

**THE SCRIPTURAL CHALLENGE TO AFRICAN VIEWS ON THE CONCEPT
OF RESURRECTION**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the African Christian's views with regard to the resurrection of the body. An attempt is done to do an intensive research regarding the aspects such as the origin of man, the soul/spirit, body, death, burial, ancestral spirits, and the resurrection of the body. The Bible is taken as the point of departure; hence, each of these aspects is then biblically evaluated to derive to a clear conclusion.

In Chapter 2 the African views have been outlined, and at the same time a scientific questionnaire was developed in order to gather more information about those views. Scripture was utilised even in this regard to give clear doctrinal interpretations and clear-cut conclusions.

In Chapter 3 all the portions that define the aspect of the resurrection both in the OT and the NT were investigated, interpreted, summarised, and then conclusions were given. In this regard the Reformed Confessions (which are based on the Bible) are utilised to defend the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Therefore in Chapter 4 an integration of information gathered from chapter 2 and 3 is done. A critical evaluation takes place in order to come to a contextual conclusion.

Chapter 5 gives some conclusive remarks. It also looks into the implications, consequences, and recommendations with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie studie word die seining van die Afrika Christene ondersoek inverband met die opstanding van die liggaam. 'n Intensief ondersoek word gedoen na aspekte soos die oorsprong van die mens, die siel/gees, liggaam, dood, begrafnis, voorvadergeestes, en die wederopstanding van die liggaam. Die Bybel is as vertrekpunt gebruik en elke aspek word Bybels geëvalueer om sondoende tot 'n duidelike gevolgtrekking te kom.

In Hoofstuk 2 word die senning van die Afrikaan Christene uiteengesit en 'n wetenskaplike vraelys is ook opgestel om dus meer inligting in te win oor hulle onderskeie senning. Die Bybel is gebruik om duidelike doktrinale interpretasies te gee en duidelike gevolgtrekkings te maak.

In Hoofstuk 3 word al die dele wat handel oor die opstanding definieer van die liggaam in beide die Ou en Nuwe Testament ondersoek, geïnterpreteer en opgesom om tot 'n slotsom te kom. Die Reformasie belydenisse (wat gebaseer is op die Bybel) word gebruik om die leerstelling van die opstanding van die liggaam te verdedig.

In hoofstuk 4 word die inligting beide hoofstuk 2 en hoofstuk 3 geïntegreer. 'n Kritiese evaluering word gedoen om tot 'n kontekstuele gevolgtrekking te kom.

Hoofstuk 5 gee 'n paar beslissende opmerkings en kyk ook na die implikasies, gevolge en aanbevelings wat gedoen word op grond van die leerstelling van die opstanding van die liggaam

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CHAPTER 1 ACCOUNT OF STUDY

Keywords: resurrection, ancestral spirits, body and soul.

Sleutelwoorde: Opstanding, voorvadergeeste, liggaam en siel.

1. Introduction

Some Reformed African Christians do not have sufficient knowledge with regard to the concept of the resurrection of the body. Some of them have been taught superficially during the catechism classes, others have heard about this concept during funeral services, and others recite the apostles' Creed every Sunday at their various churches.

The main reason why many African Christians lack adequate knowledge about the resurrection of the body is because they worship God and their ancestors. For them when a person dies, he becomes part of the ancestors. God is not regarded as the true and reliable author of the resurrection of the body.

This study is designed to help the Reformed African Christians to know and understand better the concept of the resurrection of the body, and what it entails. The most important thing is to teach them to understand that after the resurrection there is eternal life promised for all believers after this temporary life.

1.1 Background and statement of problem

1.1.1 The definition of the resurrection

According to Hodge (1988:515) the word resurrection signifies a rising again, a rising of that which was buried, or a restoration of life to that which was dead.

Tillich (1963:412) adds that man's participation in eternal life beyond death is more adequately expressed by the highly symbolic phrase "resurrection of the body". The Churches recognised it as a Christian expression.

The phrase in the Apostle Creed is "resurrection of the flesh", that is, of that which characterises the body in contrast to the spirit, the body in its perishable character. Erickson (1985:1194) argues that the major result of Christ's second coming, from the standpoint of individual eschatology, is the resurrection. This is the basis for the believer's hope in the face of death. Although death is inevitable, the believer anticipates being delivered from its power.

The word resurrection comes from the Greek word called —ἀναστασις¹ - to come back to life after having once died (Louw and Nida, 1988: 262).

Deist (1984: 145) defines the resurrection body as a form of a person after the resurrection. Grudem (1994: 1253) explains the resurrection as a rising from the dead into a new kind of life not subject to sickness, ageing, deterioration, or death.

According to Tenney (1987:714) the word *anastasis* signifies the arising to life of dead bodies, or a dead body, while O' Collins and Farrugia (2000:227) signify it as the final life after death affected by the divine power for the whole human being in "body and soul".

The doctrine of resurrection is stated clearly in its simplest form in Paul's words before the Roman law court presided over by Felix: "there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust" (Acts 24:15). This is explicitly seen in John's gospel – John 5:28, 29. We also find the concept of resurrection in the book of Daniel 12:2. Daniel 12: 2 teaches resurrection of the wicked as well: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting contempt". The idea of resurrection is also asserted in Ezekiel 37: 12-14.

¹ According to Vine (1985: 531) the word ἀναστασις denotes a rising up, or rising.

The most important verse about the resurrection is in John 11:25 because here we get a true promise of a blessed resurrection.

There are many other Scriptural verses that deal with the resurrection such as Luke 20:35, 36; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16. According to Grudem (1994:836) the emphasis of Scripture is on the fact that believers will experience a bodily resurrection, there are some passages that state that unbelievers will also be raised from the dead, but that they will face the final judgment at the time they are raised.

De Bruyn (1998:103) points out that the resurrection of the body comforts the believers with the knowledge that not only their souls, after this life, will immediately be taken up to Christ, its Head; but also their bodies, will be raised by the power of Christ.

1.1.2 Background

Some of the African people do not believe in the concept “resurrection” of the body like in the Christianity but they adhere to the traditional believes in the after life. According to Parrinder (1954:136) the spirit of the dead person may still hang around the grave for a time, or will be available to receive gifts and consultations.

This statement is contrary to Christianity because according to De Bruyn (1998: 104) in the Catechism we confess that the soul of the believer is taken up to Christ its Head immediately after the person breathes his last breath. Mönning (1967: 53) mentions that at the death of a person, his *moya* (soul) and *seriti* (shadow) depart and leave the body a lifeless thing to decompose.

Binns (1974:96) states that the ceremony of *ukubuyisa* “bringing back” among the Zulu people was conducted in order to entice the spirit of the dead person to come back to his kraal, so that he can join his predecessors, and to be one of the guardians to protect his people.

Krige (1993:170) states that *ukubuyisa idlozi*, “the bringing home of the spirit of the deceased” which takes place a year or two after a person’s death is a very important ceremony, because it is said that it secures the blessings for the whole lineage. The Xhosa people have the ceremony called “*ukubuyisa u Tata*” which means to bring back the father.

However, Broster (1981:20) says that this ceremony is an obligatory ritual to release the spirit and place it in its rightful position. Such a spirit is regarded as watching over the family and is also present in every aspect of life. That spirit loves and protects them, but if they break or neglect the moral codes and traditions of the tribe, he sends adversity.

Nyirongo (1997:81) declares that when a person dies, his soul first roams around his homestead or neighbourhood. Then after the funeral rites, the soul is believed to join other ancestral spirits in the spirit land. With regard to all these ideas it is clear that the resurrection of the body is not fully understood and confessed.

1.1.3 Problem Statement

The African people believe in the ancestral spirits. However, Gehman (1989: 154) alludes that the various Akamba people speak of the ancestors being nearer to God and, therefore, possessing better knowledge of God and has access to Him.

They go so far as to say that no one can approach God directly but must pass through the ancestors, reciting the names of all those forefathers who have passed on before. Even some of the people who have embraced the Christian faith still cling to the ancestral beliefs. They do not have a true knowledge about the resurrection of the body.

Gehman (1989:273) argues that such Christians may seek prayers and spiritual help from the church and pastor for a sick family member. If that request fails, they seek traditional help from the traditionalists.

He adds that Christians may bury their dead loved ones through the church and the pastor, but then at night they will seek out the counsel and help from the traditionalists. For them there is a mutual intimate relationship between the living and the dead.

According to Muthwadini (1990:20) there is still the knowledge that there is life after death. The main reason is that the African people and also Christians amongst them do not easily accept the death of a person as the end of everything.

Especially the Shona people regard death as a frightening entry into the unknown, a complete break from the community of the living (Bourdillon: 1976:259). Soga (1931:319) argues that the fear of death is very real, not on the part of the dying person, but, because of its great mystery, on those watching beside the death-bed.

Amanze (1998:24) declares that death amongst the Batswana people is considered as unnatural not in the same way as Christians regard it as a result from sin, and such it is always believed that it is caused by evil powers such as evil spirits, disgruntled ancestral spirits, witches and sorcerers.

In addition to that Nida (1954:166) also says that the Semang of Malaya attribute death to both magic and the anger of evil spirits.

Since death is unnatural, Gehman (1989:54) maintains that it does not terminate the existence of a human being. He continues to live on as an ancestral spirit. This means that a person who dies, by no means will be resurrected.

1.2 The actuality of this study

This study would like to attempt to show the main beliefs of the African people who have been converted to Christianity but still holds on to the ancestral believes and show that in the teaching of Scripture such a situation is intolerable.

Some of the Reformed church members amongst the African people also belief in the ancestral spirits. African Traditional Religions offers no hope of resurrection.

1.3 The main research question

How can African Christians with unbiblical beliefs about the resurrection of the body and the ancestral spirits be helped to keep and defend the Biblical teaching about the resurrection and ancestral spirits?

1.3.1 Different research questions

1.3.1.1 What are the views of the African people with regard to the resurrection of the body and ancestral spirits?

1.3.1.2 What is the Biblical message and the Reformed confession with regard to the resurrection of the body?

1.3.1.3 How can the Biblical standpoint in this regard be kept and be defended?

1.3.1.4 What recommendations regarding this issue can be made?

1.4 Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to help African Christians to keep and defend the Biblical teaching about the resurrection and ancestral spirits. In order for this to be achieved, the following objectives will be focused on:

To give relevant answers to the following questions:

- 1.4.1 To try and determine the views of the African people on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and ancestral spirits.
- 1.4.2 To determine the Scriptural perspectives and the Reformed standpoint with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.
- 1.4.3 To determine ways in which the Biblical standpoint regarding the resurrection of the body can be kept and defended as answer to the traditional African views.
- 1.4.4 Recommendations are going to be developed to serve as guidelines in order to assist Reformed ministers in various churches to empower their church members, to understand the resurrection of the body.

1.5 Central theoretical argument

This study holds that a true Biblical viewpoint on the resurrection will be an answer to combat the fact that the African people and many Christians amongst them do confess the doctrine of the resurrection of the body but they adhere to the traditional views and believes in the afterlife.

1.6 Method of research

This study will be conducted by using the following research methods:

1.6.1 A literature study of the African theological authors.

1.6.2 A scientific questionnaire will be developed to determine the Christians' views about the resurrection and the ancestral spirits. This questionnaire will be comprised of closed-and-open questions and multiple-choice questions.

1.6.3 A literature study of the Reformed viewpoint regarding the resurrection of the body.

1.6.4 The Grammatical – historical exegetical studies will be done from the Old and New Testament books (cf Vine, 1985, Louw and Nida, 1989) and other relevant commentaries.

CHAPTER 2 THE AFRICAN VIEWS ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the various views of African Christian people with regard to the origin of man, soul/spirit, ancestral spirits, body, and the resurrection of the body.

The main purpose is to establish whether all African Christians believe in the resurrection, and to establish whether they have sufficient knowledge to defend the doctrine of the resurrection. The scientific questionnaire that was formulated will give us clear results with regard to the above-mentioned aspects.

2.2 Man

2.2.1 The Origin of Man

Amongst the African people there are many views on the origin of man. According to Parrinder (1967:41) the Zulus of South Africa used to say that the first human pair, a man and a woman, came out of a reed-bed.

The Thonga of Mozambique said that one man and one woman came suddenly out of a reed, which exploded and there they were. Hodgson (1982: 23) argues that: "One strand of the myth says that deity created the first human being by splitting a reed, from which came a man and two women, who were the progenitors of human race".

The Herero people of Southern Africa believe that the first humans, as well as cattle, came from a tree called Omumborombong, which is found in the grasslands south of the Kuneno River (Billingham, 2004).

Hammond-Tooke (1993:150) maintains that the Nguni and Thonga believed that the creator “broke off the nations” from a bed of reeds and the South Sotho, perhaps influenced by the Nguni, taught that all true Sotho came from a reed bed at *Ntsuanatsatsi* in the Free State.

Smith (1936:32) mentions that the Sotho say that the first man came out of a hole in a place named *Ntsuanatsatsi* (East). The fact that the two authors differ a little bit is because of the historians who wrote from different backgrounds. According to the Xhosa, all people, stock and all forms of animal life came out of a cavern ‘in a land in which the sun rises’ and the Tswana, Tsonga and Lovedu referred to certain places where the god’s footprints could still be seen on the rocks (Le Roux, 2003: 161).

According to Saunders and Ramsey (1999 - 2007) the Ancient One, known as *Unkulunkulu*, is the Zulu creator. He came from the reed (*uthlanga*, means source) and from the reeds he brought forth the people and cattle. He created everything that is: mountains, streams, snakes, and everything. He taught the Zulu how to hunt, how to make fire, and how to grow food.

Parrinder (1967:44) adds that many stories are told in Buganda, Uganda, of Kintu, the first man and ancestor. When he came to the country from the gods he dwelt by himself with only one cow and lived on her milk. In Malagasy it is said that in the beginning the creator made two men and a woman, and all lived on earth, but separately, knowing nothing of each other (Parrinder, 1967:45).

According to Setiloane (1986:56) African Traditional religion does not say the human (*motho*) was created, it nevertheless accounts for a powerful instrumentality that has made everything be where it is. *Lôôwe*, the mysterious one-legged figure that led the first people out of the hole in the ground, is an agent of *Modimo* (God), understood to be fulfilling *Modimo’s* will and direction.

Van der Walt (1997:32) declares that most African tribes used to believe that man is a descendant of the highest gods. An intimate, personal direct relationship between man and the supreme Creator was usually not possible.

2.2.2 Summary

- According to the Africans man comes from the following places: reed-bed (cf Zulus, Nguni, and Thonga, Sotho people), trees (cf Herero), out of a cavern in the ground (Xhosa), and a hole (Sotho people). All these arguments are not true because they are contrary to the Biblical teaching.
- The abovementioned places prove to us that the Africans do not know where man was originated in the beginning of the world.
- The Africans based their views and knowledge on African Mythology.
- It is clear to us that they did not have the true teaching of the Holy Scriptures.
- We can conclude that the Bible is the only book that tells us vividly the origin of man (cf point 2.2.2).

2.3 The Human Spirit/Soul

Nyirongo (1997:99) says that according to African views man consists of two major parts: the "immortal" soul or spirit, which goes to the spirit land after death, and the tangible body which rots in the grave.

For most of the Bantu groups, man is composed of two elements. The first is the physical body known variously as *mele*, *mmele*, or *nama* (flesh). The second element is the invisible or incorporeal spirit, known as *moea* (wind) and *seniti* (shadow).

Venda and Pedi religions define a tripartite conception for man in whom the soul, known as *moya* (literally wind or breath) is a third element and the indispensable life principle intertwining the spirit and the body.

The soul, which the Zulu call *idlozi* or *ithongo*, cannot die, only the body does. Thus, dead is not the end, it is a change of status (Afolayan, 2004:67).

Van Der Walt (1997: 13) reports that in Traditional Africa man is seen as a dichotomous being, consisting of body and soul.

The invisible soul lives inside the body, but is also capable of leaving the body temporarily during dreams and permanently upon the death of the person.

African's have a belief that a person must not be awoken suddenly when they are sleeping for fear that his soul may not be able to return immediately to its abode.

Van der Walt (2003:79) says at death the soul becomes finally separated from the body. Mbiti (1975:124) says that since the spirit is closely associated with breathing, people know that the spirit has gone when a person stops breathing. He declares that some people think that it goes out through the mouth, nostrils or eyes. The surviving soul, after its separation from the body becomes a spirit.

It is interesting to note that according to Nyirongo (1997:83), when the spirit leaves the body it goes to the spirit land; whilst there, it does not expect a resurrection, a union with God or any other significant change in its lifestyle.

Eiselen (1946:249) states that the Nguni people call such a spirit "*Itongo* or *Idlozi*"(ancestor) and the Shangana –Tsonga, call it "*Shikwembu*"(god). According to Mbiti (1969:157) as soon as a person dies, he becomes a living-dead, he is a spirit in the sense that he is no longer in the body, and yet he retains features, which describe him in physical terms.

To add on that Gehman (1989:54) says that a person who is dead continues to live on as an ancestral spirit. He also continues to maintain living relationships with the living, bringing both benefits and trouble to them.

2.3.1 Summary

- African Christians declare that man has an immortal spirit, but this returns to the spirit-land when a person dies. This means that they do not believe that when a person dies his spirit is immediately taken up to Christ.
- Most African people make a distinction between the body and the soul. The body is known as *mele/mmele/nama*, while the spirit is known as *moea* or *sinti*. The soul is also called *idlozi* or *ithongo*.
- There is a belief amongst African people that the soul can temporarily leave the body when a person is asleep.
- Some African people state that a dead person is called a living dead. This means that he lives in a spirit-land. Such a person is regarded as the ancestor.
- We can conclude that some Africans do not believe in the resurrection of the dead and the belief that there is a heaven (an eternal home) for believers.
- The soul will only leave the body during the death of a person.

2.4 Death

Amongst the African people death is known as the end of life, and that all creatures including plants and animals are subject to life and death (Popenoe, 1983:218).

Nyirongo (1997:79) also emphatically declares that all Africans accept that death is an unnatural and sorrowful event. A member of the family has been taken away never to be seen again.

Death among the African people is seen as a very strange aspect in their life. They regard it as an external power that intervenes in their society.

There are so many factors that cause people to die. Mbiti (1975:118) mentions those factors that cause death, such as sickness, disease, old age, accidents, lightning, earthquake, flood, drowning, animal attack, and many

others. But African people believe that a particular person will only die from one of these physical causes because some human or other agent has brought it about by means of a curse, witchcraft and magic.

Amanze (1998:24) states clearly that the Tswana people in some cases believe that God may cause the death of a person but in most cases it is held that some evil person used sorcery or witchcraft to bring it about.

The Xhosa people ascribe death to the work of the witches and magic.

Elliot (1970:127) reports that the Xhosa are afraid of the dead people and regard their bodies as contaminating. They will try by all means to avoid their corpses.

Death is regarded as something that defiles the whole kraal; everybody is believed to be weak and to stand in some danger of being drawn after the deceased (Krige, 1993:163).

Other Africans believe that ghosts, spirits, and certain diseases cause death. Van der Walt (1997:13) maintains that the African people believe the origin of death is explained by way of many myths from which it emerges, that death is the result of the alienation between man and the divine being. According to the Catechism (Question and answer 42) our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only a dying to sins and entering into eternal life (Murray, 1986: 29). When the news of death spreads, the neighbours and other friends proceed to the bereaved family as soon as possible to show their practical sympathy and to strengthen them in their grief (Pauw, 1963:102). When death has occurred, all the normal activities stop.

Kasenene (1993:68) adds that everyone should mourn for the dead person and no work is done that day and until the burial day. It is believed that if one weeds his crops on the burial day his crops will not produce fruit, as expected. No work is done until the strictest part of the mourning is over.

According to Ngada and Mofokeng (1939:46) there are a number of restrictions that are placed on the bereaved during the mourning period. The

bereaved are expected to show humility and respect. Among other things, they may not attend places of pleasure or be outdoors late in the evenings.

Anderson (2000:213) reports that during the time of mourning the bereaved should stay at home should not socialise or have sexual contact or even go to church. Some wear black clothes or black cloths fastened to their clothes and shave their hair (including facial hair) from the day after the funeral.

Soga (1931:323) adds that shaving the head, as a sign of mourning, is performed by the members of every bereaved family. Letsosa (2005:428) declares that mourning is good but it should not be without hope for the resurrection.

2.4.1 Summary

- Most African people regard death as their greatest enemy. During the bereavement times Africans express their deepest sorrow and grief as a sign of mourning and loss.
- Some African people do not believe in the everlasting life. They believe in life after death in a different way.
- Africans associate death as the act of evil forces of darkness.
- Death is held as something that can contaminate and defile the living.
- A person who comes into close contact with a dead corpse is regarded as unclean.
- Death is associated with all kinds of superstitions.

2.5 The body of the deceased

Immediately after death the deceased will be summoned to the mortuary. Here Pauw (1963:102) mentions that the regulation forbids keeping a corpse in the house, and it is removed to the funeral parlour on the day of the death.

Some elder people are chosen by the relatives to go and wash the corpse in order to prepare it for the burial.

Kasenene (1993: 68) tells that the corpse is treated with great respect and it is washed with doctored water known as *umsatane* by the closest female member. This could be the mother, grandmother, aunt, sister or wife.

Anderson (2000:211) mentions that some people still practise the traditional custom of using the hide of the slaughtered beast (cow) to cover the corpse or to place on top of the coffin as a “blanket” for the deceased, but this practise seems to be dying out in the urban areas.

Kwenda, Mndede, and Stonier (1997: 39) mention that among many African groups, the deceased’s body is washed, and a ritual speech takes place, in which the deceased is addressed and told to leave the dirt of this life behind so that there is nothing to block his or her incorporation into the world of the ancestors.

Some individuals are not allowed to touch or come near to the corpse in case misfortune should befall them or on the family (Mbiti, 1975:119).

These are usually the children, pregnant women, or suspected witches. If the deceased was a woman the women will prepare her corpse. Gelfand (1977:45) maintains that among the Nyamaropa people, when a woman dies she is washed by the eldest *samukazi* “aunt” and rubbed with oil.

A day before the funeral the body will be brought to the house of the deceased before the sunset (at about 17h00).

A night vigil is conducted at the house to salute² the deceased. Anderson (2000: 210) adds that the night vigil is viewed in most Pentecostal churches as a good opportunity for evangelism, when the Christian gospel can be preached to many people who would not normally attend church services. The

² Cf Chapter 2, page 25, 2.8.3.17.4 i.e 76%.

night vigil is also a time for pastoral care, to comfort and encourage the bereaved (Anderson, 2000: 211).

The attendants at the night vigil will also take part in singing church songs and saying prayers in order to comfort³ the bereaved family.

Early in the morning the next day, everybody is allowed to view the face of the deceased in the coffin for the last time. Then after that the elderly family member will close the coffin and the minister who is present will say a prayer in front of the coffin. This is a common practice amongst black Africans.

If the deceased was a church member, the hearse will take his or her body to the local church. The members of the church and other local people of the community will show their last respect⁴ to the deceased. The minister will conduct a funeral service to comfort the bereaved family and the community. After that all the members will then go to the graveyard to bury the body of the deceased.

2.5.1 Summary

- According to some cultural beliefs the deceased is taken to the mortuary. The deceased is not buried on the day of his death, for many preparations have to take place before the person is buried. Many relatives, friends, colleagues should be invited to come and attend the funeral.
- Certain people are chosen to prepare the corpse for burial, for it is maintained that the corpse has to be buried in a dignified manner.
- The corpse is respected and honoured by all people (young and old). Children are only allowed to come near the corpse when it is the last day of the funeral.

³ Cf Chapter 2, page 26, 2.8.3.19.1 i.e 84%.

⁴ Cf Chapter 2, page 25, 2.8.3.17.4 i.e 8%.

2.6 Burial

Death affects the whole community, because the departed belongs to the community. Therefore Van der Walt (2003:80) mentions that everyone should attend the funeral and not only the close relatives. To stay away, even for good reasons, may invoke suspicions of witchcraft.

According to Elion and Strieman (2001:47) the custom of being buried in the place of one's birth continues to be practised by many African people. In the rural areas, when it is to be an African Traditional funeral, men carry the body to the grave – and when the grave has been filled, thorns and stones are placed on top to prevent people or creatures from getting to the corpse (Elion & Strieman, 2001:48). In the suburbs stones will be piled on top of the grave, while others will add a tombstone the same day or sometime later.

Kasenene (1993:69) states that among the Africans a person is buried with some of his possessions so that his or her spirit may not come back to look for it and because he/she will need some of them in a spirit world. Anderson (2000:212) argues that the marks of ZCC membership-the badge, the uniform, and the membership "tickets" or certificates proving that the deceased has fully paid his or her church membership dues, accompany the deceased to the gates of heave.

According to Mbiti (1975:120) the belief behind this custom is that the departed needs weapons to defend himself along the way to the next world, or food to eat on the journey, wives and servants to keep him company when he reaches there, and other property to use so that he would not arrive empty-handed or remain poor.

Mbiti (1975:121) maintains that people, especially women, wail and weep, lamenting the departure of the dead person, recalling the good things he said and did, and reminding themselves that he lives on in the next world.

In Africa, a man must never shed tears in front of women or children. To do so, would be to appear weak before the very people he is supposed to protect.

After some few years the bereaved family would unveil the tombstone⁵ (cf 2.2.9.3.19.2 i.e 84%) to remember the deceased person. A common practice is that the bereaved family would prefer to erect the tombstone during the day of the burial or at a later stage.

2.6.1 Summary

- The funerals are regarded as community events and therefore many people are expected to attend them.
- The death of a person affects the whole community. All the people always express their sympathy with the bereaved family.
On the day of death they would visit his or her house to console the bereaved family.
- It is a custom amongst the African people to bury their dead in the graves. It is also the wish of the living to be buried in their places of origin. They believe that the spirit of the deceased will be comfortable when buried at his or her homestead.
- Only non-believers bury a person with his or her possessions. The most Africans believe that the dead lives in the next world (a spirit-land).
- All men are not allowed to express their sorrows openly; they are expected to suppress their tears.

⁵ Cf Chapter 2, page 26, 2.8.3.19.2 i.e 84%.

2.7 The views of the African people with regard to the ancestors

2.7.1 Introduction

According to Scapera (1966:247) ancestor worship is based upon the belief that man, or rather part of him, survives after death.

This conviction is held by all Bantu, who firmly believe that already during his lifetime a person consists of two separable entities, his mortal body and his immortal soul (Zulu, *isithunzi*; Sotho and Shangan-Tshonga, *moya*).

2.7.2 The Ancestors

Scapera (1966:249) comments that the surviving soul, after its separation from the body, becomes a spirit (Nguni, *ithogo* or *idlozi*; Shangan-Tshonga, *shikwebu*; Venda, *mudzimu*; Sotho, *-dimo*).

Therefore, according to Kuckeretz (1990:264) all these terms for ancestors (*abaphantsi*, *amakhosi*, *amatyala*, and *amathongo*) belong to the sphere of ritual.

Lawson (1984:24-25) adds that the ancestral spirits variously known as the *amadlozi*, *amakhosi*, or *amathonga*, are of fundamental significance for the Zulu. They are the departed souls of the deceased.

Although they are regarded as having gone to abide in the earth, they continue to have a relationship with those still living in the kraal.

They are also capable of meting out punishment when they have been wronged or ignored. Veneration is their due.

Afolayan (2004: 66) mentions that the ancestors are the spirits of the dead members of the lineage or family who, as the living dead, continue to show interest in and exercise influence over the lives and affairs of surviving relatives.

2.8 Questionnaire

2.8.1 Introduction

The main objective of this questionnaire was to establish whether the staunch Christians (especially members of the Reformed church) still believe and adhere to various traditional views or not. There is a tendency amongst the African Christians to hold to their Christian norms as well as to traditional norms and beliefs.

Number of Churches	Churches	Frequency	Percentages
1	Reformed Boskop	3	12
2	Reformed Bophirima	3	12
3	Reformed Ikageng	3	12
4	Roman Catholic	2	8
5	Lutheran Church	2	8
6	Baptist Church	2	8
7	St Johns Apostolic	2	8
8	Uniting Reformed	2	8
9	AME	2	8
10	ZCC	2	8
11	Methodist	2	8
	Total Number	25	100%

The following people from various churches were interviewed:

There were 3 ministers from Reformed Churches, 3 elders from Reformed Churches, and 3 deacons from Reformed Churches who were interviewed. From other Churches there were 5 men (35 – 70 years), 5 women (35 – 70 years), and 6 youths (18 – 35 years). Pastors were not interviewed because they are not ordained in the same way the Reformed Pastors are ordained.

2.8.2 Background of the Questionnaire

This scientific questionnaire was developed in order to gather more information to determine the African Christians' views with regard to the resurrection of the body and the ancestral spirits. There are many Reformed African Christians who do not have sufficient information about the resurrection of the body. They recite the Apostles' Creed every Sunday but they have little knowledge about the resurrection of the body.

The Reformed African Christians and the other Christians from other local churches at Ikageng (Potchefstroom area) were approached to fill out the questionnaire.

There were about 25 people who answered the questionnaire. Therefore in this section views of the Christians will be summarized, interpreted in detail and after that there will be a conclusion of these views.

2.8.3 Questions

2.8.3.1 Do you have knowledge or belief in the ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%

2.8.3.2 What do you call them in your language?

Number	Ancestors names	How many	Percentage
1	Badimo (Sotho/Tswana)	10	40%
2	Abaphantsi (Xhosa)	5	20%
3	Amadlozi (Zulu)	5	20%
4	Izinyanya (Xhosa)	4	20%

2.3.3.3 Are you really sure that they exist?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%

2.8.3.4 Do you bring offerings to the ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	14	56%
No	11	44%

Number	Multiple choice questions	How many	Percentage
1	To remember them	7	28%
2	To ask for healing	3	12%
3	To express loyalty to them	2	8%
4	To ask for protection	5	20%
5	Neutral	8	32%

2.8.3.5 How do they reveal themselves to the living people?

Number	Multiple choice questions	How many	Percentage
1	Through dreams	12	48%
2	Through illness	3	12%
3	Through luck (Prosperity)	4	16%
4	Through bad-luck (misery)	6	24%

2.8.3.6 What types of relationship do they have with the living people?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	An intimate relationship	4	16%
2	A lifelong relationship	18	72%
3	Neutral	3	12%

2.8.3.7 Do all people become ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	12	48%
No	11	44%
Neutral	2	8%

2.8.3.8 Where are the ancestors living?

Number	Multiple choices	How many	Percentage
1	In the graves	7	28%
2	In the caves	1	4%
3	On the mountain	1	4%
4	In the sky	5	20%
5	Neutral	11	44%

2.8.3.9 Do you think that it is sinful to worship the ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	8	32%
No	17	68%

2.8.3.10 Can the ancestors be offended when they are not worshipped?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	14	56%
No	9	36%
Neutral	2	8%

2.8.3.11 Can the living people ask for forgiveness from the ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%

2.8.3.12 Do you think it is a sin to pray to God via the ancestors?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	10	40%
No	15	60%

2.8.3.13 Do you think that they are your mediators before God?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	13	52%
No	11	44%
Neutral	1	4%

2.8.3.14 In which way do you pray to them to help you?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	By bringing offerings to them	3	12%
2	By slaughtering an animal to them	9	36%
3	By brewing beer to them	10	40%
4	Those who do not pray to them	3	12%

2.8.3.15 Do they hear your prayers?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	18	72%

No	6	24%
Others are uncertain	1	4%

2.8.3.16 How do you know that the ancestors have answered your prayers?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	When you become successful in life	7	28%
2	When you prosper in life	6	24%
3	When you are healed after an illness	6	24%
4	When you are haunted by evil spirits	1	4%
5	Others are uncertain	5	20%

2.8.3.17 DEATH

2.8.3.17.1 Is death the end of a human being?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	4	16%
No	19	76%
Others do not know	2	8%

2.8.3.17.2 What happens when a person dies?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	His spirit hovers around the homestead	3	12%
2	His spirit goes to the spirit land	7	28%
3	His spirit goes to heaven	11	44%
4	His spirit hovers around the grave	2	8%
5	Others are uncertain	2	8%

2.8.3.17.3 What happens to the body of a person?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	The body becomes an empty box	3	12%
2	The body becomes rotten	20	80%
3	Others are uncertain	2	8%

2.8.3.17.4 Why do you think people bring the corpse to the house?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	To salute it	19	76%
2	To show the last respect for it	2	8%
3	To initiate it for the last time	3	12%
4	To say farewell to it	1	4%

2.8.3.17.5 Why do you think people bring the corpse to the church?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	To express their sorrow	3	12%
2	To show their last respect	14	56%
3	To open door to heaven for it	8	32%

2.8.3.18 ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

2.8.3.18.1 Do you believe that the deceased will rise again?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	19	76%
No	6	24%

2.8.3.18.2 Do you belief that the body and the soul will be united again?

Responding	How many	Percentage
Yes	15	60%
No	9	36%
Others are uncertain	1	4%

2.8.3.19 MOURNING AND BURIAL

2.8.3.19.1 What is the importance of the night-vigil?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	To comfort the bereaved family	21	84%
2	To pay the last respect	2	8%
3	To empathise with the bereaved family	1	4%
4	Others has no idea	1	4%

2.8.3.19.2 What is the role played by the tombstones?

Number	Multiple choice	How many	Percentage
1	As a remembrance	21	84%
2	To seal the grave	2	8%
3	To decorate the grave	1	4%
4	Others does not know	1	4%

2.9 Interpretation

According to African Christians the ancestors are called by different names such as: *Badimo* (Sotho/Tswana) (cf 2.8.3.2 i.e 40%), *Abaphantsi/Izinyanya* (Xhosa) (cf 2.8.3.2 i.e 20%), and *Amadlozi* (Zulu) (cf 2.8.3.2 i.e 20%).

We can deduce from these various names that the African Christians still uphold the ancestral spirits as part of their culture and religion.

Some of the African Christians have indicated that they do uphold the ancestral beliefs (cf 2.8.3.1 i.e 72%). They also believe that the ancestors exist (cf 2.8.3.3 i.e 72%). It is noted that the ancestors can even hear the prayers of their worshippers (cf 2.8.3.15 i.e 72%).

They have indicated that a person can also pray to God via the ancestors (cf 2.8.3.12 i.e 60%).

According to the African Christians, ancestors are regarded as mediators between the living people and God (cf 2.8.3.13 i.e 52%).

The reason why the living pray to God via the ancestors is because they regard God as far away from them and only the ancestors can approach him on their behalf. The living people can even ask for forgiveness from their ancestors (cf 2.8.3.11 i.e 72%).

Ancestors are regarded as agents that can punish and bless their worshippers. African Christians think it is not a sinful act for a person to worship the ancestors (cf 2.8.3.9 i.e 68%). The ancestors' worshippers believe that to bring offerings and libations to them is a way of life. They believe that the living have a direct link with their ancestors.

Therefore the relationship between the living people and the ancestors should always be maintained, since it is regarded as a lifelong relationship (cf 2.8.3.6 i.e 72%). The living people are required and compelled to bring offerings to their ancestors (cf 2.8.3.4 i.e 56%).

This is a way to remember their ancestors (cf 2.8.3.4 i.e 28%), to ask for protection (cf 2.8.3.4 i.e 20%), and healing (cf 2.8.3.4 i.e 12%).

The African Christians who maintain this relationship, it is noted that they will be successful in their lives (cf 2.8.3.16 i.e 28%), and they will prosper (cf 2.8.3.16 i.e 24%).

Most of the African Christians (cf. 2.8.3.7, i.e. 48%) indicated that all people when they are dead become ancestors.

Others were not quite sure whether all the dead people become ancestors. Others emphatically declared that not all the dead people become ancestors (cf. 2.8.3.7, i.e. 44%).

All people are going to die one day. No one will live forever in this world. Amongst the Christians who were interviewed about 76% (cf. 2.8.3.17.1) responded that death is not the end of the human being.

At the same time other African Christians who made 16% responded that death is the end of a human being, while others do not have a clue about the destiny of a human being (cf. 2.8.3.17.1, i.e. 8%).

Amongst the African Christians who were interviewed some responded that they do not know really what happens to the person's body when he dies (cf. 2.8.3.17.3, i.e. 8%). They do not even know what happens to his spirit. The minority mentioned that his spirit goes to heaven (cf. 2.8.3.17.2, i.e. 44%).

Other African Christians said that his spirit hovers around the homestead (cf 2.8.3.17.2, i.e. 12%), or it will go to the spirit land (cf. 2.8.3.17.2, i.e. 28%), while others said the spirit would go to the grave together with the corpse or body (cf. 2.8.3.17.2, i.e. 8%). There were those who frankly said they do not know what happens to the spirit if a person dies (cf. 2.8.3.17.2, i.e. 8%).

The majority of African Christians i.e. 80% (cf. 2.8.3.17.3) confessed that the body of a person becomes rotten.

The majority of African Christians regard the body as unimportant. What is important for them is the spirit or the soul of a human being.

African Christians who made 12% (cf. 2.8.3.17.3) argued that the body of a dead person becomes an empty box. Others do not really know what happens to the human body (cf. 2.8.3.17.3, i.e. 8%).

To bring the corpse to the house, according to many African Christians who made 76%, (cf. 2.8.3.17.4) is to salute it. It is to say farewell to it, until we meet again in heaven. It is to show the last respect to the deceased (cf. 2.8.3.17.4, i.e. 8%).

We have noted that though the African Christians regard the body as unimportant (cf 2.8.3.17.3, i.e 8%) they show respect to the deceased before his or her burial.

The main fact that causes the African Christians to bring the corpse to the Church is to express sorrow (cf. 2.8.3.17.5, i.e. 12%) together with the bereaved family and to show a last respect to the deceased (cf. 2.8.3.17.5, i.e. 56%).

About 76 % (cf 2.8.3.18.1) African Christians mentioned that a deceased would rise again. Although there are so many African Christians who believe that the deceased would rise again, they do not really confess the resurrection of the body.

They still maintain the belief that when man dies he becomes part of the ancestors, while others (cf.2.8.3.18.1, 24%) say that the deceased will never rise again.

There were 60% (cf. 2.8.3.18.2) African Christians who agreed that the soul and the body will be united at the resurrection. On the other hand they believe that the soul is *ithongo* or *idlozi* (ancestor). They also uphold the believe that the soul can stay in one place (around the grave) until such time that ritual are done to release it to be in the homestead or go to a spirit-land.

Others disagreed (cf. 2.8.3.18.2, 36%) that the soul and the body will be united at the resurrection and the rest were uncertain about this issue (cf. 2.8.3.18.2 i.e 4%).

2.9.1 Summary about the Questionnaire

- From the questionnaire it has been noted that many African Christians, as well as some Reformed Christians worship God and the ancestors.
- The fact that the ancestors are called with various names from certain languages, it is an indication that ancestors are seen as forming part of the African religion.
- According to most of African Christians who worship ancestors, Christianity is not sufficient to bring human salvation. Ancestors are regarded as mediators between the living people and God. Man is seen as inferior to commune with the living God.
- Ancestors are regarded as agents of good/prosperity/luck and evil/suffering. To bring offerings to them is to strengthen one's relationship with them. This relationship must be maintained throughout generations and generations.
- Majority of African Christians lacks information about the soul. According to many African Christians mentioned many destinations of the soul or spirit after death.
- Some believe that when a person dies his body becomes rotten. This means that the body is not quite important after death. What is important to them is the soul or spirit. Believers know that the body is also important since in Scripture it is declared that the body is like a seed that is planted in the soil (cf 1 Corinthians 15: 36).
- Most African Christians believe the deceased will be resurrected. But they do not know how the deceased will be resurrected. The minority of the African Christians do not believe that the deceased will be raised from their graves.
- There are many African Christians who believe that the soul and the body will be united one day.

2.9.2 Conclusion about the results of the Questionnaire

- Reformed African Christians still adhere to traditional customs and beliefs.
- Reformed African Christians do not discern between Christian beliefs and pagan (heathen) beliefs (Secularism). That is why they worship God and their ancestors at the same time.
- The majority of African Christians worship both God and their ancestors (Syncretism). The ancestors are regarded as the custodians of the family, nation, and tribe. The Reformed African Christians who are staunch members of the Church also take part to bring offerings to their ancestors.
- Not all Reformed African Christians understand and belief the doctrine of the resurrection.

2.9.3 Conclusion

It is evident from the questionnaire that many Christians who are staunch members of the Church still uphold to ancestral beliefs. They are loyal to their ancestors by bringing offerings to them. The main purpose for serving their ancestors is because they want to receive healing, protection from evil forces, prosperity, and good luck.

Mourning is quite important for the bereaved to deal with their grief, but they should have hope in the resurrection. Christians should mourn with a hope based in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18). Christ resurrection assures us of a future resurrection of the body to eternal life. They must mourning at the same time they should know that their beloved ones who passed away will be resurrected one day. They must also know that they will meet their beloved ones who passed away during the day of resurrection.

CHAPTER 3 THE BIBLICAL AND REFORMED DOCTRINE ON THE RESURRECTION

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to highlight all the Scriptural portions with regard to the resurrection of human beings. Most of the Old Testament and New Testament passages will be considered to defend the whole perspective of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Certain verses will be exegeted in order to highlight important concepts of the resurrection. This chapter will also deal with the role of the Trinity with regard to the resurrection of the body.

3.2 The definition of the resurrection

Williard (1852: 312) comments that the resurrection of the body means the restitution of the substance of our bodies after death out of the very same matter of which they now consist, and the re-animating, or quickening of the same bodies with an incorruptible and immortal life by the same immortal soul, which they now consist; which God will effect through Christ at the end of the world, by his divine power and virtue, and which will result in the eternal glory of the elect.

The Christian idea of the resurrection is to be distinguished from both Greek and Jewish ideas. Douglas (1962: 1020) argues that the Greeks thought of body as a hindrance to true life and they looked for the time when the soul would be free from its shackles. They conceived of life after death in terms of the immortality of the soul, but they firmly rejected all ideas of resurrection (cf. the mockery of Paul's preaching in Acts 17:32). The Jews were firmly persuaded of the values of the body, and thought these would not be lost. They looked for the body to be raised.

Ladd (1978: 472) points out that in Biblical theology the body is not merely an outward shell housing the real man-his soul or spirit. Such thought is found in Greek philosophy, but it is not biblical.

Douglas (1962:1020) adds that the most startling characteristic of the first Christian preaching is its emphasis on the resurrection. The first preachers were sure that Christ had risen, and sure, in consequence, that believers would in due course rise also. Beasley-Murray (2000: 21) declares that the resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of our faith (Mark 16:6).

3.3 The Scriptural views on the resurrection of the body

3.3.1 Scriptural pericopes on the origin of man

Scripture according to Berkhof (1949:181) offers us a twofold account of the creation of man, the one in Genesis 1:26,27, and the other in Genesis 2:7, 21-23. Van Wyk (1993: 5) says that there is no doubt that God created the man. In addition to that Nelson (1988:80) maintains that God formed man from “the dust of the ground⁶” (Genesis 2:7) using pre-existing matter but not other forms of life, such as marine or land animals.

Grudem (1994:439) refers to Genesis 5:1-2 where we read, “When God created man; he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created” (cf. Genesis 1:27).

According to Grudem (1994:439) the Hebrew term translated “Man” is ‘*âdâm*, the same term used for the name of Adam, and the same term that is sometimes used of man in distinction from woman (Genesis 2:22, 25; 3: 12; Ecclesiastes 7:28).

Hanko (2004:98) highlights some important ideas from Scripture about the origin of man such as the following:

⁶ Adams (1979:105) asserts that when the Bible teaches that Adam was made “out of the dust of the ground” it is firmly attesting man’s material nature. From the beginning, there was an identification, harmony and continuity with this world. Man is earthly, from the earth. The very name, “Adam”, means “red (clay)”, emphasizing this fact.

- God spoke with Himself before creating man-something he did not do when creating other things (Genesis 1:26).
- God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26, 27).
- God created man by a twofold act of His own (Genesis 2:7) and did not simply call him into existence as He did with the beasts, birds, and fishes.
- God created man to live in fellowship with him directly (Genesis 2:15-17).
- God made a special home in which man could live (Genesis 2:8).
- Having created man, God spoke to him directly (Genesis 1:28)
- God gave man dominion over all the other earthly creatures (Genesis 1:28).

3.3.2 Summary

- Scripture declares without doubt that God created man.
- God created man in His own likeness.
- God created human beings being males and females.
- Man is a unique creature; he differs a lot from other creatures created by God.
- Man was created in order to live in a personal relationship with God.
- God gave man a special task (cultural mandate) in order to rule over other creatures as well as the creation.

3.3.3 Man in the Image of God

According to Scripture man was created in the image of God (cf Genesis 1:26), and is therefore God-related (Berkhof, 1939:202).

Before the inspired writer records the creation of man, he leads us back, as it were, into the council of God, acquainting us with the divine decree in the words, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness", Genesis 1:26

(Berkhof, 1949: 182). Here God mentions man's divine image and his dominion over creation in one breath (Nelson, 1988:86).

The likeness of man to God respected the kind of his nature; man was created like God a free, rational, personal spirit. He was created like God as to the perfection of his nature; in knowledge, and in righteousness and true holiness (Heyns, 1926:64). The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God (Grudem, 1994:442).

When God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), Hodge (1988:262) eludes that according to the Reformed theologians and the majority of the theologians of other divisions of the church, man's likeness to God included his intellectual and moral nature.

Killgalon and Weber (1958:36) argue that man is a creature with a material body and a spiritual soul, made by God in his likeness.

All creatures reflect God in the sense that each mirrors in its own limited way the boundless reality and beauty of God.

3.3.4 Summary

- It is only the Holy Scriptures that informs us that man has been created in the image of God.
- Man was created by the divine act of the Triune God.

3.4 The OT views on the resurrection of the body

3.4.1 Resurrection during the time of Abraham

In the OT Scriptures there are scriptural texts that deal with the future resurrection of the body. The first time we learn about the concept of the resurrection was during the era of Abraham. We read in Genesis 22: 1 -5 the following:

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
"Here I am", he replied.

2. Then God said, "Take your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering he set out for the place God had told him about.

4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

5 He said to his servants, " Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We will worship and then come back to you".

God instructed Abraham to offer him a sacrifice with Isaac (Genesis 22: 2). In Genesis 22: 5 Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Brueggemann (1971: 193) adds that Abraham knew beyond understanding that God will find a way to bring life even in this scenario of death. That is the faith of Abraham.

Helberg (1996:65) asserts that the faith of both Abraham and Sarah was directed at God's power to create life out of death. According to Morris (1976:378) Abraham had learned to trust God so fully that he believed He could even raise the dead.

According to Matthews (2005: 292) Abraham's instructions to the servants reveal the patriarch's ultimate trust in God's provision, his faith is therefore a testimonial to the servants as well as to the boy (cf Hebrews 11: 17-19).

Furthermore Campbell (2002) advocates that Hebrew 11 tells us about Abraham's faith. It tells us that he knew God was able to raise his son, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11: 19). Abraham put his promise before his providence. In other words, he did not say, "God's promise cannot be valid, because I have to offer

Isaac", he said rather "Even though I must offer Isaac, God will still keep his promise".

Hamilton (1995: 108) comments that Hebrews 11:17-19 understood these words as a powerful illustration of Abraham's faith that God was able to raise Isaac.

3.4.2 Summary

Based on these aspects the following ideas are highlighted:

- Abraham was faithful to God his creator and Lord. He believed that there was nothing impossible for God. God's Word is reliable and trustworthy.
- His faith was based on the promises and the providence of God.
- He knew that God would be able to raise his son from the dead because God is the only author of life.
- Abraham understood that Isaac was not his son alone; he was also the child of God.

3.4.3 The resurrection in the book of 1 Samuel 2:6

In 1 Samuel 2:6 Hannah sings: "The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up".

Schep (1963:29) declares that the Lord is able to kill as well as to preserve life when death is near; He is able to bring down to sheol (death) and to bring a man back from the gates of sheol when life is endangered.

3.4.4 The resurrection during the time of Elijah

The resurrection of the son of the widow of Zarephath by the prophet Elijah is recorded in 1 Kings 17: 17 – 24:

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing.

18 She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

19 Give me your son, "Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed.

20 Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?"

21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

22 The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived.

23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of Lord from your mouth is the truth".

Elijah, through the power of prayer to God, restored the life of a widow's son in Zarephath. House (1995: 215) declares that Elijah's faith in the midst of uncertainty allows God to use him to demonstrate God's life-giving power, his constant watchfulness and his compassion even to those outside the elect nation.

Elijah stretches himself on the child, thereby seemingly transferring life from himself to the sick one. Church & Hist (1961: 387) comment that Elijah earnestly begs God to restore the child to life again.

The child revives because Yahweh hears Elijah's plea, not because of the prophet's prowess.

Yahweh is God, not Baal, not Elijah. Still, the miracle helps the woman know that Elijah is a man who represents and is sent by the Lord. She understands that the same God who provided the oil has provided life for her son. Baal is dead, but Yahweh is not, nor is her son. It is also noted by Nelson (1971: 113)

that God is the prime mover in these stories, even to the point of being the author of death and famine, but the power of God is ultimately on the side of life.

3.4.5 The resurrection of the body during the time of Elisha

Scripture tells us in the book of 2 Kings 4: 32 - 37 that Elisha raised the son of the Shunem woman from the dead:

32 When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch.

33 He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the Lord.

34 Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the body grew warm.

35 Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

36 Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite." And he did. When she came, he said, "Take your son."

37 She came in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.

Elisha first turned to the Lord in earnest prayer for the restoration of life to the dead child. His prayer is clear evidence that his subsequent actions were not intended as a magical means of restoring life. House (1995: 268) asserts that Elisha heals the boy much like Elijah healed the child in 1 Kings 17: 7-24. Gehazi goes ahead and finds the boy dead. Elisha lies on the boy, the child recovers, and Elisha restores him to his mother.

Elisha's work here proves the same points Elijah's healing demonstrated; the Lord controls death, and the Lord cares for the needy and hurting.

In 2 Kings 13: 20-21 we read that “Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring.

Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet”.

According to Adeyemo (2006: 454) Elisha’s death was not as dramatic as that of Elijah, for he died in his bed and was buried (13:20). But the power of the Lord still resided in his bones, as is evident from the incident recorded in 13:21. This miracle must have occurred some years after his death to allow time for the body of Elisha to decompose and the bones to become exposed.

When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life. Elisha’s dead body communicated life to another dead body. This great miracle was a plain indication of another life after this one (Church& Hist, 1961: 417).

House (1995: 308) maintains that not even death stops this prophet’s ministry. His predictions about Syria’s defeat live on, of course, but so does his miraculous powers. Moabite raiders interrupt a group of men burying a corpse, which forces them to throw the body in a tomb that just happens to be Elisha’s. The deceased man revives.

This final Elisha story provides a fitting summary of the prophet and his ministry. Elijah has gone to heaven without dying; the God of Elisha has kept giving Israel life after he has died.

According to the OBE (2000) Elisha’s dead body was a means of giving life to another dead body. This miracle was a confirmation of his prophecies, and it may have reference to Christ by whose death and burial, the grave is made a safe and happy passage to life to all believers.

3.4.6 The resurrection of the body during the time of Job

In Job 19: 25 – 27 we read:

25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth.

26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;

27 I myself will see Him with my own eyes- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

In the book of Job 19: 25-27 it is confessed that the same power that made man's body at first, out of common dust, can raise it out of its own dust. Vos (2002: 199) adds that the bodies of believers shall rise again and be united to their souls.

Job comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side of death and the grave. Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again, being a glorious body.

He is absolutely certain, that death is not the end of existence and that someday he will stand in the presence of his Redeemer and see him with his own eyes.

Epp (1967: 80) says that Job knew that one day the Lord would vindicate him. He could not trust these earthly friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) but he did trust God. God as his Vindicator would appear on earth, and Job knew that he himself would see God. Not only that, but he would see God on his side. His Redeemer would be his vindicator.

Though Job may have had no hope for the time when he was suffering, he looked forward to the great resurrection day when God would vindicate him. He looked forward to the time when his living Redeemer would change that poor, weak and decaying body of him into a glorified body. Then he would see God face to face and learn the secret of all his sorrow.

3.4.7 The resurrection of the body in the book of Psalms

In Psalm 16: 9 – 11 David stated confidently that God would not leave him in the grave. Many people fear death because they can neither control nor understand it (Life application Study Bible, 1988:915). As believers, we can be assured that God will not forget us when we die. He will bring us to life again to live with Him forever.

According to the FOB (2006) these words are quoted by Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the spirit on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:25-31); he declared that David in them speaks concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection.

From Psalm 17:15 "And I, in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness", the word awake shows that David believed in life after death.

It is stated clearly by Church and Hist (1961: 594) that when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave blessedness will consist in three things: - the immediate vision of God and His glory, the participation of his likeness, and a complete and full satisfaction.

We cannot agree with this statement because the soul does not sleep. The soul is immortal.

In Psalm 49: 15 we read there that: "But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself". Erickson (1992: 388) states that while there is no statement about the resurrection that the incomplete existence in Sheol will not be our final condition.

The word translated 'take' is the same one used for God 'receiving' or 'taking' Enoch and Elijah to himself at the end of their lives on earth (cf Genesis 5: 24 and 2 Kings 2: 3). It is also used in Psalm 73: 24, 'You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will take me into glory'.

The Study Life Bible (1988: 984) declares that from birth to death God has us continually in his grip. But far more, we have the hope of the resurrection.

3.4.8 The resurrection of the body in the book of Isaiah

In Isaiah 25: 8 we read: “He will swallow up death for ever”. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken”. These words hint at the belief in the victory of life over death and the possibility of resurrection for the just (Adeyemo, 2006: 826).

According to Life Application Study Bible (1988: 1209) part of this verse is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15: 54 to describe Christ’s victory over death. God’s ultimate victory is seen when death, our ultimate enemy, is defeated (cf Hosea 13: 14). Another part of this verse is quoted in Revelation 21: 4 which describe the glorious scene of God’s presence with his people.

Douglas (1963: 855) says this verse is explicit in its affirmation that in the Lord’s Day, even death itself will disappear to be seen no more.

Isaiah in 26: 19 declares that all those who are dead will live again, and it is God who will revive them. According to Owuor (2006: 67) this verse pronounces the promise of the resurrection of the body with language that helps us understand another perspective on death. The word “wake up” has been used to describe the command for bodies that will be raised (Isaiah 26:19). Therefore, it is noted that these bodies are considered to be ‘asleep’ and at the command of God they will rise. Guthrie and Motyer (1970:605) stress that this verse clearly promises bodily resurrection. Hillyer (2007) emphasises that their bodies will rise.

3.4.9 The resurrection of the body in the book of Ezekiel

Block (1998: 377) mentions that the process by which Yahweh will fulfil his promise involves four stages: He will reconnect the bones with sinews, cover the bones with flesh, overly the flesh with skin, and infuse them with breath (cf Ezekiel 37: 6).

The sequence involving bones, sinews, flesh, and skin reflects an understanding of anatomy available to anyone who had witnessed the slaughter of an animal; it also reverses the decomposition process (cf Ezekiel 37:6). Miller (1995–2007) says that God does not do anything capriciously. He brings people back to life for the special purpose He describes in His dialogue with Ezekiel: ‘Then you will know that I am the Lord’ (Ezekiel 37:6c).

3.4.10 The resurrection of the body in the book of Daniel

Redditt (1999: 191) says that those who would be delivered by God, some dead believers would be raised to including their hero Daniel (Daniel 12:2)⁷. Therefore Daniel 12: 2 is a clear reference to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, although the eternal fates of each will be quite different.

Buttrick (1956:542) declares that with the deliverance comes the resurrection. Here, for the first time in the Old Testament, we have a clear mention of a resurrection of the wicked as well as of the righteous. Adeyemo (2006: 1011) emphasises that there is life beyond the grave (see 12:2a), a life either of blessing or of eternal contempt (see 12:2b).

⁷ Shaw (1998: 377) asserts that this doctrine held a prominent place in the discourses of our Lord's declaration: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come out and those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (cf John 5: 28, 29).

Johnson (2006) stresses that some will awake to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. This is undoubtedly the resurrection. Bryce (2007) adds that God will give life that will never end to some of them. But some will have shame and disgust always.

3.4.11 The resurrection of the body in the book of Hosea

Hosea 13: 14 speaks very clearly "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave is your destruction?" From this prophecy the Spirit spoke of delivery of the body from death and hell on the resurrection day, and the children of God have rejoiced by faith in this assertion (Kersten, 1983: 553).

Apostle Paul applies the promises of this verse to the resurrection (1Corinthians 15:55) (see Adeyemo, 2006:1025, Life Application Study Bible, 1988:1523).

3.4.11.1 Summary of the OT part on the resurrection

- God is able to restore life irrespective of any cause of death. He is superior to death. When coming to death He has the final word.
- There is a permanent life after this earthly temporary life.
- Our mortal bodies will be united with our immortal souls. This will be after the resurrection of all believers.
- God does not forget the righteous people. He will awake them at his own determined time.
- All believers shall be raised from their sleeping places (graves).
- The wicked people will also be raised, but they will experience eternal condemnation.

3.5. The NT views on the resurrection of the body

3.5.1 The resurrection of the people in the Gospels

The information we receive from the New Testament records the rising of certain persons:

- Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9: 24, 25). Hill (1972: 179) states that Jesus communicates to the girl by the power of God by which she is made alive ('literally she was raised').
- The young man of Nain (Luke 7: 14, 15). Jesus was deeply moved when he met the funeral procession and saw the mother's grief at the death of her only son (Luke 7:12). Immediately he healed the young man and gave him back to his mother (Luke 7:15). Witnessing this incident, one is reminded of the coming resurrection of another Son of a grieving mother (Adeyemo, 2006: 1217). It is of course a reminder to all people that God is able to raise every human being with the power vested in Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Lazarus (John 11: 43, 44) was also raised by Jesus. Beasley-Murray (1999: 195) states that Lazarus comes forth from the tomb with his head still wrapped in a veil because he is still subject to the power which the Angel of Death, Satan, and the evil impulse will have over all mankind until this power has been destroyed in the days of the Messiah. Lazarus has been brought to life, but he will die again.
- In addition we read of the raising of many saints during the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27: 52, 53). Dickson (1981: 401) mentions that the resurrection of the saints depend upon the resurrection of Christ who is their Head; for He is the first born from the dead.
- The rest who arose to an immortal life came out of their graves after his resurrection.

The wonders, which our Lord did work, were able to abide the light and did not lack sufficient witnesses; for amongst the rest, these saints, who were raised out of their graves, came into Jerusalem and appeared to many.

Barclay (1975: 371) adds that the tombs were opened and that was the symbol that shows Jesus Christ has conquered death.

In dying and in rising again He destroyed the power of the grave. Since his life, his death and his resurrection, the tomb has lost its power, and the grave has lost its terror, and death has lost its tragedy. It is certain that because he lives we shall also live.

Carson (1991: 256) states that in John 5: 25 – 26 the coming hour already is: the resurrection life for the physically dead in the end time is already being manifest as life for the spiritually dead. It is the voice of God (or his word: cf verse 24) that will live. Such a voice, such a life-giving word, is nothing other than the voice of God (cf Isaiah 55:3), whose vivifying power mediates the life-giving spirit. Barclay (1975: 192) adds that the Messianic claims of Jesus stand out most clearly.

He is the Son of Man; he is the life-giver and the life-bringer; he will raise the dead to life and, when they are raised, he will be their judge.

Carson (1991: 412) mentions that Jesus' concern is to divert Martha's focus from an abstract belief in what takes place on the last day, to a personalized belief in him who alone can provide it (cf. John 11: 25-26). Just as he not only gives the bread from heaven (cf. 6:27) but is himself the bread of life (cf. 6:35), so also he not only raises the dead on the last day (cf.5:21, 25) but is himself the resurrection and the life. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside him.

Beasley-Murray (1999: 190) adds that the greatest gift of God's saving sovereignty is precisely life eternal under that sovereignty and entry upon it through resurrection.

The power to initiate it resides in Jesus ("resurrection") and to grant it in its fullness ("the life"). For the body there is a promise of a blessed resurrection. Though the body is dead because of sin yet it shall live again. The body shall be raised a glorious body.

3.5.2 The resurrection of people in the book of Acts

- In the book of Acts 17: 32 it is recorded that: "When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject". Adeyemo (2006:1331) argues that some Athenians believed the very idea of the resurrection of the dead provoked a strong reaction in the crowd. Some scoffed at the very idea, while others wanted to hear more of what Paul had to say.
- Dorcas was raised by Peter (Acts 9: 40, 41), according to Van Niekerk (1978: 140-141) Peter asked the mourners to leave the room and he knelt down and prayed. Afterwards he turned towards the body on the bed and spoke to her saying: "Tabitha, arise".
- *Immediately she opened her eyes and sat up. He took her hand and helped her up and showed her to the people who were waiting outside. Once again Jesus Christ had used His apostle, Peter, in order to show that He had the power to conquer death itself.*
- Eutychus a young man from Troas who fell from an upstairs window-seat during Paul's protracted nocturnal address was raised to life by Paul (Acts 20: 9-12).

Osborne (1995: 290-291) declares when Luke caps the episode with the lad being led away, probably home, alive, and the disciples being greatly comforted, he certainly focuses on this miracle of resurrection as a source of comfort to the Christians.

3.5.3 The resurrection according to the messages of Apostle Paul

We have noted that believers in Jesus Christ have assurance of their future bodily resurrection from the dead due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In

1Thessalonians 4: 13 the apostle Paul explains this hope of life beyond physical death.

Thessalonians were wondering why many of their fellow believers had fallen asleep (dead) and what would happen to them when Christ returned.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that death is not the end of life. Verse 13 explains that the apostle do not want their fellow believers to be ignorant about believers who die. Similarly he does not want them to grieve like unbelievers who have no hope.

The difference between the believer and the unbeliever is expressed in the hope of the resurrection of the dead. Believers had hope of eternal life due to Christ's resurrection (OWUOR, 2006: 71).

Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:18 says that the false teachers were denying the resurrection of the body. They believed that when a person became a Christian, he or she was spiritually reborn, and that was the only resurrection there would ever be.

To them, resurrection was symbolic and spiritual not physical. Paul clearly taught, however, that believers would be resurrected after they die, and that their bodies as well as their souls will live eternally with Christ.

Mackervoy (2003) declares that these men have turned from the truth. They teach many things that are not true. Among these things, they say that the resurrection is past. But the Bible teaches that it is still in the future. The Lord Jesus will come again.

Those who have died, as believers in him, will rise from the dead. God will also resurrect the rest of the people. All of them will have to come before God who will be their judge.

Hodge (1988: 516) says Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 proves that the dead can rise, referring to what no Christian can deny, the rising of Christ from the dead. He supports this fact by historical evidence.

He then shows that the denial of the resurrection of Christ is denial of the whole gospel: "If Christ be not raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (verse 14). But if Christ did rise from the dead, all His people will also rise. Christ rose as the first fruits of them that sleep (verse 20).

3.5.4 The resurrection message in the book of Revelation

We learn from the book of Revelation 20: 13 that John says that the sea, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them. He obviously means resurrection, even though this is not explicitly affirmed (Ladd, 1972: 273).

Certainly, we are not to think of the souls of those who had met death by drowning remain in the sea until the time of judgment.

John merely means that all who have drowned, all who have suffered death, are revived to stand before God in judgment (Ladd, 1972: 273).

3.5.4.1 SUMMARY OF THE NT PART ON THE RESURRECTION

- Jesus Christ is the basis and foundation of the entire believer's resurrection. Since Christ was able to be raised from His tomb, it stands to reason that all believers in God are surely going to be resurrected.
- Through Christ's resurrection death has been conquered and there is no need for believers to fear death any longer.
- Christ is the source of life. In him there is a blessed promise of eternal life for all believers. Where Christ is, there is life in abundance.
- The human body is buried in a weak state, and it will be raised in a powerful and glorious state. Our resurrected bodies are not going to experience pains and be subjected to various diseases.
- The resurrection of Christ is sufficient to convince all believers that they will also be raised from their graves. Christ has been accorded the ultimate authority by God to raise all confessing believers.

3.6 The general resurrection

Heyns (1926: 330) states that there will be but one resurrection and it is taught by the Scriptures in John 5: 28, 29; 1Corinthians 15: 24, and other passages. It will be a resurrection of all at the same time, righteous and the wicked. All men, both those who are saved and those who have rejected salvation (cf. John 5: 29), will rise again with their own bodies (Lawler, 1976: 542). Those who have died will no longer be dead.

Those who will then be alive will be changed in a moment and made unto those who will then arise from the dead, I Corinthians 15: 51, 52. Scripture teaches us that at the return of Christ the dead will be raised up (Berkhof, 1933: 353).

3.6.1 The resurrection of the believers

Concerning the resurrected body of the believers it is revealed to us in the Scripture according to Heyns (1926: 340) that it will in essence be the same body which was ours during our life.

It will also be a body clothed in glory and honour, with immortality and power, not a natural but a spiritual body. It will thus be free from such imperfections and blemishes as it may have now.

Berkhof, (1933: 354) asserts that the resurrection of the just is an act of deliverance and of glorification. The body is raised from the grave and reunited with the soul, but the great point in their resurrection is that their bodies are now endowed with a life that is glorious and blessed. In their case the re-union of the body and soul issues in the extreme penalty of death.

3.6.2 The believers' bodies after the resurrection

Möller (1998: 112) declares that the resurrection of the body from the dead is a doctrine unique to Christianity. It is directly linked to the death and resurrection of Christ.

Therefore if Christ was not raised from the dead, there could have been no gospel (1Corinthians 15: 13-19). Thus this resurrection does not only imply the soul's continuation after death.

The Scriptures states or imply that the resurrected body of believers will be like that of Christ's' glorified body (Philippians 3: 21; 1 John 3: 2; 1 Corinthians 15: 49).

Christ took on Him flesh and blood (Hebrews 2: 14); but after His resurrection He speaks of His body as composed of "flesh and bones" (Luke 24: 39).

He was not pure spirit, so we shall not be pure spirit at the resurrection (Thiessen, 1956: 492).

It will be incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15: 42, 53, 54). It is therefore not subject to sickness, decay or death. Killgallon (1958: 288) adds that at the end of the world the bodies of the dead will arise. These bodies will be spiritualized, immune to sickness and death.

The beauty of the soul will shine forth. It is an enduring body. It will be a glorious body (1 Corinthians 15: 43). We may get the idea of what that means by thinking of the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17: 1-8), and of the description of the glorified Christ in heaven (Revelation 1: 13-16).

It will be powerful bodies (1 Corinthians 15: 43). That is it will not become weary, but be able to perform mighty feats in the service of Christ (Revelation 22: 3-5). It will be a heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15: 47-49). In 2 Corinthians 5: 1-2 Paul speaks of "a building from God", "our habitation from heaven."

3.7 The role of the Trinity on the resurrection

3.7.1 God the Father

Grenz (1994: 588) mentions that Jesus reminded the Sadducees who denied the resurrection, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mark 12: 24-27).

He adds that Stephen H Travis rightly concluded from this text, “I believe that death will be overcome by life because I believe in God – the kind of God whom Jesus shows us, the God to whom we human beings matter. It is impossible to imagine this God scraping what is precious to him.”

The New Testament writers testified that the means whereby God will draw us to himself is best described by the term “resurrection”.

In the Old Testament we understand that when a person dies it is a fact that his body will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God who gave it to all human beings (Ecclesiastes 12: 7; Genesis 2: 7).

The same God who created the body will be the one who will resurrect the bodies of all people.

The Lord God grants and takes life of all people (Job 1: 21) and it stands to reason that He will also be able to resurrect all human beings. God was able to credit Elijah (2 Kings 2: 11) that he would not die but was translated to heaven. Enoch did not die but was also translated to heaven by God (Genesis 5: 24; Hebrews 11: 5).

Homer & Kent (1972: 220) say that it was faith that made him well pleasing to God, and his God-pleasing life brought about his translation.

God who buried Moses (Deuteronomy 34: 6) at Moab valley has power to raise those who put their faith in Him. If it was possible for the dry bones to be revived (Ezekiel 37: 10) God will still unite the dry bones of the saints with

their soul one day. Since God knew Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1: 4-5) before he was born, it is possible to raise all people.

According to Hanks (2004: 314) the bodies of some have long ago turned to dust so that not a trace of them can be found. Others have been eaten by wild beasts and by the fish of the sea. Some, like John Wycliffe, have had their bodies burnt to ash and their ashes thrown by their enemies into the rivers and the seas yet God, who knows all things, keeps track of each soul and gives it back to its proper owner in the resurrection.

The resurrection is a testimony, therefore, to the faithfulness of God, who does not forget even our dust.

The resurrection of the dead is a miracle, a wonderwork of God that is understood and received only by faith.

Unbelievers mock when they hear of it (Acts 17: 32), and heretics deny it (1 Corinthians 15: 12; 2 Timothy 2: 18), but those who believe the promise of the resurrection of the dead, for them it is further proof that God is indeed the true God, the Almighty, the one who does "great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number" (Job 5: 9).

Vos (2002: 205) asserts that this doctrine of God's Word has been made the object of scoffing by unbelievers ever since the Sadducees (Acts 23:8) and the Athenians (Acts 17:32) disbelieved it.

Those who regard this doctrine as absurd or impossible do so because they reject the authority of the Scriptures and do not believe in a God who is almighty and can work miracles.

3.7.2 God the Son

Intimately associated with Christ's Parousia is the resurrection of the dead (Lawler, 1976: 542). Paul says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound

of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1Thessalonians 4: 16).

It is maintained by Erickson (1985: 1200) that Jesus affirms to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die”. It stands to reason that the resurrection is ascribed to the power and work of Jesus Christ (John 11: 25). In other words He possesses life. He will resurrect those who died.

Hanko (2004: 315) states that there is an hour coming in which the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and live (John 5: 28, 29), but there is an hour already come in which the dead hear his voice through the Gospel and live in him by faith (John 5: 25).

Having lived by his voice at their spiritual resurrection, which is their regeneration, they wait now for the hour of their bodily resurrection.

It is very important to know that according to Lawler (1976: 1580) the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian life of faith, prayer, and spiritual growth. It is the pledge of the resurrection of our bodies, for Christ conforms the faithful to His own image and leads them to share in His glory.

Jesus’ resurrection and glorification provide the basis for our hope and faith in the immortal life of our bodies after the final resurrection at the end of time.

The reality of our resurrection hope, like every other hope, is centred in Christ. Apart from him, as Calvin argues, “it is too hard for men’s minds to apprehend” (Spykman, 1992: 553).

Recognizing that “it is difficult to believe that bodies, when consumed with rotteness, will at length be raised up in their season,” Calvin holds that “one of the helps by which faith may overcome this great obstacle” is “the parallel of Christ’s resurrection” (Institutes, III, 25,3). The reality of our “not yet” resurrected life is anchored securely in the empowering reality of Christ’s

"already" resurrection (cf Romans 8:11; 1Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14) (Spykman, 1992: 553).

3.7.3 God the Holy Spirit

Richards (1987: 11) mentions that from the moment of Jesus' conception to the unleashing of resurrection energy, the spirit ministered to and through Jesus.

According to Lawler (1976: 544) the Spirit dwelling in us will bring our mortal bodies to life (cf. Romans 8:11). Because of His resurrection, Christ has become a life-giving Spirit, and He sends His Spirit to us as a pledge of our own future resurrection (cf. Romans 8:23). All of us who have the Spirit dwelling in us are already being "changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18); we are already being prepared for our bodily resurrection.

According to Hodge (1988: 189) the works of the Spirit are the works of God. He fashioned the world (Genesis 1:2).

He regenerates the soul: to be born of the Spirit is to be born of God. He is the source of all knowledge, the giver of inspiration, and the teacher, the guide, the sanctifier, and the comforter of the Church in all ages. He fashions our bodies, He formed the body of Christ as a fit habitation for fullness of the Godhead, and He is to quicken our mortal bodies (Romans 8: 11). It is also noted by Criswell (1979: 203) that in Christian experience, expressed in baptism, we know God as triune, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Catechism tells us that God revealed Himself in His Word (Lord's day 8 Question and answer 25). God the Father brought our creation. The Son brought our redemption; the Holy Spirit our sanctification (cf Murray, 1986: 26). God the Father so loved us that He sent His Son for us. Christ so loved us that He suffered and died and was buried for us. The Holy Spirit so loved

us that He raised up Christ from the dead to ascend into heaven where the Lord intercedes for us. The same Holy Spirit shall also raise us up.

3.7.4 SUMMARY

- God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source of our life. God has the record of every human being's body that has been turned to dust. Therefore God will forget no one. During the resurrection everybody will be resurrected from his or her grave.
- Christ defeated death and He was resurrected and this is a clear indication that all people will be raised from their tombs through the divine power of God.
- A time and hour is coming in which all people will hear the unique voice of Christ.
- The Holy Spirit has the ultimate power to resurrect our mortal bodies. The Holy Spirit will revive our mortal bodies to be spiritual immortal bodies.

3.8 The Reformed testimony on the resurrection

The theologians of the period of the Reformation were generally agreed that the body of the resurrection would be identical with the present body (Berkhof, 1939: 720).

According to Spykman (1992: 552) Sunday after Sunday countless worshippers, from cathedrals to underground churches, recites the Article of faith: We believe "the resurrection of the body". In the Apostle's Creed, we say "I believe the resurrection of the body." This is a very important Christian doctrine that is essential to a proper understanding of our salvation. Salvation does not only involve our souls, it involves our whole person, and thus our bodies as well.

De Bruyn (1997:81) points out that for the believer the certainty of the resurrection is a great source of consolation (comfort) when beloved ones are taken away by death or when he sees his own death approaching, because he knows: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Kersten (1983:531) argues that God has laid that consciousness in the heart of man, even of those who lack the special revelation God has given us in His Word; therefore we find with all peoples, although in various ways, the expectation that the soul shall continue to exist after death. Plato, among others, gives evidence of this when he writes: "We must believe the old Divine reasoning which testifies that we have an immortal soul."

Christ is the *first fruit* of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20) and after him follows the *whole harvest*: all the believers.

The Catechism also confesses that there will be a resurrection of the body. The most striking question about the resurrection of the body (Lord's Day 22, question 57) reads thus: "What comfort does the resurrection of the body afford you?" The answer says: "That not only my soul after this life, shall immediately be taken up to Christ, its Head; but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall again be united with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ" (Murray, 1986: 31).

The Belgic Confession (A.D. 1561), adopted by the Synod of Dort (A.D. 1619), declares that "all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their soul joined and united with their proper bodies in which they formerly lived" Belgic Confession (Article 37) (Geisler, 1994).

In the Nicene Creed (1996 – 2007) believers profess: "We look for the resurrection of the dead". Richards (1987:305) adds that we look ahead to resurrection with confidence. One day the dead will rise, and we who believe will be given bodies that are fresh and new, as perfect as Jesus' own resurrected body. These confessions of faith should be adhered to and be lived out by all confessing Christians.

Vincent (2004:104) emphasises that the resurrection entails the last and general resurrection of all the dead that have lived in all ages, from the beginning of creation, which will be, first of the righteous, and then of the wicked, at the last day (Article 37, question and answer 9).

Vincent (2004:106) adds that the bodies of believers, at the resurrection, shall be made most healthful, strong, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, most beautiful, and glorious, like that of Christ's most glorious body (Article 38, question and answer 4).

The resurrection of Christ is the true guarantee that we ourselves will one day rise bodily from the dead to obtain eternal life and salvation (De Bruyn, 1997:81). The spiritual resurrection is followed by the bodily resurrection on the day of the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15). Erickson (1992:378) adds that at the second coming of Christ, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body which will be reunited with the soul. Thus, orthodoxy held to both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.

3.8.1 Summary

- Death brings sorrow, unhappiness, and fear in the life of a believer, but all believers have a true and reliable source of comfort, which is the resurrection of the body.
- Every believer is buried after death, and his soul immediately goes to heaven (cf Matthew 10:28); Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21; 23) and after death the body will be resurrected on the last day.
- The true faith and hope of a believer is based on the fact that there is eternal life after the resurrection of the body.
- Christ's resurrection is a sure guarantee for the blessed resurrection of the believer. This core truth of Scripture is confessed very clearly in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches.

3.9 CONCLUSION

- Death for the Christians is regarded as a resting period or phase.
- God is the author and only source of life.
- God has created our souls to be immortal, and He will also raise our bodies to be immortal.
- When a believer dies, we are sad (1 Corinthians 12: 26), but we are sustained by the hope of the resurrection of the dead and by the knowledge that we will meet with the deceased on the last day.
- There will be a general resurrection of believers and the unbelievers.
- Believers after death will receive eternal life as a reward and blessing.
- Christians should constantly confess the resurrection of the body.

CHAPTER 4 THE EVALUATION OF THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND THE REFORMED THEOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, a literature study as well as a scientific questionnaire has been done to do a research on the African traditional viewpoint with regard to the concept of the resurrection. In chapter 3 the biblical standpoint in line with the Reformed doctrines has been outlined. The aim with this chapter is therefore to make an interaction between the two chapters with the intention of correcting the African traditional viewpoint to be in line with the biblical standpoint.

4.2 Inferences derived from Chapter 2

4.2.1 The Origin of man

- We have identified that there are so many ideas which are wrong in the context of African religion with regard to the origin of man.
- According to the Africans (cf Zulus, Nguni, and Thonga) man originated from reed-beds, trees, out of a cavern in the ground (Sotho), and from a hole (Sotho).
- The Africans based their views on the origin of man from African Mythology.

4.2.2 The Scriptural principle on the origin of man

- Scripture informs us that man has been created by God (cf Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 2:7).
- In Genesis 2:7 we read: “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being”.

According to Belgic Confession (1561, article 14) God created man from the dust of the earth and formed him in his image and likeness-good, just, and holy; able by his own will to conform in all things to the will of God (Geisler, 1994). He made the body first because it would be the dwelling place into which He would place man’s soul. God first created the body of man from the dust of the earth; it was without life. It was a corpse.

Hodge (1988:239) points out that the man’s body was formed by the immediate intervention of God. It did not grow, nor did any process of development produce it.

- God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source of our life.
- The Christians base their views with regard to the creation of man on God who is the source and author of life. They fully understand that the creation of man is based on the trinity.

4.2.2.1 Summary

- God created man. Man is composed of a mortal body and immortal soul. Therefore man is a living being that lives dependently on God.
- The Triune God created man being holy and in the image of God. There is direct link between God and man. God is the source of human life. He creates and at the same time can take life according to His own will.

4.3 The inferences on the African views on the human spirit/soul

- Africans hold to the view that the soul of a human being returns to the spirit-land when he dies.
- The soul of the deceased is called *ithongo* or *idlozi* (cf 2.2.4 and questionnaire 2.2.9.3.2) by some African people.
- There is a general belief amongst Africans that a spirit can leave the body temporarily when a person is asleep.

4.3.1 Scriptural principles on the human spirit/soul

- God has created our souls to be immortal, and He will also raise our bodies to be immortal. The souls of all human beings belong to God (cf Ezekiel 18:4; Job 27:3). The London Confession of Baptist Faith Chapter xxxi) states that the bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.
- The human spirit is given by God alone, and it is not derived from man (cf Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 57:16). The spirit is formed within the individual by God (cf Zechariah 12:1). God is the Father of all spirits (cf Hebrews 12:9). Man consists of dust and the breath of God (cf Genesis 2:7).
- Scep (1964:173) mentions that the whole Adam, body and soul, by God's creating, life-giving power, became a living "Soul".
- God can destroy the soul according to His will (cf Matthew 10:28), and He can take away the soul according to His will (cf Luke 12:20).

De Bruyn (1997:103) points out that the souls of believers are taken up to Christ immediately after this life. Grudem (1994: 816) reports that once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, at the moment of death the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing.

The souls of believers when they separate from their bodies, go directly and immediately to Christ in heaven, to the house of their Father with many rooms (cf John 14:2). The deceased believers abide with Christ in paradise (cf Luke 23:43). They exist there as souls. In that state they are fully conscious, they taste something of the glory of heaven (Luke 16:25; Revelations 6:10) and they reign with Christ (cf Revelations 20:4, 6).

The Westminster Confession of faith (1647 article 37) asserts that the souls of the righteous, being made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day (Grudem, 1994:1196).

4.3.1.1 Summary

- The human Spirit or Soul has an eternal immortality. The Spirit or Soul cannot be desolated by death.
- The human Spirit or Soul cannot live on its own as a ghost or else as a lost soul, because whether we live or die we belong to the Lord. He controls what happens to our soul when we die. In other words God has the ultimate power over the soul or spirit.
- God is the possessor of the human soul or spirit. The soul or spirit cannot live independently.

4.4 The African views on the aspect of death

- Most Africans regard death as their greatest enemy.
- Most Africans associate death as the act of evil forces of darkness. Mbiti (1969:151) says that the main causes of death in African Traditional Religions are believed to be witchcraft, sorcery and magic, curses from the living dead (ancestors), and God.

Mbiti (1969:45) stresses that the Luo people amongst the many African tribes associate death with God. Mbiti (1970:53) points out that the Luo people believe that God causes both births and deaths of individuals.

- Death is regarded as contaminating and defiling the living people who come close to the corpse.
- Most Africans believe that the deceased lives in the next world (i.e Spirit-land).

4.4.1 Scriptural principles on the aspect of death

- God is able to restore life irrespective of any cause of death (cf chapter 3, point 3.3.1.10.1). God is the giver of life. He has the final word with regard to death. Scripture clearly confirms that God is the cause of both birth and deaths of individuals (cf Ecclesiastes 3:2; Job 1:21; Jeremiah1:5).
- Death is referred to in Ecclesiastes 12:7 as separation of soul and body. Onukwugha (1996) states that theologically death is defined as the separation of soul and body.
- Through Christ's resurrection death has been conquered and there is no need to fear death any longer. Nelson (2001:97) declares that God does not let death have the final say over us. God does not forget the righteous people. He will awake them at his own determined time.
- Death for Christians is just regarded as a resting period or phase (cf Chapter 3 point 3.7 and Matthew 25:5).
- According to Erickson (1992:376) death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence; it is not, as some tend to think that is an extinction. Johnston (2002:25) mentions that death is often portrayed as the natural end of life.

4.4.2 Summary

- Death is inevitable and cannot be avoided by any human being. It is of course a great enemy. God grant us victory through Jesus Christ who had conquered death (cf 1 Corinthians 15:56).
- There is no human being that has the right to take the life of another person.
- Christ has conquered the power of death, so death has no more power over the lives of the living people (1 Corinthians 15:57).
- The bodies of believers shall not remain in the graves for ever (cf Daniel 12:2).

4.5 The body of the deceased

- The deceased are summoned to the mortuary on the day of death. The corpse cannot be kept in the house due to health reasons.
- According to all Africans, the family members who have experience should wash the corpse with water. It is a taboo to bury a person without washing the body.
- Certain family members are not allowed to touch the corpse or come near it such as children, pregnant women, and witches. It is believed that when a pregnant woman comes near a corpse the child she is going to conceive will be deformed.
- It is necessary that the night vigil should be conducted to comfort the bereaved family.
- The corpse is brought in the house and the church to show the last respect to the deceased.

4.5.1 Scriptural principles with regard to the body of the deceased

- It seems a common practice in the Bible to bury the dead the same day if the body is not embalmed (cf Acts 9:37; Luke 7:12, 14). In Canaan, in ancient times and in the more primitive parts of the land even today, there was (and is) no embalming in most cases but immediate burial to avoid unpleasant odours (cf Acts 5:5-10) and ceremonial uncleanness (cf Numbers 19:11-22).
- Embalming was typical for Egyptians but unusual for nomadic shepherds. Believing that the dead went to the next world in their physical bodies, the Egyptians embalmed bodies to preserve them so they could function in the next world to come.
- Jacob's family allowed him to be embalmed as a sign of courtesy and respect to the Egyptians (cf Genesis 50:2-3).
- In the time of Jesus Christ, the bodies were wrapped in clean linen (cf Matthew 27:57-60), and spices and ointments were prepared (cf Luke 23:56).
- The body was washed before burial (cf Acts 9:37). According to this verse, it is not wrong to wash a corpse.
- Jesus touched the coffin of the widow's son (cf Luke 7:14).
- We do not have scriptural evidence with regard to the night vigils, it was customary for professional mourners to be brought in at the time of death (cf Mark 5:38). The use of professional mourners was quite common when finances permitted it. The procession was led by these professional mourners followed by family members who filled the air with cries of sadness and agony (cf Matthew 9:23; Ecclesiastes 12:5; Jeremiah 9:17).
- In the accounts of Job's comforters (cf Job 2: 11-13) and the friends of Mary and Martha (cf John 11: 18-19), we come to the conclusion that it is not unscriptural to observe night vigils as long as we utilize the time to comfort the bereaved and challenge the living about their own eternal destiny.

4.5.2 Summary

- It is quite a good gesture to place a body of the deceased in a decent secluded place after death while the burial preparations are taking place at home.
- We have Biblical evidence to wash the body of the deceased, it is wrong to use herbs such as *umsatane*. Soap and water is sufficient to wash the body.
- The human body can be touched by anyone because the deceased is still a person. His body cannot defile or contaminate any person.
- Night vigils should be conducted as long as their main purpose is to comfort the bereaved family, and to pay the last respect to the deceased.
- The body must be handled with dignity and respect by all living human beings.

4.6. Burial

- In the African context it is a common practise to bury a person at his or her place of origin. The general belief behind this is the fear that the departed person's spirit can haunt those who ignored his wishes while he was still alive.
- Some African people usually bury the departed person with his or her belongings, especially those who were precious to his or her heart. He can be buried with weapons to defend himself and also with food.
- It is a custom amongst the African people that no man should shed tears during the funeral. Women and children are allowed to cry openly to express their sorrow.

4.6.1 Scriptural principles on burial

- A believer can be buried anywhere like Moses at Moab (see Deuteronomy 34:6, chapter 3, point 3.5.). We know that the soul of the believer is taken to God immediately (cf Ecclesiastes 12:7).
- Scripture informs us that we did not bring anything into this world. When we came to this world we were naked, and we will also depart being naked (cf Job 1:21), therefore all the precious things we have accumulated in this world are going to remain behind when we die one day.
- According to Scripture it is not a sin for a man to cry in front of all people (Jesus Christ cried for Lazarus, John 11:35).
- Calvin (1976: 534) argues that Abraham was anxious about the burial of his wife (cf Genesis 23:4,19) by adorning her dead body with the insignia of the resurrection; he confirmed his own faith, and that of his family.

4.6.2 Summary

- All people who had departed without being buried and there are no trace of their bodies, their souls are with God if they were believers, and non-believers' souls are in hell (cf Luke 16:23, chapter 3, point 3.3.1.10.1).
- Death for the believers is regarded as a rest from our labours (cf Revelation 20:14).

4.7 Evaluation, comparison and the implications

- One cannot agree with the Africans views with regard to the creation of man. The Scripture tells us vividly that it is God who created the heavens, earth (see Genesis 1:1) and man (see Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). The earth and everything on it, as well as human beings belong to God (see Psalm 24:1).

- There is only one and true God (see Deuteronomy 6:4) who created man.
- Man had been created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:27) not in the image of the African gods.
- God alone formed man from the dust of the ground (see Genesis 2:7) not from a reed-bed, or from a hole, or a tree as it is maintained by some Africans. When man dies, he returns back to dust (see Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Psalm 90:3; Job 34:15; Ecclesiastes 3:20).
- When man dies, his mortal body (see Genesis 6:3; Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 5:4) returns to dust. His immortal soul (see Ezekiel 18:4; Job 34:14) returns back to God, that is in heaven for believers and the unbelievers souls go to hell.
- The angels of God are his messengers who are sent to take the believer's soul to heaven (see Luke 16:22; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:2), and to Jesus Christ (see Acts 7:59). There are no ancestors that can receive the spirit of the deceased person.
- The Scripture reveals to us that the destiny of the souls of the believers is in heaven (see Revelations 6:9; 20:4). This is a clear indication to us that the human souls are immortal. Many African people believe that the spirit of the deceased remain in the grave or hovers around the grave.
- The resurrection of all believers will be possible because God raised Christ from the death (see Matthew 28:6-7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:5).
- The Word of God reminds us that the resurrection is the focus of our faith and hope (cf 1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Since God raised Christ, we shall also surely experience the resurrection of our bodies.
- The Scripture declares emphatically to us that there will be a multicultural and multi-racial resurrection of believers. We read about this issue from the OT and NT: In the book of Daniel 12:2 we read "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt".

In Revelations 7:9 we read “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands”. In this verse we learn that the resurrection will include all believers from different denominations, culture, all races.

The believers who stand before the throne of God are those who confessed Christ as their Lord and Saviour while they were still alive.

The resurrection is going to embrace all people from various cultural background, race, ethnicity, and people from various ages.

4.8 Conclusion

We have noted in this chapter that the African people investigated did not agree regarding the real origin of the man. They based their various views on questionable speculations.

In this regard we deduce from all their speculative views about the origin of man that they did not have knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We have also noted that they did not have a convincing and accurate source of information. They received their information primarily on African Mythology and the oral stories told by their elderly people.

Over against all African views based on the origin of man, Scripture gives us sufficient information on the creation of man. Scripture tells us that it is God alone who created man in his own image. Scripture also furnishes us with many pericopes and verses, which inform us about the creation of man and his relationship with God.

The Reformed Confessions give us sufficient information about the creation of man (see The French Confession (Art ix); Shorter Catechism i.e question 10).

Man is not a descendant of the gods. He was created by God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We noted that after God created man, he gave him a special breath (soul) so that he may be able to survive. Man composed of two elements, the mortal body and the immortal soul.

We have noted that it is only God who is the source of life. He can create and sustain life. This means that God alone controls the life of all human beings.

We have noted that all human beings are destined to die even if they are afraid of death. Their mortal bodies decay and return to dust, as they came from dust. Their immortal souls return to Jesus Christ. The believers' soul goes to heaven, while the non-believers' soul goes to hell. We do not read anywhere in the Holy Scriptures that when a person dies then he or she automatically becomes an ancestor or joins the hierarchy of the ancestors.

The Scriptures clearly inform and teach us that there is going to be a resurrection of all human beings. God is going to effect the resurrection of the body through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We read nowhere about the resurrection of human beings from the African viewpoints. The Africans only promote the spirit of the ancestors, not bodily resurrection.

The fact that the book of Revelation 20:12 mentions the dead, great and small standing before the throne of God it is a clear indication that there will be a bodily resurrection with regard to all human beings. In Revelation 7:9 the great multitude that no one could count is also an indication that the human beings are going to experience a bodily resurrection.

It is evident from the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions that the body and the soul will be united again. There won't be a separation of them.

We conclude that the traditional African views on the origin of man, ancestors, death, the future of the spirit, the resurrection of the body, are totally unscriptural. African Christians must therefore accept the consequences of coming to true faith and be converted from the above-mentioned unscriptural views and practices.

CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to assist African Christians to keep and defend the Biblical teaching about the resurrection of the body and to abstain from worshipping the ancestral spirits. In every chapter the Scriptural texts were outlined to give more insight with regard to the following aspects: The origin of man, ancestral spirits, death, soul/spirit, the body, and the resurrection. The detailed research about these aspects was done, exegeted, summarised, compared and evaluated.

5.2 Findings of the Research

In the first chapter the problem was formulated and the main concern amongst most African Christians is that they believe in the ancestral spirits. Most African Christians still worship God as well as their ancestors (Syncretism). Death is attributed to witchcraft or sorcery and evil spirits. There is a clear indication that there is not enough information with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection amongst most Christians. In this regard we can conclude by saying that there is a great need for Scriptural teaching to help the Reformed Christians to overcome this problem.

In Chapter two the main aspects was to outline African views about the following aspects: origin of man, the resurrection of body, and spirit/soul, death, and ancestors. We noted in this chapter that the Africans lacked true knowledge with regard to the abovementioned issues.

The result of the questionnaire is that African Christians still adhere to traditional customs and beliefs. Many African Christians cannot discern clearly between true Christian worship and pagan worship.

The majority of African Christians do not have a clear understanding with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection.

In Chapter three many passages in the OT and in the NT give us sufficient information about the resurrection of the body, the unification of the body and the soul. This is based on the fact that God is the author and source of life. The most important aspect is that the resurrection is the work of the Triune God.

In Chapter Four the evaluation, comparison, and the implications between the Biblical and non-Biblical views were outlined to defend the true Scriptural standpoint: The findings were:

- Speculative views about the origin of man cannot be accepted, it is only God who created man.
- The body of man is mortal and his soul is immortal.
- Death is not the end of a human being, but a transformation to a permanent life.
- The resurrection is a reality for all believers. There will be a general resurrection of human beings (believers and non-believers). Heaven is the eternal home for all believers. Hell is the destiny of the non-believers.

5.3 Summary of Reformed Doctrine and creeds

The Reformed Christians should adhere to their doctrines and creeds so that they can be able to uphold their Christian principles and norms, and these are the following aspects that they should consider that will keep their faith in God:

- They must confess their faith in **God** alone, for we believe in God, the Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His Son, and our Lord (see Apostles' Creed). Jesus Christ is our only mediator, not the ancestors (cf 2.8.3.13).

This we confess also in the Nicene Creed: We believe in one **God**, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. It is therefore wrong to uphold to ancestral beliefs (cf 2.8.3.1) because they did not create us. God is our creator and Father who is in heaven.

- It is advisable for the Children in the Church that they learn the catechism especially at the age when they can understand it. The Children's catechism has short and direct questions and answers, for instance, question one says: "Who made you?" The answer is: **God** (see Children's Catechism). Unfortunately this children's catechism is not available in the African Reformed churches. Children should be taught at an early stage to know God as their heavenly Father, not the *Badimo*, *Abaphantsi*, *Izinyanya*, and *Amadlozi* (cf 2.8.3.2).
- The Reformed Christians are expected and obliged to worship **God** alone: The first commandment forbid the denying or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God, and the giving of that worship and glory to any other which is due to Him alone (see Shorter Catechism, question and answer 47).

We are obliged to worship God alone, and it is sinful to worship the ancestors (idolatry) (cf 2.8.3.9). It is only God who can protect us from evil forces, who can heal us, who can make us successful in our lives and not the ancestors (cf 2.8.3.5). They also cannot make us be prosperous (cf 2.8.3.16).

- Christians should not only confess with their mouths but confess with their lives that **Christ** is their Saviour and Lord: that I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, I am not my own, but belong to my faithful saviour Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins (see HC Lord's Day 1; question and answer 1).

- Reformed Christians are to base their faith in the power of the **Holy Spirit**, for we confess thus: I believe in the Holy Spirit (see Nicene Creed), the Lord, and Giver of life, who proceeded from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified (see Nicene Creed).
- It is of course very important to bury our deceased during funerals since the bodies of the faithful are the temples of the Holy Spirit which we truly believe will rise again at the last Day, therefore Scripture commands that they be honourably and without superstition be committed to the earth (see Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 36). Even though there are Africans who argue that the body is an empty box (cf 2.8.3.17.3) it must be respected by all people.
- Sufficient knowledge about the **soul or spirit**: After this life our souls are taken up immediately to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 22; question and answer 57). The believers' souls do not die or sleep (see Westminster Confession of faith, chapter 32), but immediately return to God who gave them.

The believers' souls are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God (see Westminster Confession of faith, chapter 32). This is contrary to African Christians who say the spirit hovers around the homestead, others say the spirit goes to the spirit-land, others mention that it goes to the grave together with the corpse or body (cf 2.8.3.17.2). Amongst the other African groups state that the spirit goes to heaven (cf 2.8.3.17.2 i.e 44%).

- The resurrection of the body is confirmed by the reformed creeds: We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come (see Nicene Creed), and the Apostles' Creed mentions that we believe in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

We confess that our bodies will be raised by the power of Christ (see HC Lord's Day 22, question and answer 57). What is interesting is that all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies (see Westminster Confession of faith, Chapter 32), and the (Savoy Declaration of faith and Order, chapter 31) adds with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever.

5.4 Identification of Problems

In this study the following negative aspects have been identified:

- Some African Christians still cling to superstitious beliefs and are afraid of death and dying.
Death is thought by some African Christians as something that occur through the evil actions of witches and sorcerers. They do not think that people die because of age and health reasons.
- Some African Christians do not live according to the standard norms of their confessions. They live contrary to their church confessions e.g. they bring offerings to their ancestors and at the same time they claim to worship God.
- Some African Christians do not believe in the resurrection of the body although they recite it every Sunday at their churches (from the Apostle Creed).

5.5 Possible Solutions

- Preaching in Church, during funerals and conference situations, especially during mother's union conferences (Reformed Church women's conferences) about the fear of death and the resurrection of the death.
- During Bible Study times, catechism classes, family Bible Study times, and house visitation occasions are suitable times for discussing these aspects.

- Reformed ministers should write articles about the doctrine of the resurrection of the body so that they can be published in the “*Kerkblad*” and this journal should be distributed in the Black and White African Reformed Churches to be read by members.
- Symposiums must be organised within the African Reformed Churches for men, women, and youth and request the ministers as well as professors to teach about the essence of the soul and the deceased body.
- Reformed ministers can also write sermons about the soul/body and their unification after the resurrection.
- Members who still adhere to ancestral worship should be disciplined by applying Church discipline.
- The following Biblical principles should be adhered to in order to solve the problem of **Syncretism** (the mixing of elements from different religious traditions) which is prevalent amongst African Christians:
 1. All human beings are commanded to worship God alone (cf Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7).
Jesus Christ emphasised these words by saying that no one can serve two masters (cf Luke 16:13). Therefore a believer cannot serve the ancestors and God at the same time.
 2. The Bible clearly condemns believers that consult the dead (ancestors) to seek advise from them (cf Deuteronomy 18:10-13; Isaiah 8:19).
Since the believer has been called to relate to God in all aspects of his life, there is no room in his life to keep on consulting the dead or the *sangomas* (witchdoctors). The Holy Spirit is the believer’s teacher and counsellor in all things (cf John 14:26).
 3. True believers must adhere to the word of God to find His will and guidance during their entire lives on earth (cf Isaiah 8:20b; Luke 16:29). God promises to bless all believers that are willing and prepared to meditate regularly on His word at the same time and put to practise what

the word is telling them (cf Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; John 8:31-32; James 1:25). Prosperity and success comes from God alone, not from the ancestors.

4. All believers are encouraged to call the Name of God during trials and tribulations (cf Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 145:18; Isaiah 58:9; Matthew 7:7). God is always ready to answer His children. Ancestors cannot hear us even if we can constantly worship them.
5. African Christians who are still seeking advise and often consult ancestors and spiritists are going to be condemned by God (cf Leviticus 20:6; 1Samuel 28:8). To invoke the spirit of ancestors during times of trouble or difficulty in order to know the future is a grievous sin before God.
6. African Christians should be advised by their ministers that only Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the way, truth, and life (cf John 14:6). As the way, Jesus is our path to the Father, as the truth, He is the reality of all God's promises, and as the life, He joins his divine life to ours, both now and eternally.

5.6 Contributions

The following can be recommended to the practical problems:

- The Scripture is the only source that defines vividly the origin of man. Reformed Christians must study the Word of God and the confessions so that they should understand and know that God created man.
- The African Christians who adhere to traditional views should consider the Bible as the solid foundation of Christian religion.
- The Reformed Christians are advised to base their faith and worship service on the Trinity (God the Father), (God the Son), and (God the Holy Spirit).
- Reformed Christians should be informed and be warned that the ancestors do not exist and cannot be worshipped. Ministers can do these through weekly Bible Studies.

- The Children Catechism should be translated into various African languages so that it can be utilised by them in various African Reformed Churches.
- During worship services ministers must preach about the following aspects: The human soul/spirit; death, especially the fear of death; the human body; the resurrection of the body; and the unification of the soul and the body.

5.7 Conclusion

We conclude this study by making the following deductions:

- That Reformed Christians do not have sufficient knowledge with regard to the origin of man, and his relationship to His Creator (God).
- The Scriptures are not sufficiently preached and taught in order to assist Reformed Christians to understand that it is sinful to worship and serve the ancestors.
- The fact that most Christians mixed ancestral worship and Christianity is because they did not receive enough Biblical teaching and catechetical instructions.
- During funerals and Church services ministers do not preach enough about the doctrine of the resurrection.
- During funerals many ministers only preach more on aspects such as faith and conversion or repentance.

In contrary to above-mentioned deduction the Reformed Christians need to be assisted with the following aspects:

- To overcome the fear of death, idolatry, and superstitions.
- To base their Christian religion in God (their Creator), Jesus Christ (their Saviour), and the Holy Spirit (their source of life and comforter).
- They must be assisted to understand and confess the resurrection of the body.

- Children should be helped to have a solid background of the catechism. They must be taught to base their prayers on God the heavenly Father. The children see that their parents worship ancestors, so they think that the ancestors are superior to God.
- God is the centre of the Reformed worship. All confessing Christians are expected to honour, fear, praise, and glorify Him alone.
- Jesus Christ is our only Saviour and Lord.
- Our belief is based on the power of the Holy Spirit, the source of our life.
- All Christians are expected to bury the deceased with honour, respect, and dignity.
- During death the believer's soul is immediately taken up to Christ. This means that the believer's soul cannot be disturbed or delayed by anything no matter how the person has died. The soul can also not be contained or left at a place where a person had died. The soul of the believer does not die or sleep.
- The Biblical teaching is unique because it confesses the assurance of the resurrection of the body. We also confess the belief in the everlasting life. It means for a believer in Christ there is a permanent life after this inferior one.
- Immediately after the resurrection, there will be a unification of the body and the soul.
- After the resurrection, the believer will still have the same body but in a transformed state, meaning with different qualities and without defects.
- The African Christians should know the following important aspects with regard to the resurrected body of a believer:
 1. The Scripture declares that there will be a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked (cf Acts 24:15). This means that there will be a universal resurrection of all people.
 2. At the time of the resurrection, living Christians shall instantly be changed without dying (cf 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). African Christians should know that all believers who are alive

during the day of the rapture⁸ will not die but will be escorted to the new heaven and earth.

3. The bodies of the righteous shall be raised incorruptibly (cf 1Corinthians 15:42-44). Christians and non-Christians' bodies are perishable and also prone to decay (cf questionnaire 2.2.9.3.17.3). Therefore God will transform the resurrected bodies.
4. The body of the believers shall be like Christ's glorious body (cf Philippians 3:21). After the resurrection believers will have transformed bodies that are no more weak and frail but will resemble the glorious body of Christ.
5. The bodies of the wicked shall be raised by Christ as judge (cf John 5:27-29; Matthew 25:33; Revelation 20:13).
6. After the resurrection of the body, every person will be judged according to his or her earthly deeds.

⁸ Rapture is the taking up or snatching up (from Latin *rapio*, "seize, snatch, carry away" of believers to be with Christ when he returns to the earth (Grudem, 1994: 1253).

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