctrine since 2005, was solemnly revoked... to be replaced more or less by the common popular belief: Simon Kimbangu is God, the Holy Spirit incarnate.

This study accepts that the doctrine of the church professed Kimbangu as either/or the Holy Spirit or God the Father since 2005. Kimbanguists, most likely, fashioned a kind of "official doctrine" just for international recognition.

To bring this section concerning the nature and the role of the prophet to an end, it is clear that for most kimbanguists, the prophet Kimbangu is Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God the Father at once. By himself, he already constitutes the Holy Trinity. While Balz (2009: 33) may argue that this is a recent common belief within the kimbanguist church, but research does not support that opinion.

⁶⁵ Kimbanguists do not have just one catechism. They have different versions which will be analyzed below. A particularity is made here for this one was written by the second son of Kimbangu. See them as appendices.

This analysis shows that Kimbangu followed the African concept and ideal of a leader allowing for the presence many divine characteristics at once. This is similar to the case of Isaiah Shembe of the Nazareth Baptist Church in South Africa. Sithole (2015: 2797) and Mzizi (2004: 193, 201–202, 206) say that he also is “the physical embodiment of Jehovah.” He claims to be the black messiah, he is present whenever his followers pray, and he is equal to Jesus. Mpanza (cited by Mzizi, 2004: 206) declares that:

1. The Holy Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost had no name, yet the Holy Spirit of the amaNazaretha incarnates a living being, and his name is Shembe.
2. The Holy Spirit of the Christians is a power of holiness, yet the Holy Spirit of amaNazaretha is more than this, for he is a spiritual being, an incarnated personality.
3. To Christians the name of Jesus never changes. To the amaNazaretha the name receives a new dynamic meaning. Jesus no longer has life, but in the new name he gives life. That is why amaNazaretha call upon a new name of Jesus, and this new name is Shembe.

So, Kimbangu and Shembe share in a lot of similarities including trinitarian claims. This study critically considers real claims to the biblical deity rejecting divergent understandings for Trinitarian inclusion such a mimetic way of understanding trinity or through anthropological symbolism.

The next sections will deal with the spiritual natures and roles of the three sons of Kimbangu and his grandson who is the current spiritual head of the church.

3.5.2.2. The Spiritual nature and role of Kisolokele Lukelo Charles (1914–1991)

Concerning the first son of the prophet, Kisolokele Lukelo Charles, the kimbanguists believe that he is God the Father. As such, he should then represent one mode of his father, Kimbangu. The entire book of Kinsukulu (2014) gives an account of his dialogue with Lukelo. After recounting some curious events, Kinsukulu (2014: 27–28) concludes that Papa Lukelo was “God in the midst of human beings and in human body so that natural man may not recognize that he is God. He unveiled his divine nature when his promised time was fulfilled” [Author’s translation]. He goes further, insisting that Lukelo “was a human being, but unlike you and me, he was of another nature” [Author’s translation]. Therefore, the traditional belief within this church is that Lukelo, the first son of the prophet, is God the Father.

3.5.2.3. The Spiritual nature and role of Dialungana Kiangani Salomon (1916–2001)

Here is the emergence of the second prophet Kimbangu. He is Jesus Christ for the kimbanguists. For that reason Dialungana should also represent one of his father's modes. Explaining the "Christ-nature" of Dialungana, Hoskins (2004: 51) says that: "In 1999...the then leader of the Kimbanguists, Papa Dialungana...decided to move the date of Christmas from 25 December to 25 May, which happened to be the date of his birthday.... In April 2000, Dialungana announced through his spokesman to the world that he is Christ returned." So then, for the kimbanguists, Dialungana is the Lord Jesus incarnated. Once again this is believed and taught.

On his side, Kayongo (2005:235–236) states that:

Since 1999 May 25 has been declared to be the real date of the birth of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. But this new date of Christmas coincides with the date of birth of Simon Kimbangu's second son, Salomon Dialungana Kiangani, born on May 25, 1916. Shortly before his death on August 16, 2001 he was applauded as Jesus Christ who had come back incognito into our time. This happened after he had himself declared at Nkamba to be the Jesus Christ whom the world was looking for. Since 1999, therefore, the birth of Christ is celebrated with splendor on each 25th of May as being Christmas both in Bethlehem and in Nkamba-Jerusalem. If today one speaks of Jesus Christ in the Kimbanguist Church, one sees first and foremost the Christ whom Simon Kimbangu has preached and shown to the crowds in Nkamba as Lord and Savior, but secondly His Eminence Dialungana is meant, being his incarnation. In the belief of the majority of the Kimbanguists these two are not two different persons, but only one and the same person, since it is the same Jesus who has incarnated himself in Dialungana. This is how those Kimbanguists argue in order to show that they do not have two Jesus in their Christian belief, but only one. In 2001, in the midst of the euphoria surrounding the Kimbanguist Church's acclamation and proclamation of Papa Dialungana Kiangani as Jesus Christ who has come back....

Even though Kayongo and Hoskins do not agree on who announced that Dialungana is the Christ—for the former it was his spokesman but for the latter it was Dialungana himself who announced that he is the Christ, — it remains true that it was a public announcement that broadcast that the second son of the prophet Kimbangu is the Christ incarnated. This is believed and taught as well.

3.5.2.4. The Spiritual nature and role of Diangienda Kuntima Joseph (1918–1992)

3.5.2.4.1. Declarations of Kuntima on himself.

Within Kimbanguism, Kuntima is also believed to be the Holy Spirit. Walo (2007: 419) describes the dialogue a man had with Kuntima, during which he claimed to be Simon Kimbangu. Walo (2007: 420) concluded: "as for Papa Diangienda, he is Papa Simon Kimbangu" [Author's translation].

These are words from Kuntima while he was the spiritual head of the kimbanguist church. A clear syllogism can easily be built here:

Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit
Now Kuntima is Kimbangu
Therefore, Kuntima is the Holy Spirit.

3.5.2.4.2. The prophetic words of Kimbangu

Another fact that makes the kimbanguists believe Diangienda is the Holy Spirit is the prophecy of Kimbangu himself. It is said that in 1910, the prophet prophesized that in 1918, he would be born again, the year his last son was born. Therefore, for the kimbanguists and those who heard that prophecy, Kuntima must be the Holy Spirit as his father was (Kayongo, 2005: 238).

3.5.2.5. The Spiritual nature and role of Simon Kimbangu Kiangani (1951–today)

Regarding the current spiritual head of the church, he is also believed to be the Holy Spirit, since he manifests the reincarnation of his grandfather.

3.5.2.5.1. Declarations of the current spiritual chief: Kiangani

Dimbote (2009: 49) says that: “the biggest doctrinal reform imposed by him [Kiangani] is his reincarnation as God the Holy Spirit” [Author’s translation]. From this one can rightly say that Kiangani declared himself as the Holy Spirit being the reincarnation of his grandfather, Kimbangu (Dimbote, 2009-: 58). This is accepted and taught in the church.

3.5.2.5.2. Declarations of Dialungana Kiangani

The researcher had an interview with RK, and was told the story of the current spiritual chief before the death of his father, Dialungana Kiangani, the former spiritual head of the church. These are the words of RK: “Simon Kimbangu Kiangani raised a dead person in Congo Brazzaville and his father heard about it. He called his child back to Nkamba and told him: ‘we all know that you are our father. But since your time has not yet come, do not start your work until you will be enthroned.’” These words witness of the fact that even for his father, SK Kiangani was the Holy Spirit, being the reincarnation of their father, the prophet. (Interview held on March 11, 2016).

3.5.2.5.3. Words of the kimbanguist intellectuals

Nsonge (2010: 142) says that: “the knowledge we acquire from our chief is that he is the incarnation of the Holy Spirit in flesh [Author’s translation]. Once again, Kiangani is the Holy Spirit for the kimbanguists.

3.5.3. Overall doctrinal knowledge

Diyabanza (2014: 92–95) conducted a research to discover the acceptance rate of the current trinity amongst lay kimbanguist believers and their pastors. He questioned three hundred and one believers of Funa district in Kinshasa town and forty pastors of the same town. The table below gives the results of that research.

Table 3: The kimbanguist doctrinal rate of acceptance

Faith statement	Pastors	Common believers
Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit	90%	64%
Lukelo is God the Father	87.5%	63.5%
Dialungana is Jesus Christ	90%	67.1%
Kuntima is the Holy Spirit	85%	68.1%
Kiangani is the Holy Spirit	85%	68.1%
Kimbangu and his three sons are the incarnated trinity	95%	98%

The results from this research show that pastors are more knowledgeable regarding this kimbanguist trinity than common believers. Since the church comes from a prior doctrine, this new one is still in the process of being adopted. Although changes do disturb people, they are gradually adopted. As the majority of church members already accept it, it should then be counted as the current “official” doctrine of the church. That is why it is taught in the church without significant opposition. There are certain implications that may be mentioned:

1. At least two doctrinal currents are seen and believed in the same church. There is still a fringe of kimbanguists, unaware of the actual doctrinal implications as they are more inclined to accept the doctrine which led the church to become a WCC member. Kayongo, talking about the current trinity, says it is accepted by “the greater part of the kimbanguist tradition”, showing thereby that the doctrine is not yet adopted by all.
2. These members need to be educated regards the latest doctrines.
3. More attention has to be centered on the pastors who still adhere to former nuances of the doctrines. Secession from the church is not excluded.

Concerning the elaboration and promulgation of the doctrine, the kimbanguist church does include a committee called COTHEKI (Commission Théologique Kimbanguiste: Kimbanguist Theological Committee). Its main role is to elaborate and to safeguard doctrine. Unfortunately, it refers to the Bible, including the teachings of Kimbangu and his three sons. Clearly the Bible is not the only source of authority document referred to (Alipanazanga, 2008: 7). African tradition accepts that the word of the chief supercedes any committee. This

includes that of the spiritual leaders or ‘chiefs’. None can really tell if this spiritual standing was finally approved or not by the committee.⁶⁶ The teaching is therefore a pronouncement from the church chief leader. Besides, even the catechisms are formulated by them.

3.6 The 3=1 Kimbanguist Trinitarian Formula

In relation to the trinity described above, this section will talk about a well-established kimbanguist trinitarian thought known as 3=1. Several interpretations of this idea are to be considered.

3.6.1. 3=1: Kimbangu, Diangienda, and Kiangani are “One Person”

First, it addresses the three persons in the role of Holy Spirit: Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani.⁶⁷ They are one Holy Spirit, sharing the same spiritual function. Together they constitute the third person of the holy trinity. Kimbangu is the physical reincarnation of the only celestial Holy Spirit, Diangienda and Kiangani being respectively the reincarnations of the prophet.

Though biologically three different persons they claim that they are spiritually one person. But the Holy Spirit they claim to be is another person, of the same substance with the Son and the Father. This will be elaborated more in the chapter five.

3.6.2. 3=1: Lukelo, Dialungana, and Kuntima are “One Person”

Second, it describes the existing relationship between the three sons of the prophet: Lukelo, Dialungana, and Kuntima. For Droogers (1980: 201–202), They say that: “Kimbangu’s sons, though three, are said to be one. A standard formula is the reference to ‘the three above (trinity) and the three down here.’” So then, “regarding the sons of Kimbangu, we find an important deviation from the official kimbanguist creed. Nevertheless, this deviation is accepted by kimbanguists...” He then tries to be more precise and explains why the three are said to be one: it is in reference to the celestial trinity. The three sons of Kimbangu are called the *bamvwala*; those in authority. Thus, the sons of Kimbangu, possessing an unusual authority, are the only ones who can carry on the work of their father. God through Jesus and Kimbangu transmitted the world to the three sons. They have knowledge and wisdom that ordinary humans do not have. Therefore, they know when the world will end because they have already signed the date. In addition, those who follow them

⁶⁶ Membres of the committee who are like opposing the doctrine are being dismissed gradually.

⁶⁷ To explain that reality, some pictures have been put in place. In those pictures, one can see Kimbangu at the back, followed by Kuntima, and Kiangani, all of them facing the same direction.

will be purified and have no more suffering. The faithful will enter heaven with the *bamvwala*. They are not men, but gods who descended from heaven. We know that they are from heaven and are sinless (Droogers, 1980: 201–202).

Bakali (2011: 224) is fully convinced that the three sons of the prophet are “one manifestation of three persons in God.” Talking on the oneness of the three sons of the prophet, Matondo (2004: 116) says that kimbanguists know that Kuntima is physically dead but has a portion of his body in his brother Dialungana. Though a weak connection, Matondo says it is a matter of continuity by being attached to the source, which is Kimbangu, the Alpha and the Omega. Referring to Kimbangu’s sons he says: they are “three travelers and passengers in one, who came in the world to fulfill one mission...” [Author’s translation]

So, the main idea here is that kimbanguists believe the three sons of the prophet are one person with one mission. They are the celestial trinity. Each is a piece of another in that; they share many commonalities such as having one mission, bodily continuity and so on. Thus, even dead, Diangienda was still present through his brother. They are gods, without sin. Following them is salvation. They are eternally connected to their father to rule over the world.⁶⁸

3.6.3. 3=1: Lukelo, Dialungana, Kuntima, and Kiangani are “One Person”

The last interpretation of 3=1 is that these three sons of the prophet and the current leader of the church, Kiangani, are one. That is, Lukelo + Dialungana + Kuntima + Kiangani = 1 (Dimbote, 2009: 49–57). It would even be feasible to suggest another manifestation, 4=1. But remember that Kuntima and Kiangani already are the same person, the Holy Spirit. As such, they are added to the two others as one person, and according to that reasoning, the number remains three. These four persons are, in this case, the fullness of the Holy Trinity. Even though the name of the prophet Kimbangu is absent from this 3=1 articulation, his presence is covertly implied because his two representatives are there. Consequently, these five persons are the full trinity.

Actually, the number of the trinitarian persons may increase. The best way to understand this is to bear in mind the resort to the principle of incarnation or even reincarnation, 5=3=1. This is to say Kimbangu and his two reincarnations are playing one role in the kimbanguist trinity. Being members of the Holy Trinity, all of them are but one person. For that reason the 3=1 trinitarian formula will still remain the same though the number of trinitarian members

⁶⁸ All these divine and biblical functions and descriptions ascribed to these people show that they are, for kimbanguists, the true trinity. Not just a mimetic incarnation but the actual deity.

may increase. It is accepted that each new leader, coming in power, will come from the lineage of Kimbangu for they are a chosen family to provide leadership for the church. Therefore, the leader should be a reincarnation of either the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit (Diyabanza, 2014: 106). It means that the same trinitarian person can come back in another form or body.

According to Dimbote (2009: 59): “some... already started preaching that André Kiangani Mbenza brother of Simon Kiangani Kimbangu is the incarnation of Jesus Christ and that Zacharie Kiangani Bituvuidi also called Zako, will be God the Father...”[Author’s translation]. Moreover, there is the possibility that if in the future a woman comes in power, the kimbanguist trinity will become very complex because she, the “woman” leader, will be the reincarnation of the “man” who precedes her. So within the same trinitarian role both genders are possible.

3.6.4. 3=1: True Trinitarian Formula or Representation?

Not all accept this trinitarian reasoning. Alipanazanga (2008: 20) opposes the understanding of this 3=1 trinitarian formula as explained above. For him the three sons of Kimbangu, whom he calls sceptres, do not replace the biblical trinity, they are just a representation of what is described in the holy book. He bases his reasoning on Kongo wisdom: “if you see the sceptre, you also see the chief.” It means that, for Alipanazanga, the kimbanguist trinity is just a mimetic or reflective way of understanding the true one or just an anthropological symbolism.

Kayongo (2005: 231) is of another totally different view. He summarizes some kimbanguist views on the three sons of Kimbangu in these terms: “concerning our ‘papas’, one of these hymns announced in its wording: ‘The gods have descended on earth and heaven has remained empty’.” The expression “heaven has remained empty” shows that the three sons are not just the “scepters”, they are actual gods on earth. He goes on sharing “another even more famous hymn which came through inspiration in the years of spiritual revival 1973-1975 [which] confesses in no uncertain terms:

‘Oh our Papas... you eat with us
You move with us
You sleep as we do
You tried to hide yourselves.
But today, we have discovered you

You are the god of salvation
Our salvation rests in you” (Kayongo, 2005: 231).⁶⁹

In spite of Alipanazanga’s opinions this song alone shows the accepted doctrine among kimbanguists.

3.7. The Kimbanguism position among African Churches

It is important to define the position of the kimbanguist church among many other churches founded by Africans. Because of their doctrines or different practices, African churches are classified as African Independent Churches or African Indigenous Churches or African Initiated Churches or African Instituted Churches (all of them having the same initials: AICs), and new religious movements. On one hand, the “new religious movements” claim that they are not Christians. On the other hand, the terms “Independent”, “Indigenous”, “Initiated”, and “Instituted” have been subjects of debate for many reasons, so that some use them interchangeably some with some reluctance (Hoskins: 2004: 44).

African Initiated Churches are defined by Daneel (cited by Jesse: 2008: 9) as being ‘on the whole Christian churches founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans.’ In addition, Daneel (cited by Jesse, 2008: 9), says that AICs are different from ATR. Actually, when comparing the way AICs prophets and traditional healers heal people, Daneel notices that while the first rely on the Holy Spirit to receive direction about their patients, the last “rely on shells, bones, ancestral spirits and alien spirit for divination” (Jesse, 2008: 10). Because of that difference this researcher concludes that: “The prophet’s insistence on the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit for a revelation is an important departure from traditional divination.”

According to Asch (1983: 219) Kimbangu resorted to the power of the Holy Spirit to heal his patients. In the views of Daneel and Jesse, all the AICs are Christian churches. For that reason, Jesse considers also the kimbanguist church as a Christian saying that it is falsely accused of syncretism (Jesse, 2008: 14).

In fact, if for some, African Independent Churches are Christian churches, for this research, the difference is to be established. To be more explicit, this work has to establish characteristics by which Kimbanguism is called an African Independent Church. The term “Independent” in this work has a specific connotation. Note that at its beginning, the

⁶⁹ Kayongo and Alipanazanga are both scholars. Because of their opposition to the current kimbanguist trinity, the first was punished—see above—and the second was banished.

Kimbaungism movement forbade many of the African rites even fetishes⁷⁰ (Chomé, 2008: 32) but kept some BTR thoughts as it has been demonstrated throughout this study. For instance, it was said that, for kimbanguists, Kimbangu is *Nzambi a Mpungu*, or an ancestor or a kimbanguist support near to God. This is purely a BTR perception of God and ancestors.

Again, their trinity today is so peculiar than it cannot be biblically supported for it refers too much to the Bakongo tradition. Nevertheless Kimbaungism became a threat to both Christianity and tradition. It threatened tradition by suppressing many of its components and by its usage of the Bible and threatened Christianity also by using the Bible but in a peculiar syncretistic way. So, Kimbaungism stood on its own: neither being strictly Christian nor being strictly traditional. Because of this ambivalence Kimbaungism has the characteristics of being “independent”, regarding tradition and Christianity. This term then is to be understood as: “a religious movement claiming to be Christian— therefore a church— but keeping to some essential components of the tradition for its doctrines.”

Daneel (cited by Jesse, 2008: 9) rightly observes: ‘some people seem to consider African Independent Churches as simply a continuation of African traditional religion....’ If this is not true in the case of some AICs, it is true for the Kimbaungism. Its core doctrine is, established by this study, a form of ATR blending its teaching and practice with some biblical content and understanding. This study accepts that whenever an AIC is overly syncretistic, it should be taken as an African Independent Church. Hoskins (2004: 47) confirms that: “most of AICs use the Bible to justify respective beliefs and practices.”

Maybe, with other similar AICs, Kimbaungism is fashioning a “third movement”; developing into a unique identifiable church with characteristics reflecting both Christian and ATR including unique teachings which do not allow it to be claimed by either one. For that reason AICs constitute a viable alternative for worshipers and persons seeking to worship God in an “African” way. Alipanazanga (2008: 13) says the kimbanguist church is a co-founder of the “Organisation des Eglises Independantes Africaines (African Independent Churches Organization).” This begs the question if the term “independent” was included in the name of this organization by chance or was it done purposely?

3.8. The Heritage from Kimbangu and Kimbanguists

It is to be accepted that Kimbangu used religion to liberate his people. Kimbaungism had a political side as well. Various discourses and acts of Kimbangu are witness to this. One of his

⁷⁰ Fetishes and specific rites like dances are at the very core of African traditional religions. So, forbidding them was a great shock for people in the time of Kimbangu. It was almost sign of “killing” the tradition.

major discourses related to the freedom of black Africans. The emancipation Kimbangu taught had to be religious, politic, social, and economic (Beda, 2014: 99). Kabobo (2014: 79) is of the view that Kimbangu taught his people to resist against alienation, exploitation, and imperialism due to debt. To be independent means not to be subservient to anyone. Kabobo cites one of Kimbangu's prophecies: "Today, we still are persecuted but at the God fixed time, the white will become black and the black white, that is, we will assume functions whites occupy in our country today. Then, they will be compelled to submit to our decisions. We will be the leaders in our country as they are in theirs."

In the words of Minjauw (cited by Beda, 2014: 99), this prophecy is such that: '[Kimbangu] left profound marks in the country and transformed the mind of the natives' [Author's translation]. Note that to hold such views in public in 1921 was a heroic act.

In addition, though he did not go far in his studies, Kimbangu invited his people to send their children to school. Due to the circumstances of that time, this should be considered a revolutionary message. Alipanazanga (cited by Beda, 2014: 99) says that Kimbangu urged his people in these terms: 'Send your children to schools of white people so that they may learn to well lead this country the days to come.... In the future, we will have our own schools' [Author's translation]. The prophet, in his preaching, has shown that he knew that he had to liberate the black from the colonial yoke, to rehabilitate his rights.

For M'kola (1988: 7), Kimbangu is even the hero of the Zaire independence. In that respect, he states that:

The brutal Belgian Congo colonization has determined Simon Kimbangu to undertake the global transformation of his people. Advocating nationalism of religious nature, Kimbangu becomes the principal spiritual leader of colonial Zaïre in his attempts to break down his chains. Kimbanguism has given the population a set of intentional behavior guidelines oriented towards the liberation from the colonial yoke. In fact, he gave birth to a structured movement of opposition with precise strategy to resist the colonial government. Kimbangu was really a nationalist. Far from being sectarian, Kimbanguism ... has allowed the move from tribal to national conscience. National hero, Kimbangu has died as a martyr for the liberation of Zaïre [Author's translation].

So, Kimbangu, through his preaching, and prophecies, significantly contributed to building a national conscience, which was the true leaven for the independence and development of the DR Congo today.

Kimbangu was then the hope of the people who saw him as "saviour". Kimbangu in this sense is similar to Jesus. In this respect, because of the impact Kimbangu has made then and today, he should be taken as a preacher of the theology of liberation.

Although the kimbanguist church can be helped by some international organizations, they do not borrow money to perform what they do. In fact, the church has established many hospitals, schools, universities, etc. All these achievements are due to the fact that kimbanguists are motivated by a clear desire for true and total independence (Kabobo, 2014: 74). Their commitment produces admirable results. In that respect, African Christians and countries have much to learn from kimbanguists.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter reflected on the life of the prophet, the start of the movement, the beginning of the church and its doctrines in particular its peculiar trinitarian doctrine. From that foundation it explored the spiritual natures and roles ascribed to the prophet, his three sons and grandson who is the actual head of the church. Kimbanguism is to be regarded as an African Independent Church.

CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

‘Given the complexity presented by the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity, the need is to employ methods to better understand it so as to clarify whether or not it reflects some consistency with the Christian doctrine of the trinity’ is the basic thesis for this dissertation.

Therefore, this chapter presents findings from the questionnaire, interviews and from literature. Quantitative answers are presented in form of percentage while the qualitative ones are codified and re-organized. Consideration will be given to the fact that from available literature, a number of divergent statements and views is held to by a variety of authors.

The four research questions⁷¹ to be answered are:

1. What are the sources of the kimbanguist trinity?
2. How can the African traditional religion (ATR), especially the Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), help to better understand the historical and cultural context of the kimbanguist trinity?

⁷¹ It seems important to help the reader keep in mind the questions to be answered since this is the beginning of the chapter dealing with them.

3. How can the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity be better understood in light of early church debates about theology, especially the ideas labeled modalism (in particular, the variety known as Sabellianism)?
4. How can systematic theology and the creeds drawn from the debates about the early Christian modalism be used to critically reflect on the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?

To address these questions, the first results discussed are those from the primary source, that is, the interviews and questionnaire. Afterwards, data from literature, the secondary source, will be analyzed and discussed. The results from the interviews are displayed below. They are answers received from the academic authorities, AD and DN, and the church leader, RK. Interviews were conducted in French and the vernacular. To preserve nuances, the translations below seek to retain the questions and answers in as literal manner as possible.

4.2. Interview Results

Question 1

At one moment of his life, Kimbangu was a Baptist catechist. But because of the fact that he started a revival movement, he was finally excommunicated. Did he, in his preaching, keep what he was taught by Baptist missionaries about God or not? (Other subquestions for clarification: What was his main teaching about God? In other words, which were the attributes of God for him? Did he teach the trinity? If yes, what did he say concerning the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit? Which were their particular attributes?)

Answers

AD: Yes, he preached the same God, the same attributes as those of the Bible. All was exactly as Baptists taught him. There was no difference.

DN: Yes, Kimbangu preached the same God. He insisted on the attributes as described in the Bible. He preached all Baptists know about the divine attributes. Kimbangu said also that he was the envoy and that Jesus was the savior. These are texts to show that he was the envoy: John 14: 16, 26; John 15: 26; John 16: 7–13. The kimbanguist's interpretation of these texts is singular. It is in that we differ from Protestants.

RK: Yes, he taught the same God, the same attributes as those of the Bible. He said that the trinity is made up of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation

Obviously, the aim of this question was to help the researcher discover if Kimbangu did preach the same God he was taught by Baptists, even after they excommunicated him. And if he did so, what were the terms he used in preaching. Note that for all the respondents, Kimbangu did not change his perception of God. This means that he kept the doctrine of God as he was taught and transmitted it to the people under his leadership. However, the DN points out some biblical texts used to confirm their kimbanguist trinity, namely Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit. He goes on to say that there is a difference between kimbanguists and protestants. In fact, he should have acknowledged that their interpretation of those verses distinguish them from traditional Christianity.

The DN first said that Kimbangu kept what he was taught by the Baptists and adds some texts to prove that Kimbangu was the Holy Spirit. So the DN seems to contradict himself. According to the first part of his answer, Kimbangu could never have said that he was the Holy Spirit because he taught what he was taught. Moreover, the second part of the DN's answer is not in agreement with the AD and RK. For them, there are no texts to support the doctrine under study; Kimbangu preached the trinity in terms of Father, Son and Spirit said the RK.

Question 2

Please, would you like to describe your current teaching (in your seminary) on trinity? (Other subquestions: What is the difference between what Kimbangu taught his first followers and what is taught today in seminary? Did Kimbangu say that his first-born is God the Father, the second the Son and the last the Holy Spirit? If not, where this teaching came from?)

Answers

AD: Kimbangu did not teach that. But contrary to some Christians who think that revelation ended with Jesus, kimbanguists believe that the doctrine is dynamic because God is unlimited. Kimbanguists then are of the view that the current trinity is the consequence of the evolution of the doctrine.

DN: The doctrine is being rearticulated. We do believe in the trinity but our interpretation is different. The kimbanguist church is built upon the revelation because it believes that God is still revealing himself.

RK: No, he did not teach that his sons were members of the trinity. I do not know where this current trinity is from. Maybe he taught this but I cannot tell. However, the kimbanguist church has five different sources of inspiration, and all are of the same value: the Bible, the word of the spiritual authority of the church, tradition (what is transmitted through generations by the word of mouth), revealed canticles (Kimbanguists do believe that their songs are not composed but revealed to them through dreams), and personal experience (miracles, vision, dream...). Those songs inform us about Kimbangu, K. Lukelo, D. Kiangani, D. Kuntima, and S.K. Kiangani.

Interpretation

Through this question, the researcher wanted to know if there is any difference between what is currently taught and what Kimbangu taught. The researcher wanted to measure the responsibility of the prophet concerning the actual situation. It appears that Kimbangu is not the source of the current kimbanguist trinity. This latter is a product of some “revelation”. It is said the doctrine is not static, but dynamic. God is revealing himself in other dimensions for He is unlimited. The RK is not aware of the ultimate source of that trinity. He does not know if Kimbangu himself said it or not. However, he points out a very interesting fact by saying that Kimbanguism has five sources of revelation or inspiration, all being of the same value: Bible, tradition, inspired songs, the word of the spiritual leader, and the personal experience. Therefore, Kimbanguism does not have a clear and authoritative canon.

It seems even that when all these sources of inspiration produce contradicting revelations, all of them are equally accepted. On one hand, the word of mouth is a difficulty for this church. After many years, it is obvious that something should change in the message to be transmitted to the next generation and that change might destroy the content of previous messages. On the other hand, dreams, vision and personal experience re-call the African way of dealing with the spiritual realm. Unfortunately, there is no precision here, so they are very subjective, non-verifiable. Therefore, the Kimbanguism is built upon a non-traditional Christian foundation. To have only one message, the Bible should be the only and unique rule, the canon. It is from now on very clear that the kimbanguist doctrinal confusion originates from these sources: the word of the spiritual chief of the church, revealed canticles, oral tradition, personal experience, applying a particular hermeneutics to the Bible, and miracles performed by Kimbangu, his sons and grandson. The kimbanguist believers have faith in all these sources.

Question 3

It is clearly known that Kimbanguism has problems with W.C.C. mainly because of its current doctrine on the Trinity. What is the solution to that problem?

Answers

AD: Papa Kuntima knew his father was the Holy Spirit. But to keep peace with WCC, he kept silent about it. When Papa Kiangani took over leadership, he told kimbanguists to clearly talk about the fact of Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit. It is therefore not a new thing. Now, the church will dialogue with WCC and we will see what will happen.

DN: The kimbanguist's interpretation of the trinity differs from that of Protestants. So, WCC will come and we will talk.

RK: The spiritual chief has put in place a body to frame the kimbanguist doctrine. It is up to them to solve the problem.

Interpretation

To discover the impact of the contact between WCC and Kimbanguism was the idea behind this question. In other words, the researcher sought to know if kimbanguists can change their doctrine because of the pressure they are being put under by the WCC. It was said by the AD that the current doctrine of trinity is not a new issue. Kuntima himself considered his father as the Holy Spirit. This explains all his declarations over his father as described above. The DN insists that the kimbanguist interpretation of trinity is different from that of the Protestants. It is to say that while the doctrine was adjusted to get WCC membership; it did not become really Protestant. Actually, kimbanguists kept the early confusion about the nature of the prophet. So, one can tell that Kimbanguism had two doctrines: the official one, which was made to keep peace with WCC and the traditional one, which was the real one, taught and believed.

But because of the value of the spiritual leader and of the revelation from any source, how can one think that the dialogue with the WCC will change this situation? At one moment, the church had an "acceptable" doctrine, which made it a full member of the WCC. Now, it should be known that kimbanguists never changed their conviction on Kimbangu who, from the beginning, had a saving spiritual dimension. He was even taken as Jesus.

Question 4

It is obvious that once the current head of the church, who is the Holy Spirit, goes, another member of Kimbangu's lineage will take over the power. Who will he/she be: God the Father,

God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit? To say it otherwise, will he/she still be a member of the trinity?

Answers

AD: This is a messianic secret known for a long time, and there are also people who have revelation to know the next leader of the church. Still, whoever may it be, he/she will be a member of the trinity.

DN: God will provide. He knows what He will do. But he/she will be member of the trinity.

RK: God will provide. This is God's secret. But I think that he/she must be a member of the Kimbangu's family who is predestinated. Then, he/she will be also a member of the trinity.

Interpretation

The idea behind this question was to discover if the number of members of the kimbanguist trinity will remain as it is or will still increase. In that respect, all these respondents agreed on the fact that the successor of the current spiritual chief of the church will still be another member of the trinity, because he/she has to come from the Kimbangu's offspring. This is then the chosen family⁷². Then, the number of the members of the trinity will keep increasing. But none can predict the spiritual function and nature of that successor: will he/she be God the Father, the Son, or the Spirit? The complexity will be great the day a woman takes over the leadership. This will produce another kind of trinity.

To conclude with this interview, it was said that Kimbangu was not the source of the current kimbanguist trinity. He never said that he is the Holy Spirit, nor his sons and grandson composing the trinity. In truth, kimbanguists never changed their early perception of their prophet, who played a saving role already. Then, the various sources of inspiration or revelation kimbanguists have and their particular hermeneutics are meant to support that ancient perception.

So then, various sources of revelation, particular hermeneutics, and the faith on the early nature of Kimbangu should be the causes of the current trinity. However, since the early nature of Kimbangu is still accepted within Kimbanguism, it is of great importance to refer to what he said about himself and what was said about him at the beginning of his movement by his first followers. Literature could help to solve this inquiry.

Again, will the discussion with the WCC solve the problem? Apparently not. Kimbanguists never changed their convictions.

⁷² Here is another ATR though concerning special family. There are many ATR components within Kimbanguism.

4.3. Questionnaire Results

Apart from the interview, another research instrument was the questionnaire. Theology students from two different classes, each with five students, completed the questionnaire, as well as three teachers. So, to differentiate students among themselves, a code was introduced. In addition, only one lady completed a questionnaire, she was in the penultimate year of the course. The code reflects that: S is Student, M is masculine, F is feminine, and 1 indicates the penultimate year. For final year students, S indicates the student, M is masculine, and 2 is the year. Therein, there was no female. For the teachers, T is teacher and M is masculine. No female teacher filled the questionnaire. The only female lecturer who teaches at the university was not available. To be consistent in giving the answer from the same respondent, a number was added before the S. For instance, for a male student from the year before the last one, the number 1 is added. Whenever he answers any question, 1SM1 will be used as to indicate his answer. This is also true with teachers.

Question 1

Provide the right interpretation: The kimbanguist trinitarian conception called 3=1 means

- a) *The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are EXACTLY the same person and that person is God. Each of those three sons is just a “mask” or “face” of the same God.*
- b) *The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are three different persons but making one God.*

Answers

1SM1:

- a. 3=1 means that Simon Kimbangu, Papa Diangienda Kuntima Joseph, and Papa Simon Kimbangu Kiangani are one person.
- b. The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are three different persons but they constitute one God.

2SM1:

- a. The kimbanguist thought on 3=1 is that Simon Kimbangu, Diangienda and Kiangani are one person. That person is Kimbangu. That is why we talk of the “triple personality of Kimbangu.”
- b. According to the kimbanguist sources of revelation, the three sons of Kimbangu work in perfect harmony. Spiritually, they are in perfect relation (Genesis 18).

3SM1:

a. The best way to understand the 3=1 kimbanguist philosophy is that Simon Kimbangu, Diangienda and Kiangani are one person, through various re-incarnations of Kimbangu

b. No answer

4SM1:

a. 3=1 means that the grandfather (Simon Kimbangu), the son (Diangienda Kuntima), and the grandson (Simon Kimbangu Kiangani) are only one person. This is the three-personality of Kimbangu, God the Holy Spirit (Exodus 3).

b. The three sons of Kimbangu are different persons but still one God.

5SF1:

a. 3=1 means that the three sons of Kimbangu are different but of the same nature and substance.

b. Yes, they are different but are one God, each of them having his specific role.

1SM2:

a. The best interpretation of 3=1 is that the sons of Kimbangu are exactly the same person and that is God. Each of those sons is a “mask” or “face”.

b. No answer

2SM2:

a. 3=1 means that the hidden God reveals himself in the three sons of Kimbangu who are one in the spirit

b. They are physically different

3SM2:

a. The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are three different persons but making one God.

b. No answer

4SM2:

a. 3=1 means the Spirit in the flesh of Kimbangu, in him God revealed himself to humankind.

b. Yes, they are different persons.

5SM2:

a. They were the same Spirit

b. They were bodily different

1TM:

a. They are one God, and are the same person

b. No answer

2TM:

a. Yes, they are.

b. No answer

3TM:

a. The sons of Kimbangu are three different persons who make the same God

b. No answer

Interpretation

The aim of this question was to establish the practical meaning of the 3=1 kimbanguist formula of the trinity. It would help the researcher to discover the modalistic aspects of the kimbanguist trinity. Three understandings are discerned. First, three respondents (23.1%) are of the view that 3=1 has two explanations: 1. Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani are one person, 2. Lukelo, Dialungana and Kuntima are different persons but one God. For one respondent (7.7%), 3=1 is strictly Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani being just one person. Again three respondents (23.1%) think that 3=1 means that Lukelo, Dialungana and Kuntima are masks of the same person. Five respondents (38.5%) say that 3=1 is strictly Lukelo, Dialungana and Kuntima being different but one God. Finally, one respondent (7.7%) was very evasive in his answer.

Accordingly, the 3=1 kimbanguist conception has three main definitions: 1. Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani are exactly masks/modes of one person through the re-incarnation process. 2. The three sons of the prophet are masks of the same person, God. 3. The three sons of the prophet are different persons making one God. These respondents show that they do not share the same conviction. Two types of “kimbanguist modalism” come out of these ways of defining trinity. They will be described and named in the next chapter.

Question 2

Who is the God they make? Simon Kimbangu or another one? Explain.

Answers

1SM1:

They compose just one trinitarian God, that is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the three persons in one God.

2SM1:

They compose the trinitarian God of whom Kimbangu is part.

3SM1:

That God is Kimbangu. In fact, all we can say is about Kimbangu and his sons.

4SM1:

Yes, they compose one God who is Simon Kimbangu, because this latter is the comforter or paraclete, that is, the third person of the trinity.

5SF1:

The God they compose is Simon Kimbangu.

1SM2:

There is only one God made of three hypostases: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Kimbangu is one of them, the Spirit.

2SM2:

They constitute one God who is Kimbangu.

3SM2:

They compose the God who reigns in the heavens and who, nowadays works in Simon Kimbangu.

4SM2:

They make one God, the Father of Jesus Christ. This latter entrusted Kimbangu to fulfil his work.

5SM2:

The Father of Jesus Christ is the God they constitute.

1TM:

They are the trinitarian God.

2TM:

Simon Kimbangu is the God they make.

3TM:

The God they make is the creator.

Interpretation

In fact, discovering the kimbanguist trinitarian composition was the purpose for this question. Six respondents (46.1%) are of the view that the God composed by these three sons of Kimbangu is the trinitarian one of whom Kimbangu is part. Five respondents (38.5%) believe that those three sons compose a god who is Kimbangu himself. So, for them, in Kimbangu is found the fullness of the Trinity. For two respondents (15.4%), the God is the Father of Jesus.

The logic employed is: those who said that the sons of Kimbangu are masks of the same person should be the ones who think that God made by those sons is Kimbangu himself. Those who think that they are different but constitute one God should be those who said that the God they make is the trinitarian one, Kimbangu being the third person in that trinity. Those who are of the view that the God these sons make is the Father of Jesus do not have a clear stand because, in the previous question, none have presented a possibility of thinking of the celestial and true God. Could it be that they are with those who think that Kimbangu is the third person of the celestial trinity?

From the first two questions, one can already notice three kinds of trinity: first, the Father, the Son, and Kimbangu as the Holy Spirit; second, Lukelo, Dialungana and Kuntima compose another trinity which is Kimbangu himself, and third, Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani are also a trinity.

Question 3

Did Simon Kimbangu preach on trinity? YES NO OTHER (explain)

If YES, describe briefly what he preached. What did he say?

Answers

1SM1:

- a. Yes, through his preaching, we can notice that he preached on the trinity.
- b. Before he went back, Jesus promised his disciples a comforter, the paraclete who will always be with you. When Kimbangu came, he said: "I am the special envoy of Jesus-Christ."

2SM1:

- a. No, Kimbangu did not preach on the trinity.
- b. However, he talked of his "triple personality" by re-incarnating through his last son and his grandson.

3SM1:

- a. No, he did not. He preached Jesus and called people to forsake fetishes, polygamy, idolatry, and witchcraft.

b. No answer

4SM1:

a. No, he did not preach on the trinity.

b. No answer

5SF1:

a. No, he did not preach the trinity

b. No answer

1SM2:

a. No, Kimbangu did not preach the trinity but holiness.

b. No answer

2SM2:

a. Yes, he did.

b. No answer

3SM2:

a. Yes

b. Because he preached Jesus, he knew God the Father who sent Jesus

4SM2:

a. Yes

b. He did all his work in the name of Jesus and knew that in Jesus are the Father and the Spirit.

5SM2:

a. No answer

b. He just preached the Gospel

1TM:

a. Yes. He built his teaching upon the Bible

b. He started his preaching by saying: “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.

2TM:

a. No answer

b. No answer

3TM:

a. Yes, he did.

b. He said the trinity is composed of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit whom he used to call upon.

Interpretation

Through this question, the researcher sought to discover three things. First, does the preaching of kimbanguists match the early preaching of Kimbangu himself? Second, did he preach what he was taught by the Baptists? And third, what was his trinitarian perception? The results are such that six respondents (46.2%) say that he preached the trinity while five respondents (38.5%) also believe that he did not and two respondents (15.4%) did not answer.

However, amongst all the respondents who believe that Kimbangu preached about the trinity, only 16.6% were sure in their answer. For them, he said the trinity is made of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For 16.6% again, since Kimbangu introduced himself as the comforter, thus the Spirit, he should have preached about the trinity. 66.7% just assume that Kimbangu preached the trinity for some reasons: Kimbangu prayed in the name of Father, Son and Spirit, and because he knew Jesus, he should have known the Father and the Spirit. So, since these people—83.3 percent in total— thought that Kimbangu preached about the trinity, should this research believe that Kimbangu talked of the trinity during his ministry? This is a very open question.

Question 4

Did Simon Kimbangu say that his three sons and his grandson, the current spiritual chief of the church, were trinitarian members? YES NO OTHER (explain)

Answers

1SM1:

Yes, according to the biology, this family is trinitarian. The same way God has chosen Jacob (Genesis 32: 28–29) at the time of Israel, Simon Kimbangu was also chosen by God.

2SM1:

The Simon Kimbangu born in 1887 never said that. But it is the Simon Kimbangu of 1918, that is, Papa Diangienda who revealed to the Kimbanguists that they are all one person who is not other than Kimbangu. As Kimbangu is a part of the trinity, we should say that yes, he said it.

3SM1:

No, he did not. When our three fathers were alive, they did not want people to call them according to what they really were because God can reveal or hide himself.

4SM1:

No, he did not. But they disclose themselves.

5SF1:

No, he did not say that these people are trinitarian members. He only prophesied about his re-incarnation through his last son and his grandson.

1SM2:

No, he did not preach that his people were the trinity. However, he talked about his re-incarnation through his last son and his grandson, the current leader. So then, Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani make the trinity.

2SM2:

Kimbangu has said that he will re-incarnate. He did it through his son and grandson.

3SM2:

No, he did not. This should come from Diangienda who built the church.

4SM2:

No, he did not. He only predicted his re-incarnation.

5SM2:

No, he did not.

1TM:

No, he did not. However, we affirm that trinity by the coincidence that Kimbangu has only three sons.

2TM:

Yes. When he talked about his re-incarnation, he insinuated that these people are the trinity.

3TM:

Not clearly. This is the fruit of the revelation. For the Kimbanguists, the revelation is not yet closed.

Interpretation

This question sought to measure the responsibility of Kimbangu in the current kimbanguist trinitarian configuration. The huge majority says that he is not to be held responsible for the problem. Actually, 69.2% exonerate him, while for 23.1% he is responsible for he said that he would re-incarnate. Having said that he will re-incarnate,

Kimbangu is partly responsible of 3=1 described as Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani being one kind of the kimbanguist trinity. Yet, he is responsible for other definitions kimbanguists ascribe to the trinity today.

Question 5

If NO, where the current Trinity according to which Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus Christ, Diangienda is the Holy Spirit and SK Kiangani is also the Holy Spirit is from?

Answers

1SM1:

The current trinity came about because of the prophecy of Simon Kimbangu. In 1921, he has promised it.

2SM1:

From my response to the previous question; I say that this is the preaching of Papa Diangienda.

3SM1:

That trinity is a product of revelation, which is continual. For the kimbanguist church, the revelation is not yet closed, as it is the case for other churches.

4SM1:

That trinity conception has come on time. This is the time of revelation (1Corinthians 1: 21).

5SF1:

God is a mystery but the revelation continues to show us many things. Papa Simon Kimbangu Kiangani is the holy trinity and all divinity is in him. He is the Holy Spirit and God.

1SM2:

The source of that trinity is that Simon Kimbangu incarnated by power in these papas (the three sons of the prophet).

2SM2:

The trinity comes from our comprehension of the Bible. For Kisolokele, his works and preaching show that he is really God. In Revelation 3:12, we discover that Dialungana is the Christ, and Diangienda is the re-incarnation of his father.

3SM2:

Diangienda is the source of that doctrine. He defined himself his role and those of his brothers. But concerning the grandson, he is the re-incarnation of Kimbangu.

4SM2:

The re-incarnation is to be considered as the source of that trinity.

5SM2:

Our comprehension of Exodus 3:15 is such that the expression “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” means God of the three sons of Kimbangu.

1TM:

We draw our doctrine from tradition, word of the leader, and especially inspired songs, which inform us on the trinity.

2TM:

From various sources of our inspiration.

3TM: From the inspired songs and revelation.

Interpretation

In case Kimbangu is not the source of this trinity, this study wanted to discover its true source. For 46.2%, the current trinity is a consequence of some “revelation”. Kimbanguists have many sources of revelation: Bible, tradition, word of the spiritual chief, inspired songs, and personal experience.

Apart from revelation, some other sources of this trinity are: Kuntima (15.4%), when he was the leader of the church, he defined his father’s spiritual status, that of himself and that of his brothers. Another 15.4% think that this trinity is from their peculiar hermeneutics over some biblical texts. Finally, 23.1% say that the reincarnations and the works of those sons are causes of the doctrine under study.

On the other hand, since all the kimbanguist sources of revelation are of the same value, and since all the messages from them are equally believed, there is evidence that kimbanguists will remain in that doctrinal confusion. It even seems that whenever some verses contradict what other sources provide as revelation, a very strange hermeneutics is to be produced or developed. In so doing, kimbanguists use the Bible to support their so-called revelations “which cannot be understood by everyone”, but only by them for they are the chosen people.

Question 6

Which are the biblical texts you rely on to support that Trinity? How do you interpret them?

Answers

1SM1:

Matthew 28:19–20; 2 Corinthians 13:13. These texts talk about the trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being one.

2SM1:

In Genesis 18:16, three persons went to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Then, the three persons represent the entire trinity.

3SM1:

These following texts confirm the kimbanguist trinity: John 17; Isaiah 7:14; Revelation 21:1–4. The first text shows that there is a correlation between the Father and the Son, they are one and coequal. In the second, God hid himself so that Jews will not discern his presence among them. Until today, Jews are waiting for the messiah. Concerning the last text, we see that Jews confessed the divine oneness because of the temple in Jerusalem, which was the holy city. Today, we have a New Jerusalem, a holy city where we have a temple. Then the trinity therein is efficient.

4SM1:

There are no other sources than the Bible, the Word of the spiritual chief, tradition and captured songs (Hebrew 3: 7–12).

5SF1:

[She provides so many texts, here are some] John 1:1; 14:26; 16:12–14; Matthew 28:19; etc. We have to admit that human intelligence cannot fully comprehend God.

1SM2:

The texts are Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19. There is one God in three persons. In addition, we have songs that confirm the fact of Kimbangu being the Spirit and God.

2SM2:

The text is Ephesians 3:24.

3SM2:

We have four sources of inspiration: Bible, the word of the leader, traditions, and inspired songs. These latter inform us much about many things, they are angelic voices and very revelator. One of the songs says, “Three gods have descended from heaven and lived among men so that black may enter the glory and get happiness which is there.” We also have Ephesians 1:1–14.

4SM2:

Ephesians 9:1; Exodus 3: 15; Matthew 28.

5SM2:

Exodus 3: 15; Matthew 28: 19; Acts 7: 32.

1TM:

Genesis 1: 26. We say then God is not in heaven; rather he is represented on earth by our three fathers.

2TM:

Luke 1: 26; Revelation 20: 21. The personal experience and our sources of inspiration as well confirm that trinity.

3TM:

Many texts affirm that God is a person; the three-trinitarian persons are presented to Abraham... In revelation, John says that the city of God is descended on earth and God established his throne in the New Jerusalem, which is Nkamba as revealed to Kimbangu by Jesus himself.

Interpretation

To know the hermeneutics behind their beliefs was the aim of this question. In fact, they have many verses to support their doctrine. However, they use the Bible just to try justifying what they already believe supporting revelation gotten through other channels. Kimbangu, his sons and his grandson have found room in every verse to be explained so that their spiritual status can “biblically” be supported.

Question 7

When Simon Kimbangu said that he was “Ntumua” (an envoy), what did he mean by that? Was he saying that he was the Holy Spirit, a Prophet, an Apostle, or what? Explain.

Answers

1SM1: By this he said that he was the Holy Spirit who came to achieve the work of Jesus (John 15:6–27; 14:15–19).

2SM1:

He said that he was the Holy Spirit. Actually, Kimbangu did not talk about himself but was witnessing about Jesus. In addition, he is still appearing to many people even today. In so doing, I tell you that he is well and truly the Holy Spirit.

3SM1:

He said that he is the Holy Spirit (John 14: 15–18)

4SM1:

Simon Kimbangu reveals himself to whom and how he decides. The revelation is continual.

5SF1:

He said that he was the envoy according to John 16: 7. Therefore, he is the Holy Spirit.

1SM2:

He said that he was the special envoy of Jesus, and we conclude that he is the Holy Spirit.

2SM2:

He said that he was the Spirit.

3SM2:

He said that he was a witness of Christ. But our understanding is that he is the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18; 18).

4SM2:

He said that he is the Spirit.

5SM2:

We say that he is the Holy Spirit

1TM:

He said that he was the envoy of Jesus Christ, and we conclude that he is the Holy Spirit.

2TM:

He said he was the Holy Spirit

3TM:

He said he was the preacher of the Gospel. However, the continual revelation shows that he is the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation

The researcher aimed to know what Kimbangu said about himself. Surprisingly, 100% of the respondents say that Kimbangu, by saying that he is the “*ntumua*” (envoy), insinuated that he is the Holy Spirit. However, a careful reading of their declarations shows that these respondents say what they understand by the term envoy. It is obvious that all of them believe that Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit. Since these are preachers’ and teachers’ convictions, how can lay believers think otherwise?

To conclude this section dealing with the results received from the interviews and questionnaire, this research maintains that the kimbanguist trinity is caused by: re-incarnation predicted by Kimbangu, revelations gotten from five different sources, the declarations of the sons of Kimbangu, a peculiar hermeneutics, and the preaching and works of Kimbangu, his

sons and grandson. In addition, the number of trinitarian members within Kimbanguism will still be increasing since every spiritual leader to come will be from the Kimbangu's lineage.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the secondary sources were also consulted. The information received from those sources enlightened the research. It provided some in-depth knowledge such that some detailed answers were given to these research questions.

4.4. Answers to the Research Questions

4.4.1. Sources of the kimbanguist Doctrines of the Trinity

This section displays and describes findings or discoveries about the first research question.

4.4.1.1. Kimbangu is the source/cause of the current kimbanguist trinity.

A very important point should be made concerning re-incarnation. It is well known and believed in within the kimbanguist church, and Kimbangu is the cause of it. The question is: "how can a Christian of the caliber of Kimbangu⁷³ talk about re-incarnation?" In Christianity, only Christ, the Logos, took on a physical body to save the world. That was not a re-incarnation but incarnation. The difference is huge. The notion of re-incarnation is not biblical at all.

This is the situation within Kimbanguism: Kimbangu, still alive in 1910— before he converted into Christianity and before he started his ministry—predicted his re-birth to take place eight years later, in 1918. His last son was born the very year. Therefore, these two persons, the first Kimbangu and his re-incarnation, coexisted physically. Furthermore, still alive in his prison, Kimbangu gives another prophecy of his second re-incarnation, which will take place in 1951. The day he died, his grandson is born. Once again, two re-incarnations coexisted: his son and grandson. In the case of Kimbangu, one should talk of re-incarnation, not of incarnation because he already is an incarnation of a spirit. If predicting re-incarnation in 1910 can be understood from the perspective that Kimbangu did not as yet embrace the Christian faith, his last prediction from prison cannot be, because he was a Christian, catechist. Moreover he never contradicted the first re-incarnation he predicted. From all these details, it appears that Kimbangu adjusted his Christian faith to suit his tradition; he was a traditional Mukongo regards re-incarnation. Kimbangu was, at best, a syncretistic believer, if not, he must be regarded as forsaking Christianity to rejoin his traditional beliefs.

⁷³ Many authors presented Kimbangu as a true prophet and a true Christian; man of high spiritual caliber.

But other factors must be taken into consideration. Nawej (2013:57) says that Kimbangu started hearing the voice of *Nzambi* at this period, 1910. Dumbi (2006:58–59) agrees and explains that Kimbangu talked twice about his personal re-incarnation. But would the God of the Bible reveal what is contrary to His special revelation? It is not denied that God can reveal himself to someone even before he is converted. But in the case of Kimbangu, the message he received is clearly contrary to traditional Christian doctrine. This casts serious doubt as to his call by the trinitarian God of the Bible.

All the research points to *Nzambi a Mpungu*. Furthermore, the fact of talking of his personal re-incarnation with chronological precision shows that Kimbangu had a deep connection with and profound knowledge of the Bakongo spiritual realm. He was acting here like a true Mukongo priest or prophet. Besides, kimbanguists believe that their prophet existed before his father as a spirit called upon in the Kongo Kingdom. No wonder, that he should have a very significant link with the spiritual realm.

Kimbangu became a Christian five years later, after he heard the voice of *Nzambi* calling him. He was baptized in 1915 and it was the very day of his religious wedding with his wife, Marie Muilu (Pedro V, 2013:141). Christianity seems to have been a transitional phase of his life. He ended up returning to traditional beliefs. As far as this research is concerned, Kimbangu is the most likely source of the kimbanguist trinity, especially regards the 3=1 formula. What may be queried is whether Kimbangu recognized all the implications of his beliefs.

Nawej (2013: 83) is of the view that, although Kimbangu used the Bible for his preaching, he was no longer a Christian. That Kimbangu used the Bible is understandable. In fact, as discovered in the interview, Kimbangu did not change his preaching about the attributes of God because they fit with his traditional God. It is good to remember that the BTR attributes of God are almost those described in the Bible. So, Kimbangu did not see any difference there. He then kept the same teaching. In addition, Kimbangu found in the Bible justification for moral values which he preached and taught.

In the same line, Masanga (2010: 49) is very precise.

That Mfumu⁷⁴ KIMBANGU, belonged to an official denomination with parishes, schools and farms together with his parents and friends is an indisputable fact. In fact, most messiahs practice a religion or adhere to one or many spiritual teachings before they become body-instruments for the power of god, and are regarded as man-God, or even god [Author's translation].

⁷⁴ A *Kikongo* (language of Bakongo, thus of Kimbangu too) word used for leader, chief, and boss. It is also used to pay respect to elders.

These two authors and those sharing their conviction may be right that Kimbangu the Christian rejected the Christian expression of faith as he knew it. That is why, at the start of the movement, the doctrine was very syncretistic, including ancestor worship and his stature in the spiritual dimension. To support its viewpoint, some other viewpoints are now presented.

Salimba (2013: 21) reveals that:

The kimbanguist leaders wanted to keep the line of conduct of the original Kimbanguism. Diangienda deviated from that line in orienting the new church towards the Protestantism. This was not well received. People began to secede from the movement at worst or separated themselves from it. [Author's translation].

This kimbanguist author is very clear. Diangienda, the last son of the prophet and the then spiritual leader, sought a different Kimbanguism from the one inherited from his father. The kimbanguists leaders who worked with and were taught by Kimbangu however clung to the original doctrines of Kimbangu. One of those people was Emmanuel Bamba. This latter was in prison with Kimbangu. Before his liberation, it is said that Kimbangu told him to help his sons to start a church (Mpangu, 2010: 65). So, his separation from Diangienda should be taken as serious matter.

Salimba (2013: 21) says that one of the major problems was “the fidelity to the Simon Kimbangu’s teaching.” Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 122) are then right when they say that: “Whatever it was that Kimbangu founded in 1921, it had little in common with the church created by the ...skill of his son J. Diangienda.”

Orienting and revising the doctrine to be echo protestant belief was obviously was one of the major causes of separation. In other words, having made the church a part of the protestant WCC was not in line with what Kimbangu taught. It sacrificed its original syncretistic teachings. Yeikeloyaato (2014: 99) however comes to this matter from another angle: “A distinction is made between what is taught to the crowd and the quintessence of doctrine reserved to a select few...” [Author's translation]. In this view, Kimbangu had two agendas, one for the masses, and another one for some chosen people. Both groups therefore would be sensitive to doctrinal changes.

Remember that Kimbangu was an intelligent man. Mpangu (2010: 49) says that: “his teachers appreciate his vivid and enquiring intelligence” [Author's translation]. For Pedro V (2013: 136), Kimbangu was “very intelligent with impressive mass communication and skills” and “a man with above average intelligence, strong personality and with a good knowledge of the Bible.” So, Kimbangu, with all the qualities of a good leader: intelligence

and communication skills knew without doubt that he could persuade his people to change their views about doctrinal matters. Unfortunately, he did not.

The last argument of this research is about the Kimbangu's famous prophecy. In his book, Kinsukulu (2014: 9), before writing that prophecy, specifies that Lukelo, Kimbangu's first son, who recorded prophecy, was present while his father was prophesying. It is recorded by Kinsukulu (2014: 9–12), in *Lingala*, which is one of the four national languages of the DR Congo. Pedro V (2013: 176–181), Naweji (2013: 58–61) repeat the same prophecy with slight differences. Kimbangu gave this prophecy two days before he was arrested, on 10 September 1921, at 9.00 am (Kinsukulu, 2014: 9).

Here is its full account of its content⁷⁵ by Naweji (2013: 58–61):

My brothers, the Spirit came to reveal to me that the time to give myself up to the authorities has come. Keep this in mind: with my arrest, a period will begin of inexpressible persecutions, for me and a great number of people. We will have to hold on strong, for the spirit of *Nzambi* all mighty (Yahweh) will never abandon us. He never abandoned whoever confides into him.

The government authorities (colonial) will impose to my physical person a very long silence, but they will never be able to destroy the work I have accomplished, for it comes from *Nzambi* (Yahweh) the father. Indeed, my physical person will be submitted to humiliation and suffering, but my spiritual person will fight against injustices sowed by the people of the nether world who came to colonize us.

For I was sent to liberate the people of Kongo (Cula [kula] minkangu mia Kongo) and the world black race (Zindombe zazo). The black man will become white and the white man will become black. For spiritual and moral foundations, as we know them today, will be profoundly shaken.

Wars will persist throughout the world. Kongo will be free and Africa also.

But decades following the liberation of Africa (the nominal independences of the sixties) will be awful and atrocious. For all the first rulers of free Africa will work for the benefit of whites. A great spiritual and material disorder will take place. The rulers (Minyadi) of Africa will take along, on counsel from the whites, their respective populations in murderous wars where they will kill each other. Misery will be in place. Many youths will leave Africa hoping to find happiness in the white countries. They will speak the whites' languages. Among them, many will be seduced by the material lifestyle of the whites. Thus they will become prey for whites (Nkuta Mindele). There will be high mortality among them, and some will never see their parents again.

It will take a long period for the black man to acquire his spiritual maturity. This will enable him to acquire his material independence. Then the third step will be accomplished. During this period, a great divine king will be born (Nkua Tulendo). He will come with his 3 powers: Spiritual Power (Kinzambi), Scientific Power (Kimazayu) and Political Power (Kimayala).

⁷⁵ For the sake of clarity and precision, the entire long content of that prophecy is to be displayed.

I myself will be the representative of this king. I will eliminate the humiliation that, since past time, was always inflicted to blacks. For among all the Earth's races, none has been as mistreated and humiliated as the black race.

Continue to read the Bible. Through its writings, you will be able to distinguish the acts of those who came to bring you this book and the writings or moral principles contained in this book. The robber must be caught with the object that he stole!

We will have our own sacred book, in which will be written things hidden from the Black Race and the People of Kongo. An instructor-teacher (Nlongi) will come before my return to write this Book and prepare for the arrival of the Great Divine King, the *Nkua Tulendo*. He will be fought by the generation of his time, but gradually, most of the people will understand and follow his teaching. For the arrival of the King will be without forgiveness. Then, it is necessary for the People of Kongo to be informed before this event.

You do not know yet what a spiritual war is like. When the Kongo People start to liberate themselves, any country that will dare attack Kongo will be engulfed under water. You do not know yet the power of those who are sent by *Nzambi* (Yahweh) the Almighty. The Kongo generation will lose everything. It will be muddled by teachings and perverse moral principles coming from the European world (Mavanga ma bisi Mputu). It will not know any more the marital principles of its ancestors. It will ignore its mother tongue. So, I exhort you to not neglect nor scorn your mother tongues. They should be taught to your children and your little children... for a time will come when the languages of the whites will be forgotten. *Nzambi* gave to each human group (Nkangu a bantu) a language, which he uses as an alliance of communication (Nsinga wa mbila).

Then the prophet invited everyone to pray...

Prayer to you Governors of Humanity (Mpina Nza) Prayer to you Angels of the Earth and Air

Prayer to you Angels who manage Water and Fire

Prayer to you The Great Spirit of Kongo

Prayer to you all the Angels of War who control the center of Kongo!

Prayer to you all the Angels of Victory (Mbasi za Lunungu) who fight in the corners of the heavens and the earth.

In the name of the work that you entrusted to me in front of the Heavens and the Earth, I repeat it three times: Make so that your holy benediction can fill the hearts of those who will rise to help the people Kongo!

I repeat it to you three more times and I address myself to those who will despise my work by ignorance: I will beg *Nzambi* (Yahweh) so that he forgives them and that he opens the Way of Comprehension to them!

I swear in the name of all Envoys who were killed in Kongo, in Africa, in Asia, in America and Europe: may their spirits curse these horrid individuals who will have caused death and desolation to the people of Kongo, be they Whites or Blacks! May they be destroyed and sent to the Spiritual Prisons of the Heavens.

I repeat it three more times before the Heavens and the Earth: Beware to those who continue to seek desolation in the four corners of the world!

Come! Oh! *Nzambi* (Yahweh), come! I call you as well as all the Angels of the War (Mbasi za Mvita), in order to lead a combat against this world of darkness (Nsi ya bubu)!

Beware to those who continue to reinforce the slave system and the colonization of the Black People! *Nzambi*, you are a Living God. I unceasingly beg you (Ngieti kufiongonena) in the name of the blood poured by all the Envoys, and their humiliations, I ask to you, and I recommend it to you, oh! *Nzambi* of love: come with the Angels from the Heavens and the Earth to destroy this humanity of darkness that continues to make fun of your Majestic Love!

May your Alliance be sanctified and bless the Kongo People and the Black Race of all humanity! AMEN (So be it).

Some observations:

1. Nowhere does this prophecy mention the name of Jesus. And yet the name of God the Father is seen everywhere, the Kongo *Nzambi*. In addition, one ought to notice that this is more a political speech than religious. This speech cannot be considered a Christian one because Christ is not honored.
2. In paragraph three, he says that he came to liberate black people, especially the Kongo. This allows for the implication that confers on him the same spiritual standing as Jesus had for his hearers. They are equally messiahs.
3. Paragraphs four and five are full of truths. It is just a matter of looking at the African continent and the prophecy is simply confirmed.
4. In paragraphs six and eight, Kimbangu clearly states that he will come back. This is a BTR concept of reincarnation. The question is: “will he return physically, or has he already done it through his descendants?” If so, are his descendants already playing the roles described in the prophecy? This needs clarification by the kimbanguist leaders.
5. The eighth paragraph delivers a curious declaration of the prophet: the Bakongo will have their own book. Someone will be born to write and to teach secrets hidden about the Kongo people. Did Kimbangu accept and believe in the Bible?

“He [Kimbangu] said that he was no longer a Christian even though he based his teachings on the Bible” (Nawej, 2013: 83). According to Alipanazanga (as cited by Rubango, 2014: 130):

The interest of Simon Kimbangu for the Bible can be understood by the fact that he discovered therein the experience showing how God intervenes in the daily existence of his people, to deliver them from suffering, from humiliation. He was most touched by the history of the Hebrews whom Yahweh brought out of slavery in Egypt to lead them to Canaan. Therefore, that God who is the liberator of slaves and protector of weak people become to him the God of Blacks, who walks with them in the desert to take them to the victory, that is, to religious and political sovereignty [Author’s translation].

For Kimbangu then, it is clear that he used the Bible but not as the true and unique Word of God. The Bible was mainly used to defeat those who brought it to Kongo land.

All these arguments lead to convince the researcher to agree with those authors who clearly regard that Kimbangu's primary influence came from being a prophet not a Christian. He used traditional beliefs and correlating beliefs from the bible to substantiate his messianic role as saviour and godlike nature.

Concerning the prayer, a question can be posed: "whom did Kimbangu pray to?" He addresses his prayers to the angels of the celestial throne, to seven angels at the court of *Nzambi*, governors of humanity, angels of the earth and air, angels of water and fire, the great spirit of Kongo, angels of war at the center of Kongo, and angels of victory. In this prayer, the prophet identifies not only the names of the beings he is praying to but also their location and roles. He displays here a very deep knowledge of the Bakongo spirits' world hierarchy, which he follows very strictly in his prayer. These beings can be demigods, great spirits, regional spirits, or God's assistants. Interestingly, he even knows and declares that his own mission is from them. Jesus is from his prayer. This is not a Christian prayer for it reflects the prayers of Bakongo traditional priests.

Some authors stipulate that, while being judged, Kimbangu introduced himself as a Christian, a servant or an envoy of Jesus (Pedro V, 2013: 182–185). But this must be seen in context. Chomé (1992: 77) who is of the view that Kimbangu says he was "the *Mvuluzi*" (saviour) and prophet. Matondo (2014: 105) declares that Kimbangu, when asked if he was a prophet, said that he was more than a prophet: the envoy of Jesus. If he was greater than the prophets, then he could not have been a mere man. The implication then, from the subsequent doctrines of the church must allow for the interpretation that he is one of the trinitarian members. Nawej (2013: 58) declares that Kimbangu "presented himself as the savior of the black race that he asserted solemnly during the trial...." This seems to be the truth.

It is very difficult to believe that Kimbangu was still a servant of Jesus during the trial but the possibility is not excluded. More likely is that he feared for his life and changed the language of his true beliefs. Nothing helped; he was not released from prison.

Furthermore, this research supports that Kimbangu did not teach the trinitarian doctrine intentionally. It was said that he preached biblical morals, which are, somehow, not too far from Bakongo views about morality. He found the Bible a useful source to convince his people to live upstanding lives.

Another view to be added according to Ustorf (as cited by Mushagalusa, 2008: 279), is that Kimbangu knew what was being said about him and that he confided in his wife. Here is

an “extract of his letter to his wife in 1924 during his imprisonment in...Lubumbashi: ‘I would like that all the songs which had been sung in my name be eradicated, you must dissuade them from singing them, me, I do not like to hear anything concerning it’.” Some observations should be made:

1. Even though he was in his prison, Kimbangu was in touch with what was happening outside in his name. Therefore, he was able to communicate with his wife and give instruction
2. The context of this letter shows he knew that people were praising him instead of praising God.
3. He knew that he never left a clear doctrine. The reaction of Kimbangu shows that those songs ascribed him a messianic role. In fact, this was a very urgent and serious matter. Many matters could have been settled if he had penned a clear doctrinal statement in the light of that he knew people were ascribing to him saving qualities. Paul wrote epistles from prison. Kimbangu did not do that. There is speculation that whenever the authorities heard about these claims they submitted him to torture. To avoid that, he wrote to his wife so that those songs would cease. But did he do that willingly so as to clarify his true spiritual nature?

4.4.1.2 Kimbangu’s sons and grandson are the source/cause of the current kimbanguist trinity.

It was established, above, that Lukelo told histories to Kinsukulu to give himself a particular status within the church. Dialungana, after proclaiming himself as Jesus incarnated, even changed the Christmas date to coincide with his birth date. Kuntima told people to proclaim his father as the Holy Spirit. Moreover, he said that he too was the Holy Spirit, being the re-incarnation of his father. Kiangani published that he was the re-incarnation of his grandfather, thus the Holy Spirit as well. They all proclaimed themselves to be trinitarian members, and supported each another in that. It seems from the questionnaire that Diangienda is the one who defined their spiritual status and trinitarian positions. Consequently they must be seen as the perfectors of this doctrine and responsible for current doctrinal beliefs. But there is more to be considered.

4.4.1.3 Kimbanguist intellectuals and pastors are the source/cause of the current kimbanguist trinity.

Many kimbanguist intellectuals have written about Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit, or Jesus, or God the Father. This can easily be seen through many declarations mentioned

above. Even though other intellectuals might be or not be the direct source of this trinity, yet they did play some part in shaping the trinitarian roles and publicly taught the same. Others of course do not hold to the views as strongly. But they are in the minority as the greater number of intellectuals promotes the current trinity.

In addition, Droogers (1980: 188) in debate with Martin says:

[Martin says] Instead of judging the church by what individual Christians say, we must pay attention to the authoritative leaders and to the tendency revealed in the total life of the church.[Droogers replies] Though she states that Kimbanguist beliefs and theology are ‘still in flux’ she does not allow for the integration of the ideas of the ‘simple people within the Kimbanguist church’ into her account of Kimbanguist beliefs. She goes on to great pains to polish ‘clumsy’ statements by Kimbanguists in order to maintain their theological orthodoxy and respectability. Not only members of the church, but intellectuals as well, and even one of Kimbangu’s sons, Dialungana have to undergo this treatment. Every indication of ‘heretical’ and ‘syncretist’ is re-touched and argued away.... The approach is subjectively theological in its main emphasis.

Obviously, Martin tried to justify any obscure aspect in the name of the African culture. Kimbanguists have come back to their tradition.

In addition, cognizance must be taken of kimbanguist catechisms⁷⁶ for they are the works of intellectuals and two of the sons of the prophet. Muhizi (1989: 32) notices that five catechisms in total were already used in the kimbanguist church: four fashioned by kimbanguists and a Baptist catechism. The kintuadi catechism (1957)⁷⁷ clearly states that Kimbangu is the special envoy of Jesus Christ: this quality is to be understood in the light of John 14: 12-18 (see questions 1 and 2). Muhizi, Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 123–127) do not believe that kintuadi catechism was written by Zafwa in 1957 but replicates the true catechism written in 1921 by Simon Kimbangu himself or at least by Mfinangani and Nzungu who are said to have been secretaries of the prophet. These two authors clearly stipulate that: “A copy of this document was seized at Nkamba, translated into French, and circulated within the colonial administration.” That kintuadi catechism could be the first theological document of the movement called kintuadi and founded by Kimbangu. Muhizi (1989: 33) says that the reason why Zafwa did the work is because kimbanguists were viewed as heretic and people wanted to discover the original beliefs ascribed to the prophet.

⁷⁶ Within those different catechisms, this study is more interested by the sections talking about the prophet. See them in the appendices of this work. The Kimbangu catechism is from Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 125–127) and the rest from Muhizi (1989: 1–60 Appendix).

⁷⁷ Since the movement became a church in 1959, the document is another proof that the early movement had some kind of doctrine and already the nature of the prophet was a problem.

Describing the Simon Kimbangu catechism, which should have been the document Zafwa worked on to compile the kintuadi catechism, Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 123) say that:

In 1957 the church published a booklet containing three versions of the latter [the catechism of Simon Kimbangu], in Kikongo, Lingala, and French. The first is composed of 52 questions; the second, of 18; the third, of 24. Eight of the questions in the French version are also found in the Lingala but not in the Kikongo, and four others are found only in the French. The Kikongo text, by itself, was still being distributed and used in 1996. A comparison between it and the other two suggests that the later are primarily intended to answer the questions not of catechumens but of inquiring foreigners.... The incidents in the Kikongo text are clearly based upon a history of Simon Kimbangu.

So then, the first older document found within the kintuadi movement was the history of Kimbangu. Apparently Zafwa then combined that document with what seems to be the Baptist catechism. This opinion is held by Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 123–127)

By 1963, Kuntima, the last son of the prophet, wrote another catechism. This one served to get the WCC membership. It was said to be the official one. But even this catechism displayed the ambiguous spiritual nature of the prophet. Kimbangu was said to be the helper next to Jesus, insinuating the Holy Spirit (Asch, 1983: 115). Between 1965 and 1967, Kiangani, the second son of the prophet, issued two other catechisms. The first, written by 1966, is at most a modification of the kintuadi catechism. It is called *biuvu ye mvutu*. The second, which is supposed to be also his work (1965-1967), is called *ntezi a ntangu*. This latter inclines itself strongly towards classical Christian teachings, but is not used. Rather, it is the *biuvu ye mvutu* catechism⁷⁸ that is used today and not the official which was used to get the WCC membership. It is totally a document of the history of Kimbangu. Therein, Kimbangu is featured far more than Jesus.

This brief analysis raises some major thoughts. The fact that kimbanguists forsook the Baptist catechism to make their own is significant. Why then did they do that? Some possible answers:

1. Kimbangu and his secretaries were Christians at some stage and consequently knew and used the Baptist catechism. Commitment to Kimbanguism however brought about new convictions. This would add weight to those authors saying that the doctrine was syncretistic at the start of the movement.
2. It is very interesting to note that all those catechisms were put in place between 1957 and 1967 which coincides with the second doctrinal stage of the church. Kimbanguists were changing their doctrine, attempts not trying to their own

⁷⁸ Pastors and Prof. Kayongo told the researcher that this catechism is more and mainly used today in the church, though kimbanguists do not have a definitive catechism.

convictions but that of other organizations. Consequently they produced a form of Christian catechism which would bring about a favourable response from the colonial government (1959) and the WCC (1969).

To conclude this section concerning the first research question, it supports the view that Kimbangu, his secretaries, his three sons, his grandson— the current spiritual head of the church, intellectuals and pastors are the sources of the church’s peculiar trinity.

4.4.2. Kimbanguism and the Bakongo traditional religion

Here the second research question is dealt with. The aim is to discover any relation between Kimbanguism and the BTR, its bedrock. It would be difficult to distance Kimbanguism from Bakongo traditional components. In like manner Christianity is deeply influenced by Judaism, the religion it originated from. BTR religious aspects to be compared with Kimbanguism: God, spirits and ancestors, re-incarnation, and the sacred family.

4.4.2.1. Kimbanguism and the Bakongo God

Through their songs and perception of God, it appears that the kimbanguist concept of God is very near to that of the BTR. Masanga (2010: 43–44) records that Kimbangu said, “I am God. Call me Kimbangu. I am God the creator. I am God. I am black. You are my people.” In addition, there are many songs that ascribe to the prophet divine nature, color and roles. This one, cited below, is an example of eloquency and for its content. Kimbangu is worshiped as a black God.

For *he is black*, for *he is black*, Jesus Christ sent us
The Holy Spirit is in Africa
Alleluia our *God is black*
Our *God is Holy, he is black*
Chorus
Let us go in Africa, he is in Africa
Kimbangu, the Holy Spirit is in Africa
Alleluia, our *God is black*
Alleluia *Jesus Christ is black* [Author’s translation and Italic added]

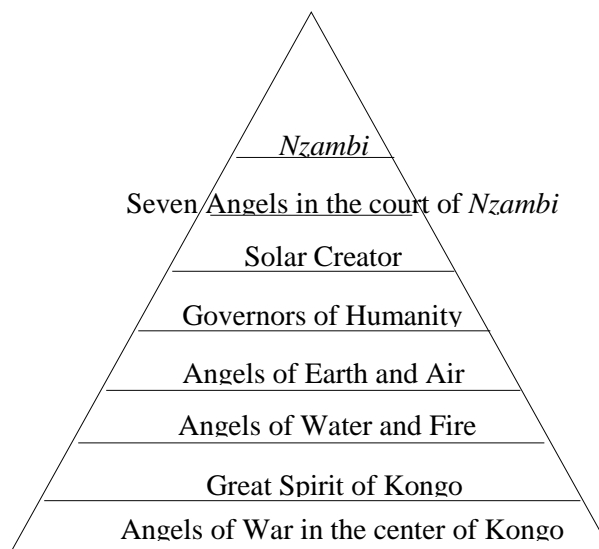
This song says that God is black, Jesus Christ is black, and the Holy Spirit is black. Then, the trinity is fully black, living in Africa. Can that trinity be in another part of Africa or only in the Kongo Kingdom, the traditional territory of the prophet? Then, if that God is in the Bakongo territory, he should be the God of Bakongo, *Nzambi a Mpungu*. That God is Kimbangu. Akiele (1999: 191) talks about “a divine power called *Nzambi a Mpungu*, or Kimbangu” whom the Bakongo so “strongly” believed in.

Supporting this view Matondo (2004: 77–79) refers to three facts—Kimbangu means the revealer of secret, his name was called upon to give life to a still-born baby in the Kongo Kingdom, and he existed before his father — concluding that Kimbangu should be God, *Nzambi* because these descriptions do not fit the biblical God. So, for this study, the God of the kimbanguist theology is *Nzambi*, Kimbangu. Because of that, it is not rare to hear some kimbanguists praying to Kimbangu as their God.

4.4.2.2. *Kimbanguism and the Bakongo spirits world and ancestors*

The belief in spirits is also evident as was seen in the prayer Kimbangu prayed two days before he was arrested. Therein, the prophet shows his deep knowledge of the Kongo spiritual world. In summary a diagram is provided revealing the hierarchy, functions and locations of the spirits he prayed to.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of the spirit realm from Kimbangu’s prayer



To make this summary, the criterion applied to identify this hierarchy is the size of the space managed by angels or spirits. That space is portrayed by the location. In case of uncertainty about who occupies space a second criterion, functions, will be used. Note that these thoughts will be generalizations and simply represent commonly held interpretations:

4.4.2.2.1. *Nzambi*

Introduced as the one sitting in a court where he makes decisions. But seven angels are also there assisting him in his work. They may possibly be identified as the *Bankita* referred to by Kabwita (2004: 46), beings that existed from the beginning. Since God reigns over the

entire world, his assistants are in charge of operations in the entire world. Other spirits may be involved but the seven angels in the court of *Nzambi* are regarded as pre-eminent in power.

4.4.2.2.2. *The solar creator*

Kabwita (2004: 36) confirms that the Kongo people ascribe the solar function to the creator of the heavens and stars. Some consider him a demigod, sharing some attributes of *Nzambi*. Some speculate that the experiences of light, warmth and so on introduced this deity. Kimbangu did not ascribe any role to spirits of the East and West. He just explained that the sun rises from east and sets in the west. In all likelihood Kimbangu was exhorting his followers to pray unceasingly. On the other hand if the East and West are spirits, then the role of the solar creator should provide a kind of ascendancy indicative of the extent of its reign.

4.4.2.2.3. *Governors of humanity*

Here the possibility is mooted that they are in charge of men, tribes, and nations. For that reason they would have some role in determining the destiny of human beings, have some influence over their health, wealth, power, and so on. For that reason they occupy a higher place in the hierarchy being more powerful than the angels of earth and air, who might be in charge of the land fertility and rains, etc. In the words of Kabwita (2004: 46–47), these angels of earth can be the Bakongo ancestors, *bakulu*, who manage the ground under which they do live.

4.4.2.2.4. *Angels of water and fire*

They are called *simbi* or *bisimbi* (Kabwita, 2004: 46; Janzen & MacGaffey, 1974: 77). About these beings, Van Wing (1959: 290) says that *simbi* have never been humans. Some say that they are “men in water” as we are men on the dry land. But looking attentively at the prayer under analysis, it seems that Kimbangu is praying to those who have never been human. He calls them angels not humans. But can he also have addressed his prayer to *Funzi*, who is said to be a manlike creator deity, living in the water (MacGaffey, 1986: 80)? Displaying their role, MacGaffey, (1986: 73) says “*simbi* are local... and are associated with positive powers for growth and well-being.” So, they were called upon for material help.

4.4.2.2.5. *The Great spirit of Kongo*

He is in charge of the Kongo territory. Since there are spirits who have power over others, this Great Spirit controls the angels of war who live in the center of Kongo (MacGaffey,

1986:80). The angels of victory seem to have a huge space, but seem to be attached or associated with the spirits of war.

To classify these spirits is not an easy task. Many authors (Kabwita, 2004: 46–47; Van Wing, 1959: 290–295; MacGaffey, 1986: 78–82) have tried but have no consensus about a spiritual hierarchy, names of spirits, their location, or even their roles. Van Wing (1959: 290) says that: “As far as spirits are concerned, do not seek, from the Blacks, clear and well-defined concepts. Many of them have only some confused and irreconcilable views about spirits” [Author’s translation]. However, this study has tried to summarize the spiritual world.

Jenzen and MacGaffey (1974: 127) stipulate that: “They [kimbanguists] make their [prayers] to Simoni Kimbangu the Helper of the Spirit of Truth.” The kimbanguists do not pray to man but to God himself. Kimbanguists declare that: “Others say we kneel to a man because we speak of Simoni Kimbangu; they have not understood who Simoni Kimbangu is.” The expression “the Helper of the Spirit of Truth” insinuates that Kimbangu can be regarded as an assistant to God. But since he lived on this earth and they pray to him, he should also be an ancestor. Bakali (2011: 222) states that: “It is Simon Kimbangu and his sons who intercede for this world” [Author’s translation]. Remember: 1. Africans do believe that their ancestors pray to God for them, being intermediaries between God and humans. 2. Africans do pray to their ancestors, living dead, for help. Here, kimbanguists show that, in their prayer practices, they are very Africans. Kimbangu is their ancestor in close proximity to God recorded as official doctrine of the church (Asch, 1983: 127). In addition, kimbanguists accept that the prophet is not a mere man; therefore, they kneel before him in prayer because of his personal status.

To link this thinking to the kimbanguist view of spirits/ancestors, this study points out that kimbanguists call *Nzambi* “the God of our ancestors.” As they understand spirits and ancestors the way Kimbangu did, they are praying the way the prophet did. This song offers a good example (E.J.C.S.K., 2007: 528):

The God of our ancestors *Nzambi a Mpungu*
He is... the true God
Kimbangu the Holy Spirit Kimbangu
The comforter Kimbangu the liberator... [Auhor’s translation]

Given that the Spirit is God, it infers that Kimbangu is the God of kimbanguists, because he is the Holy Spirit. So, he is not only their ancestor but the God of their ancestors as well. Kimbanguists pray to Kimbangu as God and as ancestor.

In support Kabwita (2004: 39 ; see also Matondo, 2004: 153), then describes another relation between the Kongo people and the spirit world: “Besides [the] literature used for the religion and government, are the “revealed texts” (by the spirits, ancestors, or deceased), the formulas and the prayers, the songs which establish communication with *Nzambi Mpungu* and the ancestors” [Author’s translation]. Kimbangu told his people that they have to wait for “our book.” Can that book be among revealed texts Kabwita is talking about here? It would seem so but this needs to be confirmed by the leaders of the church.

Concerning their songs, kimbanguists claim that they are not written or composed but inspired. Makosso (2014: 214) explains:

The song is exclusively inspired. It was ‘picked up’: the words, the melody, the various movements were given.... Because it was ‘picked up’ under the inspiration, the song was not composed...God was the inspirer of it...through dream... The song was the main key to the communication between God and man [Author’s translation].

The fact that those songs do establish a deep relation between them and Kimbangu, their God and ancestor at once; it seems that those songs represent the spirit world. No wonder, these songs contradict the Bible so easily and so often, supportive of questionable theology viewed from a Christian perspective. Heintze-Flad (as cited by Makosso, 2014: 214) says that all the kimbanguist doctrine, theology, philosophy, prayers and poetry dwell in their inspired songs. Since this is the case in BTR, the following reasoning may be established:

In BTR, religious songs are neither written nor composed, but inspired by spirits, ancestors or deceased to establish communication with *Nzambi Mpungu* or ancestors

And kimbanguists also do not write or compose their songs for they are inspired

Now, Kimbangu is the God, *Nzambi Mpungu*, and ancestor of the kimbanguists whom they communicate with and pray to as their songs show it

Therefore, the songs of kimbanguists are from spirits, ancestors or deceased.

This reflection seems to imply that Kimbanguism may be viewed as a traditional religion.

4.4.2.3. *Kimbanguism and the Bakongo prophet*⁷⁹

In his description of Bakongo ancestral worship, Van Wing (1959: 113) talks about a “staff with double branch at the apex” [Author’s translation] which was used by the prophet in his work. According to Martin (1975: 53–54), Kimbangu had a staff, which represented

⁷⁹ If in the Bible there is a kind of difference between prophet—he who represents God before the people— and priest—he who represents the people before God—in the Kongo tradition, both are almost the same. A prophet is also the priest.

“prophetic or regal authority, a sign of rule or authority.” At one of the crucial occasions in his ministry, Kimbangu forgot his staff and came back to look for it, so that he was able to “meet his enemy with prophetic authority.” Regarding the symbolic meaning of the staff Martin says: “The chief’s staff... is the chief himself” such that “the chief or prophet can be called ‘staff’.”⁸⁰ The question is: “which authority Kimbangu was looking to associated with the staff? Or, what is the meaning of ‘prophetic authority’?” The analysis below deserves careful consideration.

As far as Mackay (1987: 137) is concerned,

He [Kimbangu] carried a prophetic rod in the form of a cross, a symbol, which made references both to traditional and Christian symbolism. In Kongo tradition the cross is the diagrammatic representation of the cosmos. The vertical of the cross symbolizes both the path crossing the boundary between the spiritual world and this world, and the power linking this world to the spiritual world. By carrying the cross, Kimbangu stated himself to be the mediator between the spirit world and this world, in the tradition of priests and chiefs of Kongo traditional belief.

So, in his roles, Kimbangu was a prophet and a priest. His prayer mentioned above served as powerful intercession for his people. Therein, he is acting as the priest. In his preaching and miracles, he is the prophet and through his effective leadership, he is the chief. To read his prayer, Kimbangu inhabits two worlds: the spirit one and the physical one. Kimbangu is very near to the “modern prophet” of MacGaffey (1986: 217–218) in that he rejected all charms and magic, though he held to ancestors worship.

4.4.2.4. Kimbanguism and the Bakongo re-incarnation

Like all Africans, kimbanguists believe in re-incarnation. Dimbote (2009: 51) specifies that the current spiritual leader declared himself to be the re-incarnation of God, and the father of their fathers, that is Kimbangu. In short he introduced himself as the re-incarnation of his grandfather. He also said that the 3=1 conception is built upon “the re-incarnation of Simon Kimbangu in Simon Kiangani.” Dimbote (2009: 56–57) illustrates this with a picture he posted, where one can see Kimbangu at the back, followed by Diangienda, and Kiangani, all facing the same direction. On the top of that picture is mentioned their spiritual nature, that is, Holy Spirit, and at the bottom is written their name, Papa Simon Kimbangu. Thus, they are all the same person re-incarnated, Papa Simon Kimbangu the Spirit.

Some songs support the re-incarnation. Here is the first quoted (Dimbote, 2009: 52):

⁸⁰ Kimbangu was facing his opponents. He went out to meet them, and realized that his staff was left at home. So he came back to look for it. When he got it, he met his enemies with a “prophetic authority” such that he asked the soldier if he has come to fight against God or the Holy Spirit. Did he say by that he was the Holy Spirit? Maybe, though none can really tell.

From the beginning, it was me Kimbangu
 I am the father of Kisolokele, I am the father of Dialungana
 It was me Diangienda
 ... I am dead but I have come back to you as Kimbangu
 The son of Kiangani but also the father of Kiangani
 Why are you murmuring then? [Author's translation]

Observations:

1. Kimbangu was from the beginning, therefore he is god.
2. He is the father of Kisolokele and Dialungana, but not the father of Diangienda—his third son—because this latter is himself, thus his re-incarnation.
3. Now, Kimbangu has come back to his people through Kimbangu Kiangani—the current leader of the church— who is the son and father of Kiangani at the same time. The fact of being the father of his father should mean that he, Kimbangu Kiangani, is the re-incarnation of his grandfather. So Kimbangu is already re-incarnated twice.

This following song is chanting the re-incarnation, not only of Kimbangu Kiangani, but also that of the celestial trinity into the earthly one. Here is its content (Dimbote, 2009: 53):

Father Simon Kiangani, help me win the battle [of sin and life]
 For you are the God of our fathers

....

Black race rejoice for the celestial kingship
 Has descended upon you among all the people of earth.
 God the Father, Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit came
 They wore the black skin
 ...Kimbangu you are

The Holy Spirit who came in the world and dwelt in our midst,
 But we did not discover you. Today, you reveal yourself to us.... [Author's translation]

Observations:

1. Kiangani is the god of the kimbanguists “fathers”. This last word, “fathers”, has two connotations: it might mean the three sons of Kimbangu or the Bakongo ancestors. Kiangani is able to help kimbanguists to win the battle against the sin. For those reasons he is god.
2. The celestial trinity has incarnated into black people, and they are in Africa. Obviously, this song is talking about the three sons of Kimbangu since they are god for kimbanguists.
3. Kiangani, the current leader of the church, is the Holy Spirit living amongst humans today. As people did not receive that revelation, he disclosed himself to them.

Nsonge (2010: 141–145), explaining the kimbanguist belief about the re-incarnation, insists on the fact that Kimbangu Kiangani is to be taken as the real re-incarnation of his

grandfather. The implication is a life cycle without end. Kimbangu himself re-incarnated already twice, being the incarnation of the spirit called upon by the ancestors in Kongo kingdom. Zidi (2007: 106) says that: “Kimbangu retains all his capacities to re-incarnate” [Author’s translation]. Then, he can still re-incarnate for the third, fourth... time. This is exactly what MacGaffey (1986: 12) says about re-incarnation: “In Kongo thought, human life is a progress in space and time from the other world, through this world, and back again.” Here again, there is little doubt that kimbanguists prove that their religion is closely associated with the BTR. Note that Kimbangu said in his prayer he will come back again.

4.4.2.5. Kimbanguism and the special family

Africans do believe in “special” families; that of the king or priest for instance. Kimbanguists also believe that the prophet’s lineage—starting from Kimbangu himself—is a special one. Therefore, for them, the church can only be led by the descendants of the prophet—as the interview has shown—for they are special people. An ordinary man cannot overcome the devil and this world. Only one from Kimbangu’s lineage linked sharing the same blood, can lead the church, because only his offspring can defeat the devil and his tricks (Matondo, 2004: 156–157).

In support Bakali (2011: 219–220) declares: “It is exclusively through posterity of the person God made the covenant with that He [God] will manifest himself physically... In the case of Simon KIMBANGU, who is more than a prophet, it is God who comes to visit his people, his seed produces sheafs, to perpetuate the divine race” [Author’s translation]. His offspring is a divine race. Kimbangu, who is more than a simple prophet, is the one who benefited the divine covenant. Bakali (2011: 222) states that: “it is Simon KIMBANGU and his sons who intercede for the world” and “Kimbanguists agree that the supreme God by his own authority makes his choice [of the leader] in the family” [Author’s translation]. All these arguments support the idea that God will choose the next leader among these members of Kimbangu’s lineage. This family has been endowed with divine authority and stand in covenant with God.

To conclude this portion, the dissertation answered Droogers (1980: 206) who stated “it is more difficult to specify in what respect it [the kimbanguist church] is African”, but “it goes without saying that the Kimbanguist Church is African.” This research has attempted to show how African the kimbanguist church is. Droogers goes on saying that: “The members of the local Kimbanguist Church showed a stronger lack of appreciation of these aspects of the traditional way of life....” This work is inclined to the opinion that the kimbanguist believers

are taught in a way that they do not discover the BTR dimensions in those teachings. Whether this is a deliberate ploy by its church leaders is not established here. What is clear however the view that Kimbanguism is an African religion, which simply traces its belief upon the biblical model.

Moreover, the kimbanguist church does also behave as a cult. In fact Kitur (1996: 1–61), gives characteristics of a cult, which are as follows:

1. The leader compares himself with Bible saints
2. Opinions, ideas, words and dreams become revelation
3. Scriptural distortion
4. Revelation and visions become a principle of interpretation [of the Bible]
5. Alleged revelations to individuals become God's Word
6. Extra-biblical authorities.

All these facts maybe traced in Kimbanguism but this aspect will not be explored in this study. It does however explain what Kitur (1996: 72) calls “questionable doctrines/teachings”.

4.4.3. The Kimbanguist Trinity and Modalism

This section is about the third research question. The research provided some insight on how modalism relates to the kimbanguist trinity. Afterwards, the analysis of the complexities of that trinity produced six types of trinity or, better, six understandings of the trinity. Then, a name was found for each manifestation of that trinity and a name for the modalism related to it.

4.4.3.1. Kimbangu is the holy spirit and its produced modalism

The first understanding is that Kimbangu is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the celestial trinity. He was there from the very beginning the one who descended on the day of Pentecost in Palestine. He is the comforter promised by Jesus. He partook in the creation process. In short, he is the true Holy Spirit described in the Bible who has come back in black skin and in Africa. For one of the kimbanguist leaders (as cited by Diyabanza, 2014: 77), “God existed first as a Spirit. After, He came as a man, and now He lives with us as a Spirit. So, there are three steps: in Old Testatment, He was the Father; in New Testament, He was Jesus Christ; and now He is the Holy Spirit in Simon Kimbangu.” This latter is then the third person of the Holy Trinity.

Some observations are in order: in this trinitarian complexity a sinful human being is said to be included. So, the Holy Trinity is no longer holy. The second problem is that kind of trinity would be incomplete one day when one of its members dies. A human being is mortal.

Today Kimbangu is still in his grave. Although kimbanguists believed that Kimbangu resurrected and ascended (Dumbi, 2006: 53–58), his mortal remains are still among men on earth. Kimbanguists will then have to find another term to explain what they call resurrection and ascension.

Given that Kimbangu is not said to be another mask of God, it is difficult to associate modalism with this kind of trinity. However, to avoid confusion with the biblical trinity, this study suggests it be called a *Duotrinity*. The reasons are: first, that trinity is made of two kinds of nature: the humanity and the divinity. Second, that trinity is made of two permanent members for the third one, being a human, will die and will be replaced by another one who will die, and so on. So the idea of two incompatible natures put together and that of having only two permanent people produces the name this research gives to this kind of trinity.

4.4.3.2. Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus, Kuntima is the Holy Spirit and its produced modalism.

The second kimbanguist understanding of trinity is that Kisolokele, Kimbangu's first born, is God the Father. His second son, Dialungana, is Jesus Christ, and Kuntima, the third son of the prophet, is the Holy Spirit. This is one of the understandings about the 3=1 conception. So, the three sons of Kimbangu make up another kind of trinity.

The complexity with this trinity is that it is very temporal, given that all its members will die one day. This is exactly what happened within Kimbanguism. Their trinity is no longer alive. Their tombs are on earth with men though kimbanguists consider them as ancestors as it is for BTR. The grandson of Kimbangu took over as will other subsequent re-incarnations.

Just because this trinity is made of human beings, this study calls it the *Homotrinity*. However, a double problem is raised by this *Homotrinity*. The first is that some people, kimbanguists, consider these persons as being different faces of the same God who is Kimbangu. In that case, there is a link between this *Homotrinity* and modalism. Therefore, the modalism produced by this kind of trinity is called, for this research, the *Homomodalism*.

The second aspect is that others believe that these three sons are one God but Kimbangu is not the one they form. In addition they are different people, not masks of the same God. In that case, there is no modalism to attach to it. Even so, *Homotrinity* applies here too.

4.4.3.3. Kimbangu, Kuntima, Kiangani are the Holy Spirit and its produced modalism.

The third way kimbanguists understand trinity is that Kimbangu, Kuntima, and Kiangani are but one person. The three are the Holy Spirit. The re-incarnation is the source of this

trinity. Since for the Africans “children provide for the re-incarnation of the ancestors”⁸¹ (Steyne as cited by Turaki, 2006: 38), Kuntima was considered as his father’s re-incarnation. Though re-incarnation happens after one’s death, kimbanguists do believe that the case of Kimbangu is different (Zidi, 2007: 97).

Once again, Kimbangu told his prison mates that he would be born again (Nsonge, 2010: 145)⁸². So, Kimbangu came back through the birth of his grandson. This is the second way to understand the 3=1 kimbanguist conception. For kimbanguists then, these three persons—Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani— are exactly the same man.

The complexity of this kind of trinity is that, like the previous, it is made of human beings. In addition, these three re-incarnations constitute just one trinitarian member, the Holy Spirit. So, this trinity is called, for this work, the *spirit-trinity*. The modalism they produce is the *spirit-modalism*.

4.4.3.4. Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus and Kimbangu, Kuntima, Kiangani are one Holy Spirit and its produced modalism

Once Kisolokele and Dialungana are added to the only and one “Holy Spirit” made by three different persons, the word to qualify it is *Triotrinity*. The reason for that is three re-incarnations are added to other members of the trinity. Thus, the first two sons of Kimbangu are masks of their father; the modalism attached to it is *Homo-Triomodalism*.

But in the case whereby these Father and Son are the celestial Father and Son, they make for a very strange kind of modalism: it is composed by three “Holy Trinity” producing the *spirit-modalism* and the Father and the Son who are not masks of one another. Thus, modalism and no-modalism produce the *partio-modalism*. This means a spiritual structure where a part is modalism and another part is not.

4.4.3.5. Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus, Kiangani is the Holy Spirit and its produced modalism.

This is the same with the possibility where Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus, Kuntima is the Holy Spirit. Although the *Homotrinity* characteristics apply given that

⁸¹ Though Kimbangu was still alive, remember that because of his pre-existence, he should be taken as an ancestor as well.

⁸² Some authors, Pedro V (2011: 240) for instance, do not agree with the fact that Kiangani was born the day Kimbangu died. However, Kimbanguists hold it true that he was born that very day: October 12, 1951. Thus he is the re-incarnation of Kimbangu.

one re-incarnation is still alive, that trinity is called *Biohomotrinity*. If the sons and grandson of Kimbangu are masks, this trinity produces the *Biohomomodalism*. If they are not, then there is no modalism related to it.

4.4.3.6. Kimbangu is the whole trinity and its produced modalism.

Finally, the sixth kimbanguist understanding of trinity is that Kimbangu himself is the full trinity. He is at once God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. A song mentioned above even says that he is the trinity. So, Kimbangu is the entire celestial trinity on earth, wearing a black skin in Africa. In other words, Kimbangu encapsulates within himself the whole “biblical” trinity with all the divine attributes.

The complexity with this trinity is that it will totally disappear one day, by the virtue of being made by a mortal man. Furthermore, it is made of just one human who plays the three divine functions. The same Kimbangu has many faces (Dumbi, 2006: 4, 52). All these faces are but masks of the same “God”. The trinity composed by one man is called, *Monotrinity*. The modalism related to it, which is named after the researcher, is called *Makondism*.⁸³

Due to the complexity of the kimbanguist trinity the researcher resorted to using terminology that reflects its doctrinal statements as closely as possible as there are simply no other words available to do so. Though this terminology may be appropriately adjusted in further study, it will suffice for this study.

4.5. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results from three main sources: the interview, the questionnaire and literature. Four research questions were asked at the beginning of this study. It sought to establish the source of the kimbanguist trinity. Relational links between the BTR and Kimbanguism, showed how these two are linked. The third preoccupation of this study was about describing, qualifying, and naming the variety of kimbanguist trinities and various kinds of modalism attached to them. The last question was not discussed here because, in reality, it constitutes the apologetic side of this research, to be found in the next chapter.

⁸³ As a kind of modalism was called Sabellianism from the name of its founder, Sabellius, Makondism is the name given not to the belief of Makonda as the entire trinity but to the kind of the modalism which relates to the kind of trinity incarnated by just one man. For instance, Kimbangu is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The modalism related to this trinity is Makondism, from Makonda the researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFUTATION OF THE KIMBANGUIST DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is actually the answer to the fourth research question, which is: “how can the systematic theology and the provided resources, namely creeds drawn from the debates about the early Christian modalism, be used to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?” This will illustrate the basis for an apologetic approach to the subject.

The above chapter establishes that the kimbanguist trinity does not fit the orthodox category. It is in fact in opposition to the confessional views of the trinity as held to by the Christian faith. For that reason it needs to be addressed.

5.2. Refutation of the Kimbanguist Sources of Inspirations Argument

The first kimbanguist argument is about the sources of their revelation or inspiration. Kimbanguists have five sources of inspiration. Except the Bible, all the other sources are very subjective. No one can verify the messages they convey. The Bible, on the contrary, went through a divinely guided process, which made it to be the true Word of God. Berkhof (1933: 39) is of the view that: “The Bible is and will continue to be the Word of God for all the successive generations of man only in virtue of its divine inspiration. The whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This makes it the infallible rule of faith and practice for mankind.” For this research then, only the Bible is the authentic Word of God because of its divine inspiration and because

It was decided by the internal testimony and intrinsic value of the writings themselves—just as the true character of a tree, though questioned, and even vehemently denied, for a time in the dead months of winter, will, nevertheless, soon be established beyond all doubt—not on the authority of some expert gardener or association of gardeners, but by its own answerable evidence in the flower and fruit it bears (Collet, 1987: 58—59).

When talking of the Bible, this study means the sixty-six books found in the Protestant Christian tradition. The fact that the Bible produces transformed life and therefore bears itself witness over its power to change life is a sufficient proof that it is the true Word of God. Concerning the validity of the Old Testament books, Hiagbe (2012: 1) stated that: “Most of the Old Testament books were written by Jewish leaders who held either a religious or a civil responsibility; Moses, prophets, priests, kings, etc.” As to its canon:

The canon of the New Testament does not appear to have been fully and finally recognized as settled until two or three centuries after Christ. In any case, in A.D. 397 the council of Carthage published a list of books, which were then acknowledged as genuine. That list contained all the writings of the New Testament without exception as we have them now, although many books were acknowledged as canonical long before that date (Collet, 1987: 57).

For this research, any other source may be considered only if it does not contradict the Bible as it is the rule concerning faith, that is, doctrine and practices. Kaiser Jr. (2001: 29—30) says that: “The term Canon, when used of the Scriptures, means those books that are received as properly belonging to the group of books that form the Holy Scriptures.” All contradicting revelation, even producing miracles, is rejected if it does not succeed the test through the Scripture.

It is no wonder then that as long as kimbanguists have more than one source of revelation, they will have contradictory beliefs, because they do not have one authoritative canon.

When asked about the nature of Simon Kimbangu, many different answers were mooted by the respondents, sometimes contradicting each other. Even the songs ascribe various natures to Kimbangu and his sons, there again some contradictions were evident. In the songs, kimbanguists believe the trinity is in Africa, but the Bible does not say that. The biblical trinity is alive in heaven, made of the true invisible and immortal God, but a huge part of the kimbanguist trinity is dead on earth, namely Kimbangu and his three sons. This cannot be reconciled with a biblical notion of the trinity. Since this belief does not correspond with the Bible, the kimbanguist trinity is not sustainable.

In addition, dreams and other sources of revelation ascribe to Kimbangu contradictory spiritual functions. Sometimes he is God, or a prophet, or an ancestor, or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. So, since this belief system is internally inconsistent, this argument is altogether suspect. In the Bible, the three persons in the trinity are different, but one God. Here, apparently, Kimbangu is the entire trinity by himself. Again, this is not biblical.

5.3. Refutation of the Kimbanguist Re-incarnation Argument

The second argument kimbanguists use to support their trinity is the re-incarnation of the prophet Kimbangu. The Bible acknowledges the reality of incarnation (John 1: 14, NIV), but not re-incarnation. In addition, it teaches that the incarnation happened once and only for Jesus. The Bible says that: “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9: 27, NIV). Therefore, after death, man is waiting to face judgment. There is no way of thinking of a possible incarnation or re-incarnation.

But since kimbanguists think Kimbangu is an incarnation of a spirit called upon in the Kongo kingdom⁸⁴, he cannot be the Holy Spirit as kimbanguists believe. Not, when seen in relation to biblical doctrine. Again, the true Holy Spirit is universal, not for the Bakongo only as the spirit of which Kimbangu is said to be the incarnation.

Talking of the nature of Kimbangu, Dumbi (2006: 33) says that the Spirit took a bodily form in Simon Kimbangu. However, even without body, the Spirit is fully a person, and fulfils His role. In that respect, Edgar (2004: 113) says that: “Personhood is seen in the life, activity and character of the Spirit who knows the deepest thoughts of God, lives in the believers, gives life, guides, desires and grieves. These are descriptions of the life of a person, God is Spirit.” Kimbangu cannot be the Spirit, the God of the Bible.

Another issue with kimbanguists is that incarnation or/and re-incarnation takes place after the death of someone. But, according to the kimbanguist sources, Kimbangu announced his re-incarnation twice while he was still alive. If re-incarnation, in this context, is the transmission of one’s soul taking another body, then the question is: which soul Kimbangu transmitted to his re-incarnations because he is claimed to have co-existed with his first re-incarnation, his last son, and his second one in his grandson. Once again, this inconsistency plays against this argument, and in Christian confessional terms is spurious.

5.4. Refutation of the Kimbanguist Hermeneutical Argument

The kimbanguist believers have many verses for which they have a very particular interpretation in order to support their doctrines of the trinity, especially in attempts to establish Kimbangu being the Holy Spirit. They do support that Kimbangu is God just by insinuating that since he lived before his birth, he should be of another nature, God. Matondo (2004: 80—84) explained that in replacing the name of God with that of Kimbangu, in some well chosen Bible verses, attributes significance to the name. Claims that Kimbangu has the same attributes as God, existed prior to his earthly birth, reveals the hidden etc. remain mere claims without any biblical support for him or his sons or family. For that, they rely on other sources of “inspiration” which contradict the Bible.

However, the common texts for Kimbangu as the Holy Spirit are the following: John 14: 15—18; 16: 5—15. After reading these texts, and the writing of others talking of the Holy

⁸⁴ In fact, to say that Kimbangu was a spirit called upon in the Kongo kingdom is an issue but to prove it is another one. How can Kimbanguists prove that he is that spirit? Definitely, since the Bible recognizes the spiritual realm, it may happen that he is that spirit though it is not easy to prove it. This study holds for true that Kimbangu is that spirit, because if he is not, then there is no debate under this quality of the Godhead. But as the debate is about defeating Kimbanguists arguments, this research goes their way.

Spirit, the kimbanguists draw the conclusion through inference that the comforter Jesus promised should be recognized as Kimbangu. Kayongo (2005: 237–239) insisted that Kimbangu is so defined by kimbanguists because of his declarations and deeds. He helped people, healed the sick, and performed numerous miracles. Consequently he must be the comforter. But a question can be posed here: If Kimbangu is the promised comforter on the basis of his miracles, should many other people be considered as the same comforter because they also perform miracles, namely the twelve apostles and the apostle Paul as well? Following the kimbanguist thinking, these people might also be considered. What makes Kimbangu the exception? Therefore, performing miracles or pronouncing prophecies is not sufficient to be the comforter, the one Jesus promised.

Furthermore, kimbanguists say that Kimbangu had a spiritual body as Jesus had (Dumbi as cited by Diyabanza, 2014: 78). Christian trinitarian orthodoxy affirms that, Jesus did not have a spiritual body but a physical one, though he was fully God. His incarnation meant, “taking a physical body to save humankind.” A spirit, according to Jesus, does not have bone, or flesh (Luke 24: 39, NLT). By that definition Kimbangu then could not be a spirit. This promised helper would live in Christians. How then could physical men—Kimbangu, Kuntima, and Kiangani— live in someone else? For this research, the promised comforter is the Holy Spirit that came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost. He is fully God and a living person but without a physical body. He is the one who lives in a Christian even today, sanctifying him, thus the Church as well.

Because of these and many other contradictions, the kimbanguist arguments—different sources of inspirations, re-incarnation, and hermeneutics—serve to question the validity of the church’s convictions about Kimbangu and Kuntima who were just physical men, not spirit. As for the living Kiangani, he too is just a man, no more no less. It takes kimbanguist faith to believe their trinity.

5.5. Refutation of the Nature of the Kimbanguist Trinity

Given that all the kimbanguist arguments for their trinity can be refuted, this research had to deal with the kimbanguist trinity as such. In short, the question is: “does the kimbanguist trinity have the same attributes as the biblical trinity?” If yes, then kimbanguists are right in their doctrine, but if not, the kimbanguist trinity is refuted. It is then composed not by God but by men like all other men.

5.5.1. The kimbanguist trinity versus the attributes of God

The attributes of God were used to compare these two categories: the kimbanguist trinity and the orthodox one. According to Erickson (1998: 291), the attributes of God are:

Those qualities of God that constitute what he is, the very characteristics of his nature... The attributes are qualities of the entire Godhead.... [They] are permanent and intrinsic qualities, which cannot be gained or lost. God's attributes are essential and inherent dimensions of his very nature. They are objective characteristics of his nature. The attributes are inseparable from the being or essence of god.

This insistence is very important. Qualities are not the acts of God but they describe what God is intrinsically. In fact, what God does proceeds from what God is. But some other forces can perform miracles without being God. So, this study wants to show what the godhead is like, his nature. To that end a brief excursion will consider the incommunicable attributes of God, not shared outside of the trinity.

5.5.1.1. The Spirituality of God

“God is spirit; that is, he is not composed of matter and does not possess a physical nature... [He] is not destructible, as is material nature” (Erickson, 1998: 294). Although the Bible talks about God appearing to humans in various forms sometimes in the Old Testament (OT) —theologians call this “theophanies”— and sometimes God is presented as having members composing the human body—theologians call this anthropomorphisms—⁸⁵ it is very important to notice that these were transitional phases of his manifestations and a prelude to the incarnation. Even so, the Bible teaches that from the very beginning God was spirit; he was not composed of matter. Jesus incarnate lived on earth for thirty-three years. This also was just a temporal appearance. Nicole (1983: 48) says that: “His [of Jesus] physical nature does not remove anything from his spiritual essence” [Author's translation]. The godhead is Spirit. “One consequence of God's spirituality is that he does not have the limitations involved with the physical body” (Erickson: 1998: 294). God is then unlimited in all his movements and wills.

5.5.1.2. The Eternity of God

God is eternal. He does not have any beginning or an end. This attribute pertains to the entire godhead: Father, Son and the Spirit (Nicole, 1983: 49). On his side, as far as Erickson

⁸⁵ Sometimes God appeared in physical forms. See the theophany in Genesis 18: 1–8, Abraham saw him as a passenger. In Exodus 3: 2, Moses saw him in a fire. In 1 Kings 19: 12, Elijah felt a soft and subtle sound. These are theophanies. In addition, some biblical texts seem to portray God as having the human organs or members. This is done just to help human beings to get an idea of God. This is anthropomorphism.

(1998: 297–298) is concerned, “The adjective eternal is applied to him [God] frequently, implying that there never was a time when he did not exist... Thus he could not have derived his existence from anything else. He is, regardless of whether anything else is.” So, the godhead did exist even before all creation. One cannot imagine of a time where he was not. His existence is independent from that of anything else. He is by himself; all things came from him, yet he did not come from anything.

5.5.1.3. The Infinity of God

The infinity of God in general is that perfection of His nature by which everything that belongs to His being is without measure or quantity. God is infinite in His knowledge and wisdom, in His goodness and love, in His righteousness and holiness, and also in His sovereignty and power. Viewed in reference to space, the infinity of God is called His immensity. In virtue of this perfection He transcends all space, and at the same time is present in every point of space with His whole being. He is not partly in our country and partly in other countries, but fills every part of space with His entire being. This is also called His omnipresence (Berkhof, 1933: 63–64). All that is in God is beyond measure. None can for instance measure his love. Because of that love, God came into the world, through Jesus, to save the lost humankind. How can the human mind understand that? In addition, God forgives sins. These are clear manifestations of his love. His love is just an example. Many other qualities may be described the same way. All in God is beyond measure.

The next step is to compare these three attributes with those of the kimbanguist trinity. Actually, in the context of this research, these three qualities suffice, because, they are essential. The communicable attributes cannot be talked about here for men can have them to some degree. If in only one of these non-communicable attributes the kimbanguist trinity can be found equal to the biblical trinity, then kimbanguists are right.

The first question is: “Are Kimbangu, his sons and his grandson spirits?” Kimbanguists believe so. However, according to the definitions provided above, they are not spirits because they are made of matter. Their dead bodies are still in their native village whereby they were buried. Even so, the situation is more complicated with Kimbangu himself because of two main reasons: 1. He is said to exist before he was born and 2. He incarnated and re-incarnated successively in his last son and his grandson. On the contrary, concerning the sons and grandson of Kimbangu, the situation seems to be very obvious: even kimbanguists do not say that they were spirits at any moment of their life.

Actually, the Bible acknowledges that some spirits did exist before the world; these are angels. Again, when the devil was roamed the earth, he brought some of those angels with him (Revelation 12: 4, NIV)⁸⁶. But all of them were created. They can be spirits but they were never there at the beginning, before all things were created. Could Kimbangu have been one of them before he was born? If so, Kimbangu is not the spirit from the beginning, the uncaused cause. But the fact that his mortal remains are still in Nkamba, his native village, contradicts the belief that he was a spirit. This is the sufficient proof that he is matter. To show that he never lost his spirituality while in his human body, Jesus came back to life after his death. Here is no earthly trinity divorced from a spiritual trinity.

On his side, as far as Dumbi (2006: 52–59) is concerned, Simon Kimbangu did really come back to life in the spirit, and furthermore, he ascended to heaven. But the biblical resurrection of Jesus was never been a spiritual but a physical one, meaning that the same body, which was laid down regains its life and people see it in full motion. As for Schwöbel (2009: 233), “the disclosure of the risen Christ therefore includes his bodily identifiability.... The personal identity of Christ is revealed in the material identifiability of his body.” The body, which died is the one who come back, and disciples recognized him.

For Kimbangu, there are no proofs that his dead body regained its life, though Dumbi (2006: 4, 52) presents him under two statures: the first is the known Kimbangu and the second, the resurrected one, in a young form. His mortal remains remain in his coffin kept in Nkamba. This contradicts what Dumbi claims. Moreover, if the prophet Kimbangu rose from the dead, then he lived for a while on this earth with his re-incarnations. Even the Bakongo who think that life is cyclic cannot readily accept this view. Someone is born, dies, and is re-born, and so on. Some Bakongo believe that one man can be seen in many places at once, but they do not call this re-incarnation because they know that one person cannot live on earth with his re-incarnations. Decidedly, one should be kimbanguist to believe that.

Proofs to support Jesus’ resurrection are amply recorded in the Bible (I Corinthians 15: 3–8, NIV). So, since Kimbangu was not capable to behave as Jesus did, that is, being born without a biological father, rising after death and afterwards ascending to heaven, Kimbangu is but matter. The following syllogism can be established:

The resurrection is the coming back to life of a dead body
The body of Kimbangu is still in his coffin though he is said to be resurrected
Therefore, Kimbangu never resurrected.

⁸⁶According to Keneer (1993: 794), this passage of “Revelation links [the] fall especially with rebellion against Christ.”

There are many contradictions in the theory of the resurrection of Kimbangu, and they do not correspond to reality.

On the other hand, it should be even impossible to think of the three sons and grandson of Kimbangu as being spirits. It has never been said about them that they existed before they were born. So, it goes without saying that they are totally matter. The bodies of those three sons are still in buried in Nkamba. As for the grandson, he is still alive but, being mortal, one day his body might be kept in the same Nkamba while another will be take over leadership.

The second question is: “Are Kimbangu, his sons and his grandson eternal?” According to the description of Erickson, they are not eternal. Kimbangu is not a spirit, it has been demonstrated above that he was created. The same applies to his progeny and grandson. All of them have a starting point in life. Thus, there was a time where they were not; their existence derives from another creator, from God since he is the creator of all that exists, visible or not. All in all, these four people are not eternal.

The third question is: “Are Kimbangu, his sons and grandson infinite?” Are their knowledge and their power beyond measure? Absolutely not. Only God knows everything. Are they everywhere at the same time? No, though it is said that Kimbangu was appearing many places at once, but he was not everywhere at the same time. He was not fully present in the entire universe at the same time. Only the creator God can do that. So, these people are not infinite.

Furthermore, this kimbanguist trinity has a big difficulty— concerning the ranking of the trinitarian persons— within it. Within a kimbanguist trinity, the Spirit is the one who generated the Father, the Son, and another Spirit. Again, the biblical Father did beget the Son who was with Him since the beginning. Both the Father and the Son breathed the Spirit who also was with them since the beginning. But for the kimbanguist trinity, the Spirit had sex with a wife to get the Father, the Son, and the Spirit although this latter is said to be a re-incarnation. The Spirit biologically created three persons. This difficulty is doubled by the fact that the Spirit is not of the same generation with the two others, that is, the Father and the Son. He came before them a long time ago. Moreover, the current spiritual leader, who is also the Spirit, is a biological product of the second son of the prophet who is Jesus. So, this Jesus had sex with a wife to get the Spirit. It seems this kimbanguist trinity has nothing in common with the trinity of the Bible.

In conclusion, from all these descriptions, Kimbangu, his sons and grandson are neither spirits, nor eternal, nor infinite. Therefore, given that the qualities of the biblical trinity do not

match those of the kimbanguist trinity, this study declares that trinity is made of people who are claimed to be deified human beings. They do not have any intrinsic divine quality.

5.5.2. The kimbanguist Trinity versus creed

Church history shows that many creeds, which are theological declarations, were produced to combat heresies, especially those concerning the divine nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since the kimbanguist trinity is one of the doctrines dealing with the nature of the godhead, this study has to compare these creeds, which the church Fathers put in place, with the doctrine under study to see how it can be refuted by them. This research could not use all the creeds, therefore the Apostles' creed— in its final version of ca. 700— was chosen on the premise that it is the most widely used today in Christendom. Its content is written below:

*I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended to hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead;
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of the sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. (Noll, 2001: 43)*

The main problem between the kimbanguist believers and this creed is that they accept all that is said in this theological declaration. They just transpose all that is said about these three trinitarian persons on their trinity, consequently recite this creed confidently. That is: what this creed says about God the Father is true for Lukelo who is God the Father for them. Declarations pertaining to Jesus the Son are said to be true for Dialungana who is the re-incarnation of Jesus, and all that is said about the Holy Spirit is the same they say of Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani who are the Spirit for them. That is why the kimbanguist trinity is to be tested.

5.5.2.1. Lukelo versus the creedal father

The creedal Father is the Almighty one, the creator of heaven and earth. He cannot die, and did not and will not incarnate. Lukelo, as said above, is neither almighty nor creator. Rather he is a creature, born of human beings. Being matter, he is and was already destroyed by death. Under that status, he is not controlling anything today. He even lost the little power he had as a man. So, he cannot be God and thus, he is not the Father.

5.5.2.2. Dialungana versus the creedal Son, Jesus

The creedal son went through a long process before this creedal description was ecumenically accepted. Contrary to Dialungana's claims, the Spirit did not conceive him. His ever human parents are very well known; since he was their second son his mother could not claim to be a virgin; he suffered no trial; nor was he crucified. Though he died and was buried, he never rose again for he is in his coffin. He never ascended to heaven and is not at the right hand of the Father. Instead of coming back to judge the world, he is waiting to be judged himself. So, not being God, he cannot be Jesus Christ.

5.5.2.3. Kimbangu, Kuntima and Kiangani versus the creedal Holy Spirit

The creed is almost silent when talking of the Spirit. However, the Spirit never incarnated or re-incarnated. As mentioned above, the Spirit is God with all the attributes of God, but these three kimbanguist spirits are not God.

The words incarnation and resurrection are used by kimbanguists to support the process through which their trinity came about. They claim that Lukelo is the incarnation of God the Father, Dialungana is that of the Son and the rest are that of the Spirit. Hence, to bring the debate with kimbanguists to its end, it would be very important to add some interpolated clauses in the body of this creed. If so, the creed for Africa could read as follows:

*I believe in God the Father almighty, **the non-incarnated one**, creator of heaven and earth.*

*And in Jesus Christ, **who once incarnated, will never re-incarnate again, who did not have any earthly father. He was not married and did not have any biological child. He is the only Son of God, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended to hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead;***

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, **one and not three, the non-incarnated one, who did not have any earthly father. He was not married and did not have any biological child.***

I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of the sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

In so changing the Apostles' Creed, Christians could generally agree with the inserted clauses which merely serve as examples and do not contradict biblical Christianity and the confessions. Kimbanguists, however, will not be comfortable with the content of these inclusions as it will contradict their cherished beliefs pertaining to their doctrine of the trinity.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter submitted the kimbanguist trinity to the test of classical Christian doctrinal beliefs about the Holy Trinity. To do so, some instruments were used: the Word of God, rational argument, systematic theology, and creeds. In conclusion it was concluded that the kimbanguist doctrine was totally different from the biblical trinity, therefore should not be considered as an orthodox one. Three main kimbanguist arguments were tested and each one of them did not satisfy the requirements of reliability. All in all, it seems that kimbanguists are more traditional Africans than Christians.

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. General Conclusion

This study sought to analyze the kimbanguist trinity in regard to modalism. These two doctrines deal with the spiritual nature of the godhead. This work suggested tackling four research questions, which are:

1. What are the sources of the kimbanguist trinity?
2. How can the African traditional religion (ATR), especially the Bakongo traditional religion (BTR), help to better understand the historical and cultural context of the kimbanguist trinity?
3. How can the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity be better understood in light of early church debates about theology, especially the ideas labeled as modalism in particular, Sabellianism?
4. How can systematic theology and the provided resources, namely creeds drawn from the debates about the early Christian modalism, be used to refute the kimbanguist doctrine of the trinity?

Each one of these questions has been answered. For the first question, Kimbangu, his sons and grandson, kimbanguist intellectuals were shown to have played an important role in the construction of the current configuration of the doctrine of the trinity within Kimbanguism. This study also established that the doctrine of the church was already syncretistic from its very beginning. Some reasons were evoked to support that opinion. To receive WCC membership the first doctrine had to go through a difficult process to be made almost an acceptable one. The nature of the prophet was already a big issue, as it is nowadays. Also, though Kimbangu taught people to forsake some traditional practices like polygamy, fetishes, and so on, he did not abandon the worship of ancestors, which is the purest of the BTR components.

Concerning the second question, Kimbanguism revealed itself as a BTR. Therein, the understanding of categories like God, ancestors and spirits, sacred family, prophet and priest, etc. is incidentally almost the same with that of the BTR. For kimbanguists, their prophet is an ancestor, god, priest, prophet, and his offspring very special, the only source whereby God can choose the next leader of the church. Therefore, this research qualified Kimbanguism as being simply a traditional religion traced on a biblical model.

To answer the third question, the researcher discovered six types of trinity in the sole kimbanguist church. All those types are welcomed and believed within the church. Kimbanguists have some very peculiar ways of supporting their beliefs. Given that they have five sources of inspiration, they will have contradictory messages, which they will always accept and believe without qualification. To qualify each one of those types of trinity, this research resorted to creating specific terms formulated to express the type of trinity or modalism represented.

The fourth question, in fact, constituted the last chapter of this research. So then, after using instruments—Word of God, logic, creeds, systematic theology—to test the kimbanguist arguments for their doctrine of trinity, this study came to show that the entire kimbanguist trinity is unbiblical in the light of the Apostles Creed and by implication the Christian confessions of the church.

Consequently, this study will serve as a warning and caution to both Christians and kimbanguists to conclude that Kimbanguism in its present form is not a Christian religion. For that reason its members cannot claim the grace of God which leads to the salvation of sinners in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. It also serves as a warning that using the Bible and claiming its truths is no guarantee that the Christian Church is not being misled in its assessments. From its inception, though the Bible featured in Kimbanguism, it was not the authoritative inspired Word of God adhered to. That Kimbangu himself was a Christian at one time is accepted. That he did not remain so is most likely a true account of his later life.

Again, many kimbanguists think they are Christians because they use the Bible uncritically or interpret it in the light of their teachers' insights and doctrines. For these reasons the Christian Church should not neglect to evangelize kimbanguist members and so teach them the true gospel of Jesus. They need another message, a biblical one. However, that message needs to be adapted to the context of their realities for they strongly believe that their doctrines are right. Not only must the content of that message be well thought out, but also the way to deliver that content. This is a pedagogical aspect that needs attention in another study. Students of pastoral theology have an important subject of research here. This study can therefore serve as the starting point for such research. The kimbanguist religion is still a mission field.

This research ends with some insights from Kato (1985: 26, 23, 25) who makes two remarks. First, he observes that “cultural revolution promotes a return to the traditional socio-religio-cultural way of life in Africa” and “since it is hard to separate culture from religion, the tendency is to make them identical and cling to idolatrous practices as being an authentic

way of life.” Secondly, says he, “Just as syncretism plagued the Church in the days of the apologists, so it challenges the historic faith in Africa today.” Therefore, “if there was a time in Africa when there was a need for a clear-cut Gospel, it is today. If there was a time when Christ’s sons and daughters in Africa must be prepared to lay down their lives for the undiluted Gospel, it is today.”

This is the reality today in the DRC among the kimbanguists. One can observe a tendency to return to traditional African values. The kimbanguist church serves as a good example. Syncretism is threatening the authentic Christian faith as in the days of the early church. So, today again, the African Church needs clear doctrinal statements and apologists to defend the faith.

6.2. Recommendations

As for recommendations, the present dissertation makes four of them. First, further research can be conducted in order to discover other deviant trinitarian claims among religious groups in Africa and to compare these teachings for commonalities when compared to the kimbanguist trinity. A useful study could be a comparison with Isaiah Shembe, the South African messiah.

The second recommendation is all about terminology. An interesting study would be to research the attraction that modalism has for Africa religions but also to determine if there are modalistic tendencies in Christian churches and organizations. The current research may serve as an example of how this might be done.

The third recommendation is probably the most urgent. The kimbanguist churches and followers should be regarded as a true mission field. The current work makes an exhortation to the kimbanguist believers to come back to the true trinity, wherein is found the only source of salvation. Belief in a spurious trinity coupled to standards of morality is incapable to provide genuine salvation. Christianity does teach that man is not saved by observing the law but by faith in the true biblical Jesus.

A final recommendation might well be a consideration of how to redefine kimbanguist doctrine. A biblical approach to Christian morality, biblical leadership models and more could be considered. This would prepare the church’s followers to meet with biblical truths before an assault is made on the cardinal trinitarian doctrine. Students in systematic and pastoral theology can use the findings in this study to reflect more clearly on the syncretistic doctrines of the kimbanguist church.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview

My name is Jean-Jacques Makonda Diyabanza. I am a Masters student at North West University in South Africa. The study I am undertaking seeks to know and evaluate religions in Africa. Many non-Africans have written a number of books on African religions and prophets. Yet, Africans are not writing although they are learned. In order to respond to that challenge, I have decided to write in that domain. I have first chosen to work on Kimbanguism because I am from the same district as the prophet, thus I have much interest in him.

I kindly request you to participate by responding to the following questions as truthfully as possible in order to allow me achieve the goal of the present study. Information provided will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality. Also, note that your name will not appear in my report, unless you desire it.

1. At one moment of his life, Kimbangu was a Baptist catechist. But because of the fact that he started a revival movement, he was finally excommunicated. Did he, in his preaching, keep what he was taught by Baptist missionaries about God or not? What was then his main teaching about God? In other words, which were the attributes of God for him? Did he teach the Trinity? If yes, what did he say concerning the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit? Which were their particular attributes?
2. Would you like to please describe your current teaching (in your seminary) on Trinity? What is the difference between what Kimbangu taught his first followers and what is taught today in seminary? Did Kimbangu say that his first-born is God the Father, the second the Son and the last the Holy Spirit? If not, where this teaching came from?
3. It is clearly known that Kimbanguism has a problem with W.C.C. mainly because of its current doctrine on the Trinity. What is the solution to that problem?
4. It is obvious that once the current head of the church, who is the Holy Spirit, goes, another member of Kimbangu's lineage will take over the power. Who will he/she be: God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit? To say it otherwise, will he/she still be a member of the trinity.

Questionnaire

My name is Jean-Jacques Makonda Diyabanza. I am a Masters student at North West University in South Africa. The study I am undertaking seeks to know and evaluate religions in Africa. Many non- Africans have written a number of books on African religions and prophets. Yet, Africans are not writing although we are learned. In order to respond to that challenge, I have decided to write in that domain. I have first chosen to work on Kimbanguism because I am from the same district with the prophet, thus I have a lot of interest in him.

I kindly request you to participate by responding to the following questions as truthfully as possible in order to allow me achieve the goal of the present study. Information provided will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality. Also, note that your name is not needed.

1. Provide the right interpretation: The kimbanguist Trinitarian conception called 3=1 means
 - a) The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are **EXACTELY** the same person and that person is God. Each of those three sons is just a “**mask**” or “**face**” of the same God.
 - b) The three sons of Simon Kimbangu are three different persons but making one God.
2. Who is the God they make? Simon Kimbangu or another one? Explain.
3. a) Did Simon Kimbangu preach on Trinity? YES NO OTHER (explain)
b) If YES, describe briefly what he preached. What did he say?
4. Did Simon Kimbangu say that his three sons and his grandson, the current spiritual chief of the church, were trinitarian members? YES NO OTHER (explain)
5. If NO, where the current trinity according to which Kisolokele is God the Father, Dialungana is Jesus Christ, Diangienda is the Holy Spirit and SK Kiangani is also the Holy Spirit is from?
6. Which are the biblical texts you rely on to support that trinity? How do you interpret them?
7. When Simon Kimbangu said that he was a “*Ntumua*” (an envoy), what did he mean by that? Was he saying that he was the Holy Spirit, a Prophet, an Apostle, or what? Explain.

ANNEXURE B: VARIOUS KIMBANGUIST CATECHISMS
THE CATECHISM OF KIMBANGU (1921) BY JANZEN AND MACGAFFEY (1974:
125–127)

In 1957 the church published a booklet containing three versions of the latter, in Kikongo, Lingala, and French. The first is composed of 52 questions; the second, of 18; the third, of 24. Eight of the questions in the French version are also found in the Lingala but not in the Kikongo, and four others are found only in the French. The Kikongo text, by itself, was still being distributed and used in 1996. A comparison between it and the other two suggests that the later are primarily intended to answer the questions not of catechumens but of inquiring foreigners. The letters K, F after the number of the question indicate that it occurs only in the Kikongo or the French, respectively. If there is no letter the question occurs in both.

1. Who is Tata Simon Kimbangu?

Tata Simon Kimbangu is the envoy of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. How do know that Tata Simon Kimbangu is the envoy of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ himself promised us to ask his Father to send us another comforter who should do still greater things than he (John 14:12-18).

3. What did Tata Simon Kimbangu do?

He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, caused the dumb to speak and the lame to walk and fulfilled all the Lord's promises (Matthewn8:1-10)

4. When did Tata Simon Kimbangu begin?

He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2)

5. Who was the mother of Tata Simon Kimbangu?

His mother was Maman Lwezi , who was married to Tata Kuyela.

6. In what village was Tata Simon Kimbangu born?

In Nkamba, now the New Jerusalem, in the Lower Congo.

7. K. What does Kimbangu mean?

It means the sure Witness (*mbangi*) of the gospel of the Lord God, the true interpreter (*mbangudi*) of the hidden and obscure.

8. K. But were Tata Kuyela and Mama Lwezi believers?

No, they did not believe; but there was love in their house. Therefore the pathfinder (*muntu a nsongi*) came thence (1 corinthians 13:1-15).

9. When Kimbangu's mother and father died, who brought him up?

He was brought up by Mama Kinzembo (K:), the same who was blessed by the missionary [*mundele a Nzambi*, lit.: “white man of God”].

10. K. Where did the “white man come from the mission station and was chased out by the chief of Mbanza Lemba.

11. K. What was the white man’s name?

His name was Nzangamani, or Cameron.

12. K. Did the white man know that there was a blessing (*lusambulu*) there?

No, but filled with the Holy Spirit to bless Mama Kinzembo.

13. K. Did the blessing come from the white man?

No, it did not. Tata Simon Kimbangu was blessed from his beginning (John 1:1-5).

14. K. Was this the first blessing?

No, blessing existed from the beginning (Genesis 1:1-5).

15. K. Why did God send the white man?

Because a blessing precedes the Word of God wherever it appears. (Matthew 28:10-11 [2:8,10-11]; Acts 3:22-25).

16. K. What do we read of the childhood of Tata Kimbangu Simon?

As the child grew up he showed the spirit in him.

17. K. From whom did he receive his work as prophet?

From Our Lord Jesus Christ.

18. Did he marry?

Yes, he married. His wife’s name was Mwilu Marie. (F:) They were married under customary law and religious law.

18a. Did he have children?

Yes, he had three: Tata Kisolokele Daniel Charles; Tata Dialungani Kiangani Salomon; Tata Diangenda Joseph.

19. Was Tata Simon Kimbangu a believer?

Yes, he was a believer, baptised at the BMS mission of Ngombe Lutete, as everybody is (Matthew 3:15).

20. K. What did he say when he was given his work as prophet by Our Lord Jesus?

He said, Lord I am not worthy; choose one who desires this gift [*ndwenga*, “intelligence, capacity”].

21. K. What Jesus says?

Do not be afraid, I shall be with you.

22. K. In what year was this?

In 1918.

23. K. What do we know happened in that year?

Large numbers of people died, and not by the will of God.

24. K. When Tata Simon Kimbangu was afraid of the work he had been given, where did he go?

He went to Kinshasa to look for other work.

25. K. What work did he do

He marked off oil drums for huileries du Congo Belge.

26. K. Why did he leave Kinshasa and where did he go?

He left because he got word that his foster-mother Mama Kinzembo had fallen ill in the village.

27. K. What was the first wonder that occurred when he was in the village?

He was told by Lord Jesus to go to Ngombe Kinsuka to heal someone seriously ill there.

28. K. What incident occurred on his way?

He bought fish [to take home] which were stolen from him by Mfumu, a policeman.

29. K. What was the name of that sick person?

Nkiantondo.

30. K. How did he heal (*saasukila*) her?

He laid his hands on her and healed her in the same of Jesus the Savior.

31. K. When the news spread ,whom did he meet on the road?

He met the teacher Samuel, who said to him, greetings, healer of men.

32. K. Why was he involved in this story?

Because he was the catechist who had baptized [Kimbangu].

33. K. What reply did Tata Simon Kimbangu make?

He said, do you not want people to be healed in the name of Jesus Christ?

34. K. What was the second wonder (*sivi*) he performed, and where did he do it

In Lukengo he raised a dead child whose name was Nzuzi.

35. K. Before raising this child where did he spend the day?

He stayed at the place of Nsumbu Simon in Lukengo. They discussed the Bible, beginning at Genesis 37, from the story of Joseph to the escape of the children of Israel

36. K. Was the child completely raised (*wafuluka mvimb'e*)?

No,

37. K. Who was the second person Tata Kimbangu raised from the dead?

The second was in Kimbanza, the child of Nsoki and Nkongo; but they too doubted

38. K. Where did he raise the third person?

In Lukengo, in the section called Kintumba; a child of Nsiona and Nsangu.

39. K. Did he live?

No, because the head of the clan did not believe.

40. K. If people continued skeptical, did Tata Simon Kimbangu give up his work?

No, he did not abandon it but persisted, because his was a mission to the whole earth (Acts 5: 38–39).

41. When did Tata Simon Kimbangu begin his mission?

He began it in a public manner on 6 April 1921

42. K. But if the people were skeptical [text error: *basimbinina lukatukulu*] what happened in that area?

The chief was angry and told his people that no more dead person would be raised to life among them but only in other areas

43. K. Of the wonders performed by Tata Simon Kimbangu, which one do we know to have been greater than others?

He raised someone who had been dead three days, who came from Ntumba

44. K. When the work throughout the country became excessive, what did Tata Simon Kimbangu do?

When he saw that the work was too much, he asked the Lord for helpers

45. K. Who was the first helper given him?

The first helper given to him was Ntwalani Thomas from Mbanza Ngoyo

46. K. Who else were with him as helpers or apostles (*Ntumwa*)?

1) Ndangi Pierre 2) Manika Paul 3) Mikala Mandombe 4) Mukoko Jean 5) Mbonga Thérèse 6) Mbaki André.

47. K. What help did these apostles give him?

They healed the sick in the name of the Lord Jesus and at the command (*lutumu*) of Tata Kimbangu Simon

48. K. What happened among them?

There was one among them who let it be known that he was the true vine, and his father the husbandman

49. K. What was the apostle's name?

His name was Manika Paul

50. K. When he so announced, was he forgiven by the Lord?

No, he was removed from his position and expelled

51. K. Did the other five [sic] remain constant?

No, there was also Mbaki André who saw himself to be a sinner, asked forgiveness, and was removed.

52. F. Where did Tata Simon Kimbangu go?

He was arrested by the government and sent to Upper Congo.

53. F. Why was he arrested?

To fulfill the testimony of Our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17: 14).

54. F. Will he come again? What will be the end of all this?

Surely he will come again, for all that he began must be accomplished (John 16: 19–33).

55. F. Where is Tata Simon Kimbangu now, who was sent to Upper Congo by the government?

After being sent to Upper Congo by the government, Tata Simon Kimbangu died and rose again and is with us in the spirit.

56. F. As for Mama Mwilu, where is she, now we know that Tata Simon Kimbangu died and rose again?

She lives still at Nkamba, the New Jerusalem [Mama Marie Mwilu died on 27 April 1958]

57. F. When did Tata Simon Kimbangu die?

He died in Elisabethville on 12 October 1951.

58. F. Why are the people surprised that the followers of the prophet are persecuted [exiled]?

It was God's plan, manifested through the government; for God's people did not have money to send catechists into every region (Acts 5[?3]: 4–7).

59. F. Why the name of Tata Simon Kimbangu is put foremost? Is it because he is God?

No, Tata Simon Kimbangu is not God, but in every age God chooses one man from each race to enlighten his people (Exodus 3: 7–17).

60. F. Why were the followers of Tata Simon Kimbangu persecuted?

Because they received the light, and that is why they became catechists to teach in all lands in the church of Tata Simon Kimbangu, the envoy of the Savior (Acts 4 [?3]: 19–23).

61. F. Do you know that Tata Simon Kimbangu is dead?

Yes, we know it well; but when Our Lord Jesus Christ died, in whom we put hope, did his work die?

62. F. What does Kintwadi mean?

Kintwadi is the community of like-minded people who love one another because God said they should (John 15: 13). [*Kintwadi*, “fellowship, association, club” was a name used by kimbanguists during the colonial period to distinguish their meetings, proscribed by the government]

63. F. What name is given to the church of Tata Simon Kimbangu”

We call the church “Kimbanguism” or “The Church of Jesus Christ on earth by His Prophet Kimbangu Simon.”

**THE BIUVU YE MVUTU CATECHISM (1966) BY MUHIZI (1989: 54–60,
APPENDICES) [Author’s translation]**

CHAP. I

1. Who is Papa Simon Kimbangu?

Papa Simon Kimbangu is the envoy of Our Lord Jesus Christ

2. How do we know that Papa Simon Kimbangu is the envoy of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ himself promised to ask his Father to send us a comforter to do more that he did (John 14: 12–18).

3. What are the miracles Papa Simon Kimbangu performed?

Papa Simon Kimbangu raised the dead, he opened the eyes of the blinds, he made the lames walk, he made dumbs talk, he performed all the promises of the Lord (Matthew 8: 1–10).

4. When did Papa Simon Kimbangu exist?

Papa Simon Kimbangu did exist from the beginning with God (John 1: 1–2).

5. Who is the mother of Papa Simon Kimbangu?

LUEZI is his mother, she was married to Tata KUYELA

6. What is the native village of Papa Simon Kimbangu?

It is Nkamba, also called New Jerusalem, situated in Bas Congo, in the area of Bangu, district of Thysville (Ngungu).

7. What is the meaning of “Kimbangu”?

Kimbangu means: witness of the truth and the reveler

8. Were the parents of Kimbangu Christians?

No, but a remarkable love reigned in their house. Then he was born in that house the one called a pious man.

9. When Papa Kuyela and Mama Lwezi died, who cared for Papa Simon Kimbangu?

He grew up under Mama Kinzembo, who was blessed by the missionary.

10. Where that missionary came from?

He came from Vula and he was chased away by the chief of the village of Mbanza Lemba

11. How was that missionary called?

He was called CAMERON or Nzangamani

12. Was he foretold about that blessing?

No, but he was filled with the Spirit to bless Mama Kinzembo

13. Was that missionary the origin of the blessing?

No, Papa Simon Kimbangu was blessed even before he was born (John 1: 1–5)

14. Was that blessing the first?

No, the blessing did exist from the beginning (Genesis 1: 1–5)

15. Why did God send that missionary to realize the blessing?

God did it because he always foretells what he has to realize (Acts 3: 22–26).

CHAP. II

1. What do we know about the youth of Kimbangu?

The child grew and was very wise, pious and the grace of God was upon him (Luc 2: 40).

2. How do we know the grace of God was upon him?

When he was young, he performed miracles. 1. He purified a rotten palm fruit; 2. He transformed a bird plume into a bird.

3. Who called him into the mission?

He got the mission from Our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

4. Was he married?

Yes, he was married to Mwilu Marie

5. Did he have children?

Yes, he had three children: Papa Kisolokele Charles Daniel, Papa Dialungana Kiangani Salomon, papa Diangienda Joseph

6. Was Simon Kimbangu a Christian?

Of course, he was Christian; first a catechist at Lukengo and baptized as all at Vula (Ngombe Lutete), a Baptist mission (Matthew 3: 15)

7. What do we learn from Simon Kimbangu when the Lord called him?

He felt himself unworthy and said: “Lord, may you choose another one who is intelligent”

8. What did the Lord reciprocate to that?

Do not be afraid, I am and I will be with you.

9. In which year all this happened?

In the year 1918

10. What was painful in that year?

During that period, a huge number of people died of flu, and this was not the will of God.

11. Since papa Simon Kimbangu felt himself unworthy to do the work, where did he go?

He fled away to Kinshasa to look for a job, thinking to escape the work of God.

12. What did he really do in Kinshasa?

He was employee at “Huileries”

13. What do we learn while he was serving at Huileries?

He worked there for many months without being paid. He then started buying cassava bread in Kasa Ngulu so that he may sell them in Kinshasa but he did not get benefit out of that work. The Lord never ceased appearing to him and telling him to go back in his village to start the work.

14. Where did he go when he went away from Kinshasa?

Having heard that Mama Kinzembo was very sick, he came back to Nkamba

15. What did happen to him on his way coming back?

While coming back, a policeman called Mfumu took by force the fish he has prepared for his family.

16. What was the first miracle performed by Simon Kimbangu when he was in the village?

He healed a sick lady who was almost dying at Ngombe Kinsuka, according to the instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

17. What is the name of the sick person?

She was called Nkiantondo

18. How was she healed?

Papa Simon Kimbangu laid hands on her and healed her in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the news spread everywhere.

19. What did happen after the healing?

He met a catechist Mvuala Samuel who greeted him saying: "Hello the healer"

20. Why does he call him healer?

He called him healer because he heard that he healed someone. Since he was the guide of Kimbangu concerning the catechism, and because he was not able to do the same thing, then he got angry and jealous.

21. What did Papa Simon Kimbangu reply?

He told him: "do you not want people to be healed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

22. What is the second miracle Papa Simon Kimbangu performed and where did he do that?

His second miracle was the resurrection of Nzuzi at Lukengo, the child of Vindu and mama Mafuta

23. Was the child resurrected?

No, the child resurrected by was immediately dead because his mother did not believe.

24. Where is situated the village Lukengo?

Lukengo is closer to Nkamba, the prophet used to go there many times to visit his people or to evangelize. For instance, Papa Simon Kimbangu and his friends in the house of Nsumbu Simon discussed the good news concerning the freeing of the Israelites from Egypt in Genesis 37.

25. What do we know about Kimbonza?

At Kimbonza, a child called Bumputu whose parents were Dimeni and Wumba was dead. The uncle of this child, Nsoki, though he did not believe came to take Simon Kimbangu to raise his nephew because of what he heard. Papa Simon Kimbangu, having known his unbelief, refused to go with him.

26. What do we know about Kintumba?

Kintumba also is a small village, closer to Lukengo. There was the death of Nkunga, the son of Nsangu and Nsiona who solicited Simon Kimbangu to raise him from the dead.

27. Was he raised up from the dead?

No, as usual, Mbemba, the uncle of the dead, did not believe.

CHAP. III

1. Since the unbelief was the answer he got at each of his miracle, what did Papa Simon Kimbangu?

Despite all this, he continued the work according to the instructions of his Master.

2. When did Papa Simon Kimbangu start his mission?

He started his mission publicly on 6 April 1921.

3. What was the consequence of the unbelief of the people of that area?

The Lord Jesus Christ wanted to turn his face against that people by taking away the prophet and sending him in other areas.

4. Was it done?

No, when respected people noticed that unbelief, they came together and immediately asked forgiveness by bowing down before the envoy of the Lord.

5. Was the forgiveness granted to them?

Somehow, but the Lord said: "because of the unbelief manifested at the beginning, only sick people will be healed but no resurrection will happen to the people of this area. However, the dead from outside of this area will be raised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

6. What happened?

There was a dead child in Lukengo, son of Nzonza and Dimbu, though they asked his resurrection, the son did not resurrect. Then, people believed in the promise of the Lord.

7. What is then the most memorable miracle of Papa Simon Kimbangu do we know?

He raised a daughter coming from Ntumba, she was dead three days ago. Her name was Dina.

8. What do we learn from the renown of Papa Simon Kimbangu?

The renown of Papa Simon Kimbangu made missionaries anxious in Vula (Gombe Lutete), and then they called him to confirm if what they heard was the truth.

9. What did happen when he was going to Vula?

He met a parent whose child was dead. He raised him up in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and this latter went with him to Vula.

10. In Vula, what did the missionaries said?

The missionaries asked him to show the fruit of his work as an envoy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. What was the answer of Papa Simon Kimbangu?

He said to the parent of the risen child to lift him up. That was his fruit for the work of the Lord he was doing, but the missionaries could not look at the child. Then papa Simon Kimbangu went back to Nkamba.

12. What was the name of the chief of that area and what was his viewpoint about the work of the Lord through Simon Kimbangu?

When the news of the work of the Lord spread, the chief called Mvuti Ndompetelo came to Nkamba to support him and said the truth concerning him.

13. What did papa Simon Kimbangu when he saw that was immense?

He asked the Lord to give him disciples to help him.

14. Who was the first disciple?

It was Ntualani Thomas, from Mbanza Ngoyo

15. Who also were his disciples?

1) Ndangi Pierre 2) Manika Paul 3) Mandombe Mich. 4) Mukoko Jean 5) Mbonga Therese 6) Mbaki André

16. What did those disciples do?

They healed the sick people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and they did it according to the instructions of Papa Simon Kimbangu.

17. What happened among the disciples?

One of them said he was the vine and his father was the vine-grower.

18. Who was that disciple?

It was Manika Paul

19. What happened to him?

He was excommunicated from the work of the Lord.

20. Did the five others keep doing the work of the Lord?

Yes, except Mbaki Andre who felt “watering in to sin” and asked to be removed from the work.

21. Where the remaining disciples were from?

1) Ndangi Pierre was from Mbanza Nsanda

2) Mukoko Jean was from Kilemba

3) Mandombe Mihaelle was from Nsenga

4) Mbonga Therese was from Kinkewa

22. Who was the secretary of Papa Simon Kimbangu?

It was Papa Mfinangani Daniel

23. Where was he from?

He was from Nkamba village

THE KIMBANGUIST CATECHISM (1963) BY KUNTIMA (1984: 303—307)

[Author's translation]

(Note that this is the official catechism kimbanguists used to get the WCC membership. But it is also significant to say that today they are using another one, the Biuvu Ye Mvutu one, which is very different from this one.)

1. Who created the world and all it contains?

God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

2. Since when do God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit exist?

They exist since the eternity, making one being

3. How was the world created?

God created everything the earth, the sea, the heavens and all they contain, day and night, in five days through the world. As for man, he was created on the sixth day by God's own hands in his image and likeness.

4. Who were the first humans created by God?

God created Adam first, then after Eve.

5. What happened after Adam and Eve's creation?

Adam and Eve sinned; and, because of that, suffering and death entered the earth. God swore no human creature would enter heaven.

6. After Adam and Eve's punishment, what did God do?

Adam and Eve's descendants committed more sins, and after many warnings, God then destroyed the world by water. Only Noah, his wife, their children: Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives survived.

7. What did God do to save humanity

God sent prophets to show humanity the way to serve him rightly.

8. Name some men who served the Lord rightly

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses who delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, Elijah, Daniel and many others.

9. Does God still keep his anger on humanity?

No, for he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ in the world, in what he accepted death for humanity's salvation

10. Are Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Daniel and other servants of God now in heaven?

Yes, for since Jesus' resurrection, all the saints before God enter in heaven.

11. How did Jesus come on earth?

By God's power, Jesus was conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit. He grew up under Joseph, Mary's husband.

12. Where was Jesus born?

He was born in Bethlehem, in Palestine, but he lived in Nazareth until the beginning of his ministry

13. When did Jesus start his ministry?

At the age of thirty. After his baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus started his ministry. His first miracle was transforming water into wine in the wedding ceremony in Cana.

14. What are the other miracles Jesus accomplished?

He raised the dead, healed the blind, made the paralyzed walk, casted out demons, etc.

15. Was Jesus working alone?

No, he chose 12 disciples, among them Judas Iscariot had to betray him.

16. What was Jesus' teaching?

He taught belief in the Father and himself, to not commit sin, to love one another in order to have eternal life.

17. How did he go back to heaven?

After Judas Iscariot's betrayal, he was arrested, crucified, killed, and on the third day he resurrected. He appeared to many persons, then for forty days after his resurrection, he ascended to heaven in front of his disciples.

18. What promises did Jesus do?

He promised to come back at the end of the world to judge the humanity. But before that, he would send his Holy Spirit to dwell with us forever and teach us God's ways. However, many did not recognize him.

19. Did the holy Spirit come as Jesus promised?

Yes, the Holy Spirit lives with us.

20. What example shows the Holy Spirit lives with us?

Jesus Christ's disciples, by the Holy Spirit's power accomplished the same miracles as him. Through Simon Kimbangu, the Holy Spirit showed himself; he raised the dead, healed the blind, made paralyzed walk and healed all kinds of sicknesses.

21. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person in God.

22. From whom is the prophet Simon Kimbangu born, when and where?

Simon Kimbangu was born in 1889 at Nkamba. His father was named Kuyela and his mother Luezi.

23. By whom was Simon Kimbangu brought up?

After his birth, his parents died and he was brought up by his aunt Kinzembo

24. What did Kinzembo do before Kimbangu ministry?

She protected the reverend Cameron who was chased by Kimbonza villagers. Before he left, the reverend Cameron blessed her.

25. What do we know of Kimbangu's childhood?

He was very pious; he prayed constantly and accomplished many miracles that he wanted to be kept secret.

26. Was Simon Kimbangu baptized?

Yes, he received his baptism in Gombe Lutete where he schooled. He then became catechist at Nkamba.

27. Was Simon Kimbangu married?

He married Muilu Marie. In their marriage, three children were born: Kisolokele Charles Daniel (12th Feb., 1914), Dialungana Kiangani Paul Salomon (25th May, 1916), and Diangienda Joseph (22nd March, 1918).

28. How did Simon Kimbangu start his ministry?

First, he heard Christ's calling to start his ministry since 1918. But he delayed to answer. On the sixth April 1921, his ministry started by the healing of a sick woman called Nkiantondo.

29. What does Simon Kimbangu teach?

He taught belief in Jesus, to avoid adultery, polygamy, witch-craft, etc. and to love one another as Christ wanted.

30. What happened after Nkiantondo's healing?

Simon Kimbangu accomplished many kinds of miracles of which the resurrection of many dead people. He preached Christ through all his teaching.

31. What happened later?

Wrong accusations about him were told and on twelfth September 1921, he was arrested at Nkamba to be judged at Thysville by a military tribunal which condemned him to death on the third October 1921.

32. Was the pain executed?

The execution of the pain of death planned for the fourth October 1921 was not executed. Later, it was changed into lifespan imprisonment. He was then transferred to the jail of Elizabethville whereby he died after thirty years, on twelfth October 1951.

33. How and when was the kimbanguist church created?

Deported companions of Simon Kimbangu and the relegated kimbanguists spread the teaching of Kimbangu in their places of captivity such that the whole Congo knew about it.

34. How and when was the kimbanguist church created?

From 1957, kimbanguists accused of being heretic were excommunicated from the Catholic and Protestant churches. Those excommunicated people see themselves obliged to create the Church of Jesus Christ on earth by his prophet Simon Kimbangu, which got its religious liberty on 24th Dec., 1959.

35. What does Simon Kimbangu mean to us kimbanguists?

Simon Kimbangu is the witness of Jesus Christ next to whom he is our support. It is because of him that we know Jesus, by his death and resurrection, he saved the whole humanity without distinction of races.