

DISSERTATION

Inculturation:

Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture.

A Necessary Requirement for Effective Evangelization
for the Catholic Church in Ghana.

Verfasser

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
AAI	Afro Asiatische Institut
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
AA.VV	Auctores varii: Work published by various authors
ACS	African Christian Studies
AD	Anno Domini
AECAWA	Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa
AFER	Âfrican Ecclesiastical Review

AIC	African Instituted Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIPCA	African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa
AMECEA	Association of the Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AU	African Union
BC	Before Christ
BCC	Basic Christian Communities
BTA	Bulletin de Theologie Africaine
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCD	Catholic Catechetical Directory
CDF	Congregation for Doctrine and Faith
CEP	Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
CPP	Convention Peoples`s Party
cf.	Confer
c.	circa
CIC	Code of Canon Law
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CIWA	Catholic Institute of West Africa
DS	Denziger –Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationem de rebus fidei et morum
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
edt.(eds.)	Editor (Editors)
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
et al.	And others
GCBC	Ghana Catholic Bishops` Conference
IMBISA	Inter-Religious Meeting of the Bishops of –Southern Africa
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBC	Jerome Biblical Commentary
JRA	Journal of Religion in Africa
JMAS	Journal of Modern African Studies

LR	L'osservatore Romano
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
NCE	New Catholic Encyclopedia
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NT	New Testament
OLA	Our Lady of Apostles
PCID	Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
SCC	Small Christian Communities
SECAM	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SMA	Society of Missionaries for Africa
SVD	Society of the Divine Word Missionaries
TS	Theological Studies
WCC	World Council of Churches

VATICAN II DOCUMENTS AND PAPAL MAGISTERIUM

AG	Ad Gentes
AS	Apostolos Suos
AT	Africae Terrarum
DH	Dignitatis Humanae
DV	Dei Verbum
EA	Ecclesia in Africa
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
FR	Fides et Ratio
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LG	Lumen Gentium
NA	Nostra Aetate
OE	Orientalium Ecclesiarum
PDV	Pastores Dabo Vobis
RH	Redemptor Homninis
RM	Redemptoris Missio
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium

TMA	Tertio Millennio Adveniente
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio

0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This Thesis is the continuation of the previous work on “Proliferation of New Religious Movements in Ghana and the challenges they pose for the Catholic Church in Ghana.” This study is concerned with Inculturation as a means of effective evangelization and deepening of the Christian faith. Various authors and theologians have tackled the issue of Inculturation but our area of emphasis is the relevance of Inculturation for effective Evangelization for the Catholic Church in Ghana. In other words, no effective Evangelization can be undertaken or carried out without taking cognisance of the cultural milieu of the people concerned. Culture plays a vital role in evangelization. Jesus Christ is the model of incarnation and Inculturation. He became incarnate in one particular time and place. His entire life and ministry remain the central paradigm for uncovering and inculturating Gospel values of the Kingdom of God into particular cultural contexts. Wherever the Gospel is lived, wherever it is preached, we have the obligation to search continually for ways in which that Good News can be more deeply lived, celebrated and shared. This process is none other than the process of Inculturation.¹ Our preoccupation in this Thesis is the following: What is the effectiveness today of that innate force of the Gospel message which can penetrate to the depth of man's conscience? To what extent and in what measure is the power of the Gospel able to transform the minds of the men and women of this century? What methods and approaches should we employ in preaching the Gospel to ensure that it will achieve its full effect? Since the convocation of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, there has been a renewed awareness of the Churches in Africa of the enormous challenge before them to make Christianity not only credible but also relevant to the African. At the Special Assembly for Africa, the Synod Fathers acknowledged the challenge by indicating that the main questions facing the Church in Africa consist in delineating as early as possible what it is and what must be fully carried out, in order that its message may be relevant and credible. The Synod Fathers made frantic efforts devoid of any complacency to address the challenges among other problems facing the Church in Africa. The

¹ Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1990) 8.

renewed awareness of the challenges has been heightened with the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in Africa” by Pope John Paul II. Since the promulgation of Ecclesia in Africa, the Ecclesial community particularly in Africa have left no stone unturned in searching for fruitful implementation of the resolution of the Synod. A thorough implementation of the resolution in the Exhortation will go a long way to address the challenges facing the Church in Africa.

In implementing the resolutions of the Synod and bringing it to Ghanaian ecclesiastical level, we have considered the following questions: The Church has taken root in our people, but has she sufficiently taken root in our culture? How can the Catholic Church in Ghana find its genuine Ghanaian expressions and at the same time belong to the universal church? What Ghanaian cultural values are worth inculturating into the church? Ghanaian Catholics of all ages and backgrounds must be able to discern the values of Ghanaian religion and culture and offer these values for the enrichment of the Church in Ghana and the global church at large. In this regard, we would like to highlight the advice of Pope John Paul II on Inculturation:

The proclamation of the Gospel to all peoples of the earth cannot take place without the encounter of the Good News with cultures, an encounter which entails transformation of the authentic values of these cultures by their integration into Christianity. In order to help the church become more deeply rooted in African soil, it would be well, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council to bring to light these elements of the traditions which could better enable her to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the Saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life.²

The call of Pope John Paul II underscored the need to embark seriously on the process of Inculturation. This is definitely urgent and necessary for the Church in Ghana. It is only through Inculturation that the young church in Ghana can present

² Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 22.

to the Ghanaian a true meaning of Christianity that is in conformity with the African genius and in harmony with the vision of the universal church.

0.2 The Nature and Aim of the Study

As in any scientific study, one has to give reasons why the study is been undertaken, how it is to be approached, the type of questions it is meant to address, and the new knowledge it is supposed to add to human knowledge about the particular phenomenon or subject matter. The aim of this research is to study how to get the best of Ghanaian culture to engage with the Gospel, to bring about something new and relevant to our Ghanaian situation. The two key concepts in this investigation are Inculturation and evangelization. The task at hand is not to embark on a detailed definition of Inculturation and evangelization. The study is more about finding out ways and means for effective evangelization through inculturation.

Therefore the task of this Thesis is the creation of Ghanaian inculturated Church – a church relevant to the particular needs and life situation of Ghanaians. It is of vital importance that the Christian faith becomes a way of life for our people. This is what this Thesis sets out to achieve; the Gospel message must permeate the very core and fabric of life of our people. Just as the “Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us”, so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life situation of the hearers of the Word. This fact is brought home by John Kyule in these words:

Das Ziel missionarischen Handelns ist das Zeugnisgeben von der frohen Botschaft des Evangeliums bei allen Völkern der Welt. Die Botschaft des Evangeliums soll den Adressaten erreichen und deshalb ist die Berücksichtigung von dessen Weltanschauung mit all ihren Implikationen konstitutiv für eine erneuerte missionarische Praxis. Wenn das Evangelium alle Kulturen durchdrungen hat, kann man von einer wirklichen Weltkirche sprechen. Dabei meint der Begriff Weltkirche folgendes: Aus dem kulturellen Reichtum der Völker schöpfen, damit dieser Reichtum

im Lichte des Evangeliums neu erhellt wird, um ihn letztendlich als ein christliches Ganzes zu begreifen.³

Thus if the Gospel message is to bear desired fruits, it must be understood and lived by the people in their concrete life situations. Hence the need to make the Gospel part and parcel of life of our people. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel by taking into consideration their cultural particularities.

0.3 The Background and Importance of the Study

The Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place in Rome from the 8th of April to the 10th of May, 1994, at the convocation of Pope John Paul II, seems now to be an event of the past, but it is never forgotten. It must be accounted as a significant milestone in the history of the Church in Africa, which must bear fruits across the breadth and length of Africa. The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa was a special event in the history of the Church in Africa. Delegates from all over the world, especially those from Africa who participated in the Synod have sincerely expressed their conviction that the Synod was a moment of great grace for themselves and for the Church in Africa. It was an attempt to help the Church in Africa to reflect and make more concrete the joyful experience of the liberative aspects of the Gospel in a continent struggling to emerge from economic and political crisis. It has also helped Africa to free herself from religious crisis, violent ethnic and inter-boundary conflicts, moral degeneration and a greater experience of insecurity in families due to sub-human conditions that threaten the cohesion of family life.

This Thesis takes inspiration from the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, where there was real effort of reflection on the future of the Church Communities in Africa. The Special Assembly for Africa had as its theme: "The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission towards the Year 2000: You shall be My Witnesses (Acts 1:8)" Through calling a Special Synod Assembly, His Holiness

³ John Mwangangi Kyule, *Inkulturation des Christentums in Afrika angesichts des gesellschaftlichen Wandels*, Diss. (Westf. Universität, 2000), 7.

Pope John Paul II intended to promote in a particular way the proclamation of the Gospel in Africa during the closing years of the twentieth century, which in many ways was supposed to mark a turning point in the history of the continent. The object of the Synod was to assist the Church in Africa to deepen, in communion with Peter and the other Particular Churches, her commitment to the mission of Evangelisation, taking into account her history and development as well as the whole cultural, social, political and economic context in which she lives.⁴ As in other Special Assemblies, the focus of the Special Assembly for Africa was on certain pastoral concerns of the continent. As no Particular Church or group of Particular Churches is ever in isolation from the whole, the concerns of the Church in Africa interest the whole Church. Reflection on the demands of Evangelisation in Africa now is part of a widespread current of renewal in the proclamation of the Word of God, in older Churches as well as in the younger ones.⁵ Therefore, the focus of the Synod was evangelization with emphasis on Inculturation, proclamation, interreligious dialogue, justice and peace and means of social communication. The addresses at the Synod touched on numerous topics vital to the life of the Church in Africa: justice and peace, dialogue with Moslems, the rights of women, formation of priests and catechists, and the Inculturation of Christianity in African liturgy, theology and family life. These are the pertinent pastoral concerns of the Continent. There is a desire to renew Evangelization on the Continent and to give it dynamism, especially in view of the new challenges in the Third Millennium.⁶ The Synod Fathers explored at length the complexity of the problems facing the Church in Africa today. The Synod was an opportunity to re-examine the process of communication of the Good News to see how effectively it enables Africa to grasp, live and tell their own manner the mighty works of God.⁷ The Church in Africa is called upon to renew, through the Word of God, the people's culture, their values, thought patterns and models of life. This calls for

⁴, Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican City, 1993) 5.

⁵, Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris* 7.

⁶ Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 7.

⁷ Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 19.

genuine Inculturation.⁸ In May, 1994, the bishops' Assembly of the African Synod ended in Rome. The Pope foresaw that after the Roman phase of the Synod, the task of implementing the decisions of the Synod would go on in the Churches in Africa. The Synod was about the Church in Africa but each country has to implement the various decisions at its national, diocesan and parochial levels. It is by so doing that the fruits of the Synod can bear meaningful results in the lives of the people in Africa. Therefore, this study aims at bringing the fruits of the African Synod home by finding out ways and means of rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian culture. In July, 1989, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana organised a National Pastoral Congress aimed at careful planning of the Church in Ghana, and devising proper and appropriate strategies for effective Evangelization. The National Catholic Pastoral Congress produced a study entitled "Ecclesia in Ghana". The Bishops in their wisdom saw that they could not limit the implementations of the African Synod to the continental African Church without bringing its fruits to the various countries at the national level and eventually to the diocesan and Parish levels.

0.4 Methodology

Our methodology followed the three characteristics of Expositional, Analytic, and Synthetic. The work used the three methods in combined and complementary manner. We shall arrive at our set goal through deducing from given situations. We shall make a theological examination of the process of Inculturation and an ethnological consideration of the Ghanaian culture. This would enable us make a deduction from both considerations in order to arrive at what is relevant for the Catholic Church in Ghana. A historical approach will also be undertaken in this study. Firstly, because Inculturation is a contemporary concern of the church, which acknowledges and respects all cultures, it is of historical significance. Secondly, the central idea of this investigation is Inculturation, which means that cultural factors will play a significant role.

⁸ Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 7

0.5 Sources and Bibliography

According to Neuman a literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that we learn from and build on what others have done.⁹ This comment accurately captures the value of books, journals, magazines and newspapers in the flow of information as well as in the sharing of other people's insights and skills for growth, development and for awakening new ideas for research, and to learn from others and stimulate new ideas.¹⁰ Research has been carried out through interviews and the medium of questionnaire, which were distributed among various categories of people. The feedback is summarised in Resume of Answers to the questionnaire. Materials contained in this work have also been obtained through books from various libraries. Various authors have written on the issue of Inculturation in various aspects. But our preoccupation is the relevance of Inculturation to Africa with particular reference to Ghana. Other secondary sources such as the work of historians and social scientists, articles, study materials, newsletters and Newspapers which throw light on the phenomenon have been consulted and duly listed in the bibliography. A wide range of general literature has been consulted. General literature concerning the Church in Africa and the Church in Ghana. Extensive use has been made of the various published and unpublished literature listed in the bibliography. Journals, periodicals and bulletins, amongst others *Theological Studies*, *Theology for Southern Africa*, *Black Theology*, *Theology Digest*, *AFER*, *Grace and Truth*, *Review for Religious*, *Supplement to the Way*, carry good and thought provoking articles on Inculturation. To make this survey more manageable, sources are grouped by fields, namely, church documents, and historical sources.

0.6 Division of the Work

The study is systematically divided into seven chapters. Chapter one takes a brief look at the general situation in Africa in light of the Synod Bishops for Africa. The

⁹ Neumann, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 445.

¹⁰ Neumann, *Social Research Methods*, 446.

Synod was not only a church affair. It highlights the problems, difficulties and the challenges prevailing in Africa. Chapter two traces the background of how Ghana was evangelized - Advent of Christianity and some of the challenges facing the Catholic Church in Ghana today in its evangelizing mission. Chapter three talks about the theology of Inculturation while laying emphasis on the theological basis and Christological Dimension of Inculturation. Chapter four is about transformation of culture aimed at Evangelization. The task of evangelizing all peoples constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is bringing the Good News to different cultures. We examine the religious and cultural heritage of Ghana and try to explore their relevance for the process of Inculturation and evangelization. We highlight some salient Ghanaian cultural values worth inculturating into Christianity. Chapter five talks about the new Evangelization for the Church in Ghana. Chapter six asserts that Inculturation is aimed at effective Evangelization for the Catholic Church in Ghana and takes a look at some successful efforts at Inculturation in Ghana. It examines evangelization through Inculturation, and suggested ways of evangelizing through Inculturation. Chapter seven is summary, evaluation and general conclusion.

0.7 Conclusion

This introduction to the dissertation holds a significant position in the whole document because it sets the scene by outlining the purpose of the study, its format, the content and the method of approaching the proposed problem. The General introduction gives direction to the research, and it requires discipline, systematic thought and reflection. Working through this chapter serves to clarify and to highlight the challenge posed by the title of this study.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO THE SITUATION IN AFRICA IN THE LIGHT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS FOR AFRICA

1.1 Introduction

What does Africa look like in today's world? The only stable, unchanging data seems to be its surface area: 30,704,000 km², one fifth of the world's surface. Everything else is changing.¹¹ The whole world is passing through a period of great structural change and Africa is no exception. With the world's present tendency to become a global village, Africa risks losing much of its culture and even its identity. This Chapter is an attempt to look at the general situation in Africa in the light of the Synod of Bishops for Africa.

1.2 A Brief Insight into the Situation in Africa

The Synod of Bishops for Africa was far from being a "churchy" event devoted only to internal church issues. Rather the Bishops voiced their concern about the problems on the African continent. African problems of war, tribal conflict, the arms trade, mistreatment of women, the swelling ranks of refugees and efforts at democratization all came to the fore during the two weeks of Synod talks. According to Cardinal Josef Tomko, former Prefect of the Congregation for Evangelisation of the people, the universal church graciously considered the problems of Africa in this synod. The Synod attempted to put Africa back on the map, making its needs and dire poverty felt throughout the world.¹² This point was further highlighted by Bishop George Mpundu as follows: "on this continent of Africa we share the Good News of Jesus amidst much that is bad news in terms of human suffering: wars and tribal conflicts, refugees and displaced persons, famines and diseases, hunger and illiteracy, economic failures and political chaos, structures of oppression and violations of human rights."¹³ These are some of the

¹¹ Josef Tomko, *The Situation of the Church in Africa and Madagascar*, (E. Civitate Vaticana, 14 April 1994), 2.

¹² Josef Tomko, *The Situation of the Church in Africa and Madagascar*, 2.

¹³ George Telesphore Mpundu, Bishop of Mbala-Mpika (Zambia) "Intervention" in: *African Synod*, 102.

problems at the root of distress for many African Bishops. They are trying to spread the Good News on a continent where bad news is abundant. Nearly half of the African church leaders who came to the Synod raised their voices to make appeals on behalf of the Church and its people back home. Our evangelical message must have a transforming impact on these situations of bad news or it simply is not credible Good News for our people.

1.3 A Continent Full of Problems

Although Africa is a continent of wide diversity, one common situation, without doubt, is that Africa is full of problems. The impression of Africa given by the international press is mainly negative. For many people the mere mention of Africa brings up a myriad of problems. For the Western press, the name Africa has become synonymous with refugees, poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. However, it is also worth considering whether Africa has nothing good to offer the world. Vincent Owusu described the African situation as follows:

Africa in particular, is a continent beset by numerous political, social and economic problems; human division and sin, war and hunger, lack of respect for human rights, discrimination, injustice and powerlessness, corruption, sickness squalor, etc., all plague the African continent. There are the cries of those lost in their material poverty, and of others lost in their riches. Masses of people have never even heard Jesus' name, and there is disregard of God's message and plan for humanity. All these make Africa apparently a continent of bad news.¹⁴

All over Africa, the problems confronting the Continent are the same. Touching on the same issue, A Ebbuley laments Africa's pathetic situation as follows:

The current African situation, beset by conflicts and violence, is drawing attention all over the world. It is no good news! It is turmoil, communal conflict and violence, hatred and malicious actions towards ethnic groups in the same nation-State. There are institutionalised divisions, deep-rooted enmity between ethnic groups, religious sects and belief-systems. These have flared up in conflagration which are wreaking havoc on innocent lives, sowing death and destruction on citizens and bringing economic ruin.

¹⁴ Vincent Owusu, *The Victor Series 4 – The African Synod Charter for Renewed Evangelization Towards The Year 2000*, (Tamale: GILLBT Press, 1995), 1.

Millions of people have fled and continue to flee their homes across national borders. Mass immigration has resulted in overcrowded and cholera-ridden refugee camps where people die pathetically from apocalyptic diseases and plagues. Most of these are fleeing wars and government repression...¹⁵

It is an undeniable fact as portrayed by Ebbuley that abuse of political power and corruption has brought unspeakable suffering to people in Africa. There is therefore the need for a new generation of political leaders who have a moral conscience, a respect for the law and a sense of responsibility for the common good.

1.3.1 The Political Situation

The traditional system of government in Africa has eroded giving way to the colonial system of government. This lasted till some African countries gained independence from the colonial masters. Peter Sarpong described the current political situation in Africa as follows: Africa has only exchanged colonial servitude with indigenous oppressive terror. This has resulted in one coup after another which in turn, creates fratricidal wars, tyranny and sheer intimidation. Political deceit is rampant, vote rigging is taken for granted, political favours are granted without compunction; politics has, indeed, become a dirty game. It has introduced senseless executions, incredible and flagrant violations of human rights in the form of imprisonment without trial, torture, massacre of innocent Africans, suppression of freedom of the press, and of association, as well as religious intolerance. The political situation causes favouritism and nepotism and breeds hatred, antagonism and animosity. Megalomaniac leaders threaten citizens who do not toe the party line. Self-made godfathers tenaciously cling to power for decades even in the face of worsening socio-economic conditions. They usually manipulate the electoral process to maintain a firm grip over power, usually seen as a personally acquired property.¹⁶ In the opinion of Peter Sarpong, Africans were happy when they gained

¹⁵ Afful. Ebbuley, "Violence and State Security in Africa – A Sociological Analysis" in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, (Vol. 7:1-2, 1995), 5.

¹⁶ Peter Sarpong, "The African Synod and the powerful Word of God in evangelization at the threshold of the Third Millennium" in: *Studia Missionalia*, (Vol. 48, 1999), 354.

political independence from their colonial masters. Little did they realise that the leadership of African countries would, in the main, soon turn out to be corrupt, power drunk, oppressive and discriminating. The words “bribery and corruption”, “nepotism”, “intimidation” have become so common that they have lost their odium. Everywhere in Africa, fundamental human rights are flouted. The phenomenon of devil worship is fast gaining ground, competing with some of the barbaric and sadistic practices of some traditional secret societies.¹⁷ Democratic system of government is a new political system of government for Africa. As Oleri clearly stated, there are many traces of dictatorship on the African Continent today. Most of these dictators came to power by the barrel of the gun. Political instability has pulled the economies and the political systems of many African countries down. Political instability prevents many financial institutions to invest in such countries that are politically instable.¹⁸ African people are asking for pluralism, more participation in decision-making, and respect for human rights. The resistance to military regimes is strong in diverse areas. Some form of democratic governments are being born in some African countries, while in other countries it is those in power who are introducing significant constitutional reforms, while in yet others, military or authoritarian regimes remain in place. In one African country after another, the first signs are emerging that things may be changing. The African Report summed up the political situation in Africa as follows; twenty years ago, it was commonplace for African countries to be run as dictatorships; today such governments are a minority. Democracy has new life. In the past five years, more than two-thirds of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have had multi-party elections – some freer and fairer than others – with a number of examples of peaceful democratic changes of government. War has given way to peace in many places. Where change has occurred a new generation of political leaders is emerging, many of whom voice a new commitment to the common good

¹⁷ Peter Sarpong, *The Gospel as Good News for Africa Today*, Keynote Address at the Symposium: The Gospel as Good News for African Cultures, (Nairobi, Kenya, 16 February, 1998), 4. (Archbishop Peter Sarpong is a world famous anthropologist and inculturationist and the former Archbishop of Kumasi, Ghana.)

¹⁸ Godfrey Chukwunyere Oleri, *The Dynamic Character of the Mass Media in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church in Africa*, 54.

of their people. Of course, there are still oppressive regimes in Africa. Corruption remains pervasive. Violent conflict is all too frequent. Inefficiency, waste, and unnecessary bureaucracy are commonplace. Many nations lack the administrative and organisational capacity to deliver what their citizens require and deserve. The old Organisation for African Unity, with its policy of “non-interference” in the internal affairs of other African states, has been transformed into the much stronger African Union, which has a policy of “non-indifference” to the suffering of the citizens in neighbouring countries who do not respect democracy, human rights and the need for peace.¹⁹

1.3.2 The Economic Situation

The economy is based primarily on agriculture and husbandry, at a mere subsistence level. Fortunately, the land is fertile, except for the desert areas, which, however, are growing larger. A number of problems in the economic field are to be lamented: the immense international debt, economic dependence on non-African markets and nations, large areas beset by hunger, power struggles and wars, which then promote the arms trade to the detriment of development and produce violence and oppression. The meagre traditional economy is not enough to heal and satisfy all these needs. In addition, there are immense problems like AIDS, the problem of many millions of refugees and displaced persons, the emigration situation, to say nothing of difficulties in health care and education, rampant urbanisation, illiteracy, infant mortality, etc. Unemployment has taken over in societies where hard work was once prized above any other value. Everywhere, because of the political instability, social flexibility and uncertainty, disease reigns, bringing in its wake helplessness and wretchedness. Hunger stares the people in the face. The rate of child mortality is frightening. At the international level, Africans continue to produce raw materials whose ridiculous prices are fixed by the rich, powerful nations; African nations continue to grapple with the huge debts

¹⁹ The Report of the Commission for Africa, (March, 2005), 24.

The former British Prime Minister Tony Blair brought together 17 people to form a Commission for Africa. Their Task was to define the challenges needed to reduce Poverty in Africa. Hence to known as The African Report.

imposed on them by the rich nations. In this context, the movement to have the debts of the poorest countries cancelled is commendable. However, care must be taken to ensure that it is the poor, and not the rich, who mainly benefit from this cancellation. The Bishops of Africa taking part in the African Synod made their cry known in an open letter entitled “Forgive us our debts” to their brother Bishops in Europe and North America, asking for the cancellation of Africa’s debts.²⁰

1.3.3 Poverty

J. Moltmann in his reflection on the Gospel for the poor gives the following description of poverty:

What poverty means, extends from economic, social and physical-poverty to psychological, moral and religious poverty. The poor are all those who have to endure acts of violence and injustice without being able to defend themselves. The poor are all who have to exist physically and spiritually on the fringe of death, who have nothing to live for and to whom life has nothing to offer. The poor are all who are at the mercy of others, and who live with empty and open hands. Poverty therefore means both dependency and openness.²¹

We ought not to confine poverty in religious terms to the general dependence of men on God. However, it cannot be interpreted in a merely economic or physical sense either. It is an expression, which describes the enslavement and dehumanization of man in more than one dimension. Poverty is more than just lack of material things. Poverty means hunger, thirst, and living without descent shelter. It means not being able to read. It means chronic sickness. Poverty means not finding any opportunities for you or your children. Throwing more light on the poverty situation in Africa, the African Report has this observation to make: in Africa, millions of people live each day in abject poverty and squalor. They cannot read and write. Children are hungry, their bodies stunted and deformed by malnutrition. Those living in Africa’s mushrooming shanty towns live by stinking

²⁰ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 114.

²¹ J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit – A contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, (London; SCM Press, 1977), 79.

rubbish tips and breathe polluted air.²² The basic necessities of life must be available to the poorest people in Africa. Jesus showed concern for the poor and their well-being. So it is the duty of the Church to continue to carry out the work of Christ among the poor. The solidarity of the church with the poor means to meet Jesus Christ, who identified Himself with the poor and the needy. The people of the world have an instinctive urge to help those in distress. Given the underdevelopment and poverty under which Africa is suffering, while acknowledging the efforts already under way in view of development, the Synod calls on industrialised countries to promote real growth on the continent by paying fair and stable prices for its raw materials. It further calls on African governments to adopt appropriate economic policies in order to increase growth, productivity, and job creation.²³

1.3.4 Corruption

The African Bishops at the Synod laid the principal blame for this situation on bad government, economic mismanagement, and corruption. Most African political leaders have failed to understand that true leadership means service. Instead they are power hungry, greedy, corrupt, having enriched themselves at the expense of the people they are supposed to serve. Touching on corruption, the African Report has this say:

“The rot of corruption has spread throughout society at all levels. The international community should crack down on money looted by corrupt African leaders, now sitting in foreign bank accounts, and send that money back to the state from whom it was stolen. It is estimated that the amount of stolen money held in foreign bank accounts, is equivalent to more than half of the continent’s external debt. Nevertheless, corruption goes far beyond the actions of few kleptocratic leaders. It is present at all levels.”²⁴

Embezzlement and misappropriation of funds are serious sicknesses that need an urgent cure in Africa; otherwise, Africa may still remain in the darkness of underdevelopment. The African Synod also deplored corruption in the public life

²² The African Report, 21.

²³ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 105.

²⁴ The African Report, 36.

and the banking of embezzled funds in foreign countries. Given the underdevelopment and poverty under which Africa is suffering, while acknowledging the efforts already under way in view of development, the Synod calls on industrialized countries to promote real growth on the continent by paying fair and stable prices for its raw materials. The Synod asked people of integrity in their own countries and abroad to investigate ways of having these monies returned to what are already poor nation.²⁵ This was a humble appeal of the Synod Fathers because corruption has eaten deep into the lives of many African countries. The African Synod Fathers made passionate appeal to the world not to neglect the problems confronting the African Continent and should assist in combating some of these problems.

1.3.5 Tension, Violence and Civil Wars in Africa

For some years now Africa is the theatre of fratricidal wars, which are decimating populations and destroying their natural riches. These wars are caused among other reasons, by tribalism, nepotism, racism, religious intolerance, and the thirst for power reinforced by totalitarian regimes which trample with impunity the rights and dignity of the person.²⁶ The causes of tension in Africa vary considerably from one place to another. However, there are certain common conditions. The African Report names some these conditions as follows:

weak institutions and poor governance are risk factors, as are authoritarian rule, poverty and inequality, and the exclusion of minorities from power. States with high levels of corruption and low levels of accountability seem particularly prone to violence. There is a strong link between oil and other mineral wealth and the risk of conflict. Tension over access to land, water and other less lucrative but vital resources is also a factor. Moreover, group identities – such as tribalism, ethnicity or religion – often come into play in the competition for power. Triggers for tension and violence can include controversial elections, coups and assassinations, a sudden influx of refugees from a neighbouring country, and sudden shifts in the economy. Factors like these can convert structural proneness into actual violence; it is the

²⁵ Maura Browne et al. (eds.), “Propositions: Synod Documents”, in: *African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, (New York: Network, 1996), 86.

²⁶ The African Synod, *Propositions*, 45.

proliferation of small arms, which makes disputes much more lethal.”²⁷

Africa has experienced more violent conflict than any other continent in recent decades, with civil war, localised violence, and a general lack of security plaguing many countries. The toll on human lives has been enormous: conflict causes as many deaths in Africa each year as epidemic diseases and is responsible for more death and displacement than famine or flood. The international community must invest more in conflict prevention if Africa is to have a chance of development and prosperity. Oil, diamonds, timber and other high-value commodities all fuel Africa's conflicts. The sale of arms is a scandal since it sows the seed of death. The Bishops at the African Synod see Europe and North America as the source of good assistance which guarantees spiritual and material progress and the bad of the weapons and the bombs which cause the destruction of the people. The Bishops of Synod thanked the churches Europe and North America for their financial and political support and asked them to pressure their governments to stop selling arms to Africa. It also implores African governments to move away from huge military expenditure and put the emphasis on the education, health and well-being of their people.²⁸

1.3.6 Refugees and Displaced Persons

The African Continent has been plagued by ongoing civil wars, political unrest and natural disasters, causing the most horrific refugee crisis in recent memory. Although peace agreements in such countries as Angola and Sierra Leone have enabled many African refugees to repatriate, displacement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Liberia continues. Moreover, recent crisis such as Cote d'Ivoire are producing hundreds of thousands of refugees. As a result, millions of Africans remain in dangerous, poorly resourced refugee camps. Some of these camps are prone to violence, including murder, arson and rape. Many refugees for whom resettlement in a third country is the only durable solution languish for

²⁷ The African Report, 39.

²⁸ The African Synod, *Propositions*, 49.

years in the camps. Those who have been fortunate enough to repatriate often find it difficult to reintegrate in the absence of assistance that bridges the gap between emergency relief and sustainable development. The problem of war and civil strife constitutes a challenge for the mission of the Church in Africa. The Synod concedes this point by noting that: "The Church in Africa – especially through some of its leaders – has been in the front line of the search for negotiated solutions to the armed conflicts in many parts of the Continent."²⁹ The Synod asks the local churches to offer material assistance, in collaboration with the international agencies and with the aid of Catholic organizations, to refugees and displaced persons during their exodus in the camps and in the process of repatriation; to work effectively to eliminate those situations of violence and injustice which are at the root of forced migrations. Given the magnitude and plight of refugees and displaced persons in our countries, the Synod cried with anguish to the Organization of African Unity and all governments having diplomatic relations with those African countries from whence the refugees come or the displaced persons live, to remedy without delay the causes which are surely a disgrace to their image and to Africa.³⁰

1.4 The Religious Scenario in Africa

We look at the religious situation in Africa today. Africa is not only engulfed in political and economic problems. There are equally religious problems in Africa. In this regard, the following are worth mentioning. The important fact that contemporary Africa is, to a considerable extent, a rapidly changing continent in modern times, makes it imperative to consider the current realities of the evangelical situation of the continent. Some decades ago, especially during the era of the coming of the missionaries, there were little or no institutional hindrances to the work of evangelization. In many places, the missionaries were welcomed with open arms for showing the light to enable the people find the way. It is no longer the same, for a variety of reasons. The provision of education, on the wings of

²⁹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 118.

³⁰ African Synod, *Propositions*, 53.

which much evangelization work was done, is no longer the prerogative of the church. Some of the elite in various African societies are rediscovering the enduring values of their traditional cultures and religions and becoming more fascinated by these discoveries rather than by counterpart cultures and religions, which are often described as foreign.³¹ There are still teeming millions of unevangelized people in Africa. Therefore the Church in the Continent is faced with an enormous and urgent mission of bringing to them the saving message of Jesus Christ.³²

1.4.1 Proliferation of Sects and New Religious Movements

Everywhere on the continent, the proliferation of Sects and New Religious Movements is of great concern. The last ten years have witnessed an explosion of New Religious Movements all over the world, particularly in the Third world. This proliferation has startled both governments and the traditional Christian churches. Many governments have adopted some form of registration or restriction in an attempt to contain the proliferation. Some countries have actually banned several such groups, but it has to be said that bans or restrictions have had virtually no effect. The historical or mainline churches have also been affected. Many of these churches report that they are losing substantial numbers to these New Religious Movements.³³ The Catholic Bishops of Africa and Madagascar are similarly concerned with the rise and spread of new Christian movements in Africa. It must be admitted that the question of New Religious Movements is enormously complex. There is considerable variety among them, and attempts to group them all together under a single label inevitably oversimplify the matter. Here we will refer to them as New Religious Movements. This type of movements is evident all over the world, but in Africa the picture is even more complicated because Africa already had about 10,000 independent churches, even before the proliferation of

31 G.A. Ojo, "The Role of Catholic Tertiary Institutions in Evangelization in Africa, in: *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*, J.S. Ukpong et al. (eds.), (Port Harcourt: Ciwa Press, 1990), 13-14.

32 Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 16.

33 Secam, *New Christian Movements in Africa and Madagascar*, (Roma, 1992), 5.

New Movements in the last ten years. Among them, several categories can be tentatively distinguished. Firstly, there are those founded by older groups including the Seventh Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Mormons. Secondly, there are Eastern imports like the Baha'is, Eckankar, and various forms of the New Age Movements. Thirdly, there are the Fundamentalist-Pentecostal churches of mainly American origin; among these, some like the Potter's House, Chrisco, and the Rhema churches could almost be described as new denominations, but most are independent and autonomous fellowships. Fourthly, there are groups of a clearly African character, like Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement of Uganda, and Manuel Antonio's Naparams in Mozambique. This category could also include non-Christian or even anti-Christian movements like the Tent of the Living God in Kenya.³⁴ The new Fundamentalist-Pentecostal churches dominate overwhelmingly the religious landscape of Africa. This is the Christianity that is spreading through the crusades, revivals and worships that have become such a feature of many African cities. This is the Christianity spreading through radio and television programmes, popular literature, new ministries and Bible colleges.³⁵

1.4.2 The Threat of Islam

Most importantly, Islam is one of the major religions on the African continent that has recently reached a stage of high-level consciousness and expansion. Probably more than any other factor or force, Islamic resurgence, particularly in Africa, is challenging more than ever before the religious landscape of the African continent. This phenomenon of Islamic revival in Africa with an unveiled determination to dominate, and if possible, exterminate, other religions on the continent; is undoubtedly the most critical challenge before Christian evangelization in Africa. Islam promotes the establishment of traditional Islamic communities by organically co-ordinating in the religious, political and commercial aspects of the lives of the adherents. Islam offers a plurality of incentives to attract and retain its

³⁴ Secam, *New Christian Movements in Africa and Madagascar*, 6.

³⁵ Secam, *New Christian Movements in Africa and Madagascar*, 9.

followers especially by offering easier credit facilities and better employment opportunities and prospects for promotion, lesser taxes and levies, and virtually unlimited political advantages and other fringe benefits.³⁶ If the Church in Africa is to survive the onslaught of Islamic penetrations; more children of Africa will have to take on more responsible positions in the Church. The realities of the religious scenario in Africa correctly require the focus on the Islamic threat to evangelization, and indeed to the very survival of Christianity in Africa. It is also evident from recent activities of Islamic organizations that the above-mentioned strategies and many others are part of the master plan of Islamic domination over the whole world. Such objectives are always concretely backed up in terms of effective organizational structures and adequate funding. The tentacles of Pan-Islamism are engulfing Africa especially with the apparently unlimited petrodollars provided by some Arab countries for propagating Islam. It is a well-known fact that the power and wealth from oil that has been acquired by leading Muslims as well as the oil wealth being poured into African countries from other Islamic countries that can afford it, give Islamic expansion such an advantage that it cannot be overlooked when considering the religious scenario of evangelization in Africa.³⁷

1.4.3 African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the religious and cultural context from which most Christians in Africa come and in which they still live. The vitality of this religion varies from country to country but overall its influence remains in Africa. It is the religion which involves the totality of life. There are some countries or parts of countries where ATR is still the dominant religion and is practised as a public, social and organised system. In these places, ATR is part of the cultural heritage and determines the spontaneous and subconscious reactions of people and their interpretations of reality. Where there are still true adherents of ATR

³⁶ G.A.Ojo, "The Role of Catholic Tertiary Institutions in Evangelization in Africa", in: *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium – Challenges and Prospects*, J.S. Ukpong et al. (eds.), 14.

³⁷ G. A. Ojo, "The Role of Catholic Tertiary Institutions in Evangelization in Africa" in: *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*, J.S. Ukpong et al. (eds.), 14-15.

who do not yet want to become Christians, dialogue understood in the ordinary sense of mutual encounter is both possible and useful. In general, followers of ATR have been found to be open to such dialogue. With reference to neophytes who have been converted from ATR to Christianity or who are catechumens, dialogue is to be understood especially as pastoral attention to ATR and to its values and elements with a view to deeper evangelization.

1.5 Africa - A Continent of Great Hope and Vitality

The Bishops at the African Synod recognized the difficulty of giving a message of hope when so much fratricidal hate inspired by political interests is tearing the people in Africa apart, when the burden of the international debt and currency devaluation is crushing them. Even so, in the midst of all these problems, the Bishops proclaimed to the family of God in Africa and the family of God all over the world: Christ, our hope is alive, we shall live.³⁸ Thus the world can see that the Church in Africa is not just a collection of problems. There is also great hope and vitality. According to Cardinal Jozef Tomko, there is first and foremost a common value that imbues the African soul in all its cultures, and that is joy of life. He recalled the deep impression made upon the hearers by the remark of Bishop de Jong in Munich in December, 1988: "You, dear friends, have everything, but you are serious and sad. We have almost nothing, yet there is joy on our faces."³⁹ This is a value that is a sign of youth, which overflows in celebration and in Christian help; it helps in overcoming the difficulties of daily life. It facilitates optimism and enthusiasm in the faithful, and is a valuable source of apostolic and missionary dynamism. Thus the Church in Africa is a young, dynamic Church, one filled with life and potential.

In many parts of Africa, national Episcopal conferences have already celebrated their centenary of evangelisation. Maturation, though difficult, is in progress. The Church has helped African nations cope with the trauma of post-colonial

³⁸ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 72.

³⁹ Jozef Tomko, *The Situation of the Church in Africa and Madagascar: Some Aspects and Observation*, (E Civitate Vaticana, 14 Aprilis, 1994), 8.

independence. National and regional Episcopal conferences have taken positions against military dictatorship, ethnic and religious intolerance, poverty and oppression. SECAM has worked to promote evangelisation as integral human promotion and has criticised infringements of human rights.⁴⁰ All these are signs of hope of an evolving local church that will help demarcate the African church insofar as the church leadership courageously embraces the freedom of the children of God.⁴¹ Other signs of hope lie in an area not immediately under the control of the Church hierarchy. Generally throughout Africa today the search for security and for integral well-being has assumed unprecedented dimensions.

1.5.1 The Growth of Christianity

The ecclesial call on Africa takes cognizance of the state of African Christianity at the present. The African Church is a church growing every day in strength. The twilight Christian in Africa has witnessed a blossoming without comparison in the history of the Christian Churches.⁴² The rapid growth of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa in the last 100 years has been the most successful missionary effort in history. Although acknowledging that some missionaries were used by colonial governments, the African Bishops expressed gratitude to those who at great sacrifice brought the faith to Africa, fought their own governments to establish schools for Africans, and stayed when other Europeans fled. Abundant fruit was produced through their sweat and blood. The land of Africa has responded generously to Christ's call. In recent decades various African peoples have celebrated the first century of the beginning of their evangelisation. The growth of the Church on this continent during our century is something of a miracle. A hierarchy of priests and bishops is implicit in the establishment of Christian communities. As in education, early missionary achievements in this sphere are well attested to, especially by what is now described as the boom in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Ironically while the Catholic Church

⁴⁰ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 5.

⁴¹ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 6.

⁴² Reginald Nnadodzie Nnamdi, "The African Synod and the Social Question" in: *Catholic Social Teachings En-Route in Africa*, Obiora Ike, (ed.), (Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd., 1991), 297.

in Africa appears to be increasing in numbers, the independent churches and sects are also booming, some of which are composed of fallen Christians.

1.5.2 Africanisation of Christianity

Africanisation essentially means indigenisation, or better still inculturation, the process by which Christianity is accepted into African patterns of thought and behaviour. Having been accepted, as it were, into the heart of Africa, the Gospel must, like leaven, work itself through the entire structure, changing, adapting and using all that it finds there.⁴³ Obviously, this process does not take place on its own. People need to study, experiment and come to an understanding of how entire societies can become Christianized. Not simply to engineer the establishment of a superficial and external religion, it involves the true conversion and transformation of individuals, churches and communities. According to Kretzschmar, African Theology, then, is quite simply Christian Theology written in the context of Africa, bearing in mind the needs of Africa and the Gospel's message to Africa. This does not mean that Africans are cutting themselves off from the rest of the world, nor indeed writing an exclusive theology. Rather, it means that there is a vision to understand fully and live the Gospel as Africans, rather than Americans or Europeans. In fact, amongst some, there is even the vision of a great African Church making its contribution towards the universal church in terms of theology, mission and church life.⁴⁴ For those who wonder about the validity of such an enterprise, African theologians have not been slow to point out that the attempt to understand Christianity from a particular perspective, for the express purpose of making it relevant and meaningful to those to whom it is addressed, has been in progress throughout the many centuries of church history. From the early to the modern church, theologians have been engaged in the task of interpreting and presenting the Christian faith to the people of their time. African Theology in this century and on this continent is engaged in this very task, that of the intelligible proclamation of the Gospel. African Theology has deliberately

⁴³ Louise Kretzschmar, *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 24.

⁴⁴ Louise Kretzschmar, *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa*, 25.

addressed itself to the question of Christianity's contribution to, and relevance in, an African context. It was for this reason that the Gospel, as it was preached in the mission churches was in some of its emphases, irrelevant to the experience and questions of Africans. As a result, Christianity was not able to touch, renew or become part of the inner core of the experience of African believers. African Theology objects to the fact that Christianity, when interpreted in a purely Western sense, has been used to deny the value of African identity, culture and world-views. Thus, instead of the Christian faith working as leaven within African society, converts often tended to live in an uneasy balance between African and Western worldviews.⁴⁵ This emphasis on the development of an African Christianity must, however, not be seen to be a mere harking back to the past. African theologians do not want simply to return to the old way of life, but rather, in the context of the Christian faith, to preserve that which is valuable in traditional African life and religion, to respond to the challenges of contemporary African experience. The overriding concern of African Theology is its emphasis on a holistic salvation, not salvation that affects only the soul or spiritual things but one that touches, heals and changes all of life. This follows from an African world-view, which is predominantly ontological, i.e. that religion is the essence of life. It is not a separate, spiritual compartment, but an attitude that penetrates life as a whole.

1.5.3 The Prophetic Mission of the Church in Africa

The Synod of Bishops for Africa drew attention to the problems of the continent, asking the question: In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message "Good News" for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where is the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings? Evangelization stands for many of those essential values which our continent very much lacks: hope, peace, joy, harmony, love and unity.⁴⁶ Despite the negative picture which today characterises many parts of Africa, the church has the duty to affirm vigorously that she is the voice of the voiceless and must demonstrate in all aspects that she is the hope of

⁴⁵ Louise Kretschmar, *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa*, 25

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 40

liberation just as Christ came to liberate humanity. Jesus Christ came not only to liberate mankind from sin but also from the consequences of sin, namely; ignorance, poverty, disease and all forms of injustice and oppression. Taking these situations into consideration, Pope John Paul II asked: "... How could one proclaim Christ on that immense Continent while forgetting that it is one of the world's poorest regions? How could one fail to take into account the anguished history of a land where many nations are still in the grip of famine, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violation of human rights? This is all a challenge to evangelization."⁴⁷ It is wrong to conclude that Africa has little or nothing to offer to people in Western countries or other parts of the world. African peoples and cultures have many special human and spiritual values, insights and experiences⁴⁸ which can be offered to the universal church.

1.5.4 The Church as the Voice of the Voiceless

What role can the Church play in the midst of the problems engulfing the continent of Africa? Bishops see themselves as the voice of the voiceless and powerless and mediators in conflicts. In many countries the churches are the only credible organisation that people turn to for help in times of difficulties. According to Bishop Benedict Dotu Sekey of Liberia, "when church leaders speak up, they are threatened with public flogging. Again, when they speak up they are told by the mass media to confine themselves to the pulpit and not to get involved in politics."⁴⁹ For him, it seems that the Church in Africa has failed to be a leaven of justice, peace, and unity on the continent. In many African countries the Church in the past has not spoken up against the violations of the fundamental rights of its people. Some of the leaders have either directly or indirectly encouraged despots in the various countries, and individuals have collaborated with the powers that be in a way that has compromised their position. In his intervention at the Synod of Bishops for Africa, Bishop Benedict Dotu Sekey, Bishop of Gbanga (Liberia) had this to say:

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 75; *Ecclesia in Africa*, 51.

⁴⁸ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 14.

⁴⁹ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* 113.

“The Church is the Body of Christ so when one member of the Body suffers, the rest of the Body suffers too. When the Church in one part of Africa suffers, the rest of the Church in Africa and the universal church suffer. This is why is why we appeal to this venerable Synod that wherever there are conflicts in parts of Africa and the Church in those areas is rendered voiceless, the rest of the African Church should speak out with a strong voice of solidarity, communion, support, and solace on behalf of those local churches that are suffering. The voice of the African Church through its national and regional Episcopal conferences, together with that of the Holy Father, will be a deterrent to those who take the lives our people for granted.”⁵⁰

The church has a paramount duty in educating the people to insist on their rights and to defend them. The Church has an important role to play. It is being challenged to come out and stand up for the truth. For too long many church leaders have looked the other way when human rights have been violated by unscrupulous leaders. Some of them look impotent because the political leaders threaten to punish them for educating their communities and telling the world what is really happening in their country. But if the violation of human rights is evil, then the Church has no choice but to condemn it. The violation of the fundamental rights of peoples of Africa is a daily occurrence. The Church in many countries has been the lone voice of sanity. The Church must stand up to the political, social, and moral evils that beset Africa today. The Church cannot remain neutral in the face of evil. The Church must fight for what is right and condemn what is wrong. For the past few years, justice and peace has been a main theme in the Church’s social teaching. It was the theme for discussion in 1980 during the Synod of Bishops and a sub-theme during the special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. This shows that the Church will not keep quiet when God’s people, particularly the poor and the weak, the refugees and displaced, are suffering and deprived of their basic human rights and the dignity of having a home.

⁵⁰ The African Synod, *Documents, Reflection, Perspectives*, 113.

1.6 Conclusion

The Church lives and works in this African world. As Pope John Paul II said: "The mission that Christ entrusted to the Church is not a mission in the political, economic or social order."⁵¹ However, this in no way diminishes its consequences for temporal affairs. Indeed, the Gospel proclaims an integral redemption which encompasses all aspects of the human person. The Church in Africa must continue to exercise its prophetic role and be the voice of the voiceless, so that everywhere the human dignity of every individual will be acknowledged and respected.⁵² The Church occupies a position of respect and moral influence throughout most of developing Africa. This gives the Church the opportunity to speak out, to assume leadership in the public forum for the eradication of injustice and hatred in the community. The Bishops of Africa would be failing in their mission if they were to ignore poverty, hunger, sickness, ignorance, the undermining of liberty, the tragic consequences of racial discrimination and the ravages of war and oppression which overwhelm so many of the people in the Third world. There is hardly a country that has been or is an exception to the suffering perpetrated by men and women who in one way or the other govern them. The Fathers at the African Synod tried to address some of these problems. They cried loud and made some contributions in solving the poverty that exist on the continent. The Bishops appealed for help from the developed world, to international organisations and to those responsible for political and economic development. The Church has to pay attention to the problems of Africa. The Fathers of the Synod also reminded the African Bishops of the need to go on to help Africa to develop, because it has always been in the nature of the Church to help out in the development of the people. The regional or national conferences of Africa or through individual Bishops have from time to time called the attention of the powers that be to the inhumane situation that has existed and still exist in nearly all African countries. The Church has a very significant contribution to make in Africa. Many Bishops' conferences are addressing themselves to the problems that exist in their

⁵¹ Second Vatican Council, World *Gaudium et Spes*, 42.

⁵² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 70

respective countries. The Church must always be seen to be the champion of the poor, the oppressed, and the down-trodden.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN GHANA AND SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GHANA

2.1 Introduction

The first attempt at missionary enterprise in Ghana was by Portuguese missionaries in 1482. In the history of the advent of Christianity in Ghana, two main areas of missionary enterprise must be identified. The early missionary era, which began around the 1480's to about 1637, within which period Portuguese Roman Catholic Missionaries and merchants introduced Christianity into the then Gold Coast, and the modern missionary era, which began around 1820 with the planting of denominational churches by different missions. The distinction is important because Christianity as a religion did not become institutionalized into denominational churches as we have them today in the early period. The results of these early 19th century efforts led to the establishment of mainline Churches like the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in Ghana. Over the years, the tolerant nature of Ghanaians coupled with deep respect for religion, and other factors have contributed to the pluralistic nature of the Ghanaian religious landscape.

2.2 A Brief Historical Background of Ghana

According to John Kuada, the name Ghana has deep roots in African history. Historical records show that a remarkable and powerful kingdom blossomed in the savannah belt south of the Sahara during the 7th century. This kingdom was called Ghana. It was described with great respect in all the accounts of such Arabian writers as Al-Fazari and Al-Bakri. The kingdom was copiously rich and its administration as well as social infrastructure such as schools and health services were generously praised.⁵³ In other words, the kingdom was a concrete testimony of what the emerging nations of Africa could do. This message came to the people

⁵³ John Kuada & Yao Chachah, *Ghana – Understanding the People and Their culture*, (Sogakofe: Comboni Printing School, 1999), 23.

of the Gold Coast loud and clear on the day of their independence. Therefore the name Ghana was chosen as an inspiration towards the future. By the end of the sixteenth century, most ethnic groups constituting the modern Ghanaian population had settled in their present locations. These migrations resulted in part from the formation and disintegration of a series of large states in the western Sudan. Prominent among these Sudanic states was the Soninke Kingdom of Ghana. Strictly speaking, Ghana was the title of the King, but the Arabs, who left records of the Kingdom, applied the term to the King, the capital, and the state. The ninth-century Arab writer, Al Yaqubi, described ancient Ghana as one of the three most organised states in the region. Its rulers were renowned for their wealth in gold, the opulence of their courts, and their warrior-hunting skills. They were also masters of the trade in gold, which drew North African merchants to the western Sudan. Ghana succumbed to attacks by its neighbours in the eleventh century, but its name and reputation endured. In 1957 when the leaders of the former British colony of the Gold Coast sought an appropriate name for their newly independent state – the first black African nation to gain its independence from colonial rule – they named their new country after ancient Ghana. The choice was more than merely symbolic because modern Ghana, like its namesake, was equally famed for its wealth and trade in gold. Until its independence from British colonial rule on 6th March 1957, Ghana was called the “Gold Coast”, a name given it by the early Portuguese explorers who first set foot on the shores of the country in 1471. The name aptly described a country rich in mineral resources such as gold, diamonds, manganese, bauxite, iron ore and various clay and salt deposits. The country has rich forest reserves with a wide range of fine tropical hardwoods and a wide variety of agricultural products and rich fishing resources. On 6th of March 1957 the Gold Coast was declared independent by the British in a wave of great popular enthusiasm. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the dynamic leader and founder of the Convention People’s Party (CPP), became the first Prime Minister of the first decolonized country south of the Sahara.⁵⁴ The stage was set for a new life, full of

⁵⁴ John Kuada & Yao Chachah, *Ghana Understanding the People and their Culture*, 23.

hopes and expectations. The expectations of the people and their new leaders were symbolically captured in the new name given to the country – Ghana.

2.3 Early Missionary Attempt at Evangelization

The Gospel was first introduced into Africa through the efforts of Western European missionaries representing different missionary groups in their home countries. In Ghana, contact with missionaries who brought the Christian message dates back to the 15th century, when two Portuguese Roman Catholic chaplains and merchants arrived at Elmina in the Central Region.⁵⁵ The beginning of Christianity is therefore traced to January 20th 1482 when Portuguese merchants with Roman Catholic Chaplains celebrated the first Mass at Elmina. The primary aim of these missionaries was not to evangelize the country as such. They came as chaplains to the Portuguese traders. These early missionary attempts, however, were not very successful. The mixing of missionary with commercial interests has been suggested as one of the main reasons for the failure of these early missionary attempts, as this made it impossible for the Ghanaian population to distinguish between the European trader and missionary. From then on, up to the year 1640, missionary activity in the country was intermittent as it had to be abandoned several times because of health hazards, lack of personnel and the unpreparedness of the people for the Gospel message.⁵⁶ The missionaries in the second phase of evangelization included the Capuchins and the Augustinians. Their main task was to systematically explore the favorable areas of evangelization and to set up small communities that could be given regular catechetical instructions as well as lessons on how to read and write. F.K. Buah stated that: “Economic gains aside, one of the important goals which urged Portugal, a fervent Catholic nation, to embark upon the sea voyage to the African coast and beyond was the promotion of the Catholic faith in these new lands. In the company of the merchants on the coast were Priests, who initially served as chaplains. The Priests soon started making

⁵⁵ Johnson Asamoah-Gyadu, *Traditional Missionary Christianity and New Religious Movements in Ghana*. (unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, June 1994), 1.

⁵⁶ Ecclesia in Ghana, 7.

converts among the people of Elmina and the immediate districts.”⁵⁷ A study of the early missionary style against the background of human and material resources, the motivations and the needs that inspired the setting up of schools and Catholic communities will go a long way to help us formulate new strategies for a more dynamic evangelization in Ghana. The seed of the Christian religion was sown in the fifteenth century, but the permanent establishment of religious denominations on a nation-wide scale began from the second decade of the nineteenth century. Progress was slow because Christianity was a new religion whose demands were often at variance with some of the deep-rooted beliefs, practices and the traditional religions of the people.⁵⁸ The early missionaries evangelized while simultaneously establishing schools from which they imparted a western education. There was a break in this initial missionary contact with Christianity until the 19th century, when fresh attempts were made to establish Christianity through the endeavours of various mission bodies. First to arrive were missionaries of the Basel Mission Society followed by Wesleyan missionaries. They worked predominantly among the Fante people of the coastal areas. Northern German missionaries from Bremen established themselves among the Ewe people of the East in what was then the German colony of Togoland and Keta in the Gold Coast. These were the early missionary societies from Western Europe which introduced denominational Christianity into Ghana.

The arrival of the missionaries, the early attempts to spread the Word of God, and the growth of the Church in Ghana depended on methods of evangelization and the response of the people. All missionary societies had the same basic aim: that of developing local churches as part of the universal church of Christ. The basic aim of church building was approached in two different ways; civilization and evangelization. The civilizing approach saw the Church embedded in the whole of human civilization. It perceived the need to penetrate that civilization and split it. This approach relied on education to achieve its aim; it also aimed at converting

⁵⁷ F.K. Buah, *A History of Ghana*, (Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980), 132.

⁵⁸ F.K. Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 132.

the whole society and entire peoples.⁵⁹ Various Christian denominations are well represented in Ghana. The Volta Region has a high concentration of Evangelical Presbyterians. Many Akwapims are Presbyterians, and the Methodist denomination is strongly represented among the Fante. The Roman Catholic Church is fairly well represented in Central and Ashanti Regions. Although no official figures exist to reflect regional distribution of the various denominations, it is generally agreed that the southern part of the nation is more Christian, while the north is more Islamic. The Catholic Church is very important in Northern Ghana and contrary to popular perception held by many southerners that northerners are all Moslems. In fact Tamale is an Archdiocese and has a major seminary established by the (SVD) Society of the Divine Word. The establishment of the Catholic Church in the Upper and Northern Regions was pioneered by missionaries commonly known as the White Fathers. After initial problems arising from the refusal of permission by the British colonial authorities, the White Fathers were finally allowed to open their first mission station at Navrongo in 1906.⁶⁰ In spite of various setbacks such as poverty, disease and deaths, and the world war (1914-1917), the Catholic Church expanded remarkably.

2.3.1 A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Ghana

The Rev. Frs. Auguste Moreau and Eugene Murat, both French Nationals and from the Society of the African Mission (S.M.A) are credited with the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Ghana. They arrived at Elmina on 18th May, 1880. History summarises the great difficulties that these pioneer missionaries went through: no money, no plot of land, bouts of malaria and exhaustion, and no holidays.⁶¹ This forms part of the second major stream of missionary work in Ghana. The contemporary Roman Catholic Church in Ghana is the fruit of this second attempt at evangelization. Catholic Church history in Ghana became lively again. Before the re-entry of the Catholic Church into the evangelization field, other religious

⁵⁹ John Bauer, *2000 Years of Christianity in African: An African History*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1994), 402-403.

⁶⁰ F.K. Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 133.

⁶¹ Johan Van Brakel, *The First 25 Years of SMAA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast 1880-1905*, (Nijmegen, 1992), 34.

denominations had already established their bases along the coastal regions of Ghana. The Catholic Church re-emerged in Ghana in May 1880, thus becoming the last of the major Christian denominations of the 19th century to be established in Ghana. After establishing a mission station at Elmina by 31, March, 1882, the S.M.A missionaries decided to extend the Catholic faith to Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti region. The main preoccupation of the SMA missionaries was to promote education. There were major setbacks, but since the missionaries used the schools as means to promote the Christian religion and teach the doctrines, they devoted most of their resources for the establishment and sustenance of the schools. In 1883, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles Society joined the missionary enterprise in Ghana and their main preoccupation was to promote the education of girls alongside the SMA. The SMAs made some modest attempts at Inculturation. They learnt the Fante local language with little resources and great enthusiasm. From 1900 the Catholic Church spread rapidly not only in the south, but also in Asante, Brong-Ahafo and Eweland, thanks to the dedicated work of the fathers of the Society of African Missions. In 1939, another group of missionaries, the Society of the Divine Word (S.V.D) arrived to work in the present day Greater Accra and the Eastern Regions of Ghana.⁶² The Catholic Church is one of the mainstream Christian churches in Ghana. In fact, it is the premier Christian religious body in the country, for it is the first mission that was established by Europeans on the Ghanaian soil.

It is observed that, in the Northern Ghana, missionary enterprise started much later than in the south. After the mission was opened in Navrongo, the missionaries faced a number of difficulties which made it impossible for any progress in their work, and the mission remained for nearly two decades confined to Navrongo. A major obstacle to the progress of the mission in the early years of its existence was the general misunderstanding held by the colonial authorities about the influence of Christian missions. To most of them, the activities of Christian missions constituted a disturbing political force which could stir up the people against

⁶² F.K.Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 133.

British colonial rule and the authority of the Chiefs. Secondly, the policy of limiting Christian influence and development in the Northern region, considered to be a Muslim area, created great regional disparities not only in the pattern of evangelization, but also in development and sowed the seed for certain social conflicts which have become enduring today. In southern Ghana, where the activities of missionaries remained unchecked, the zeal for evangelization propelled the enterprising missionaries to all corners in the country. This contributed in no small way to spread Christian teachings and values. The work of the early missionaries has clearly been of great significance for the later development of Christianity in Ghana and has influenced the teaching and practices of other churches to this day. Since the first successful missionary enterprise in the nineteenth century, Christianity flourished, with the result that today Ghana is generally considered to be a largely Christian country.

2.4. The Impact of Christianity on Ghanaian Life

It is worth noting that the encounter of Africa with Christianity has been as old as Christianity itself. The origin of Christianity in Africa has been seriously affected by elements of chance, historical accident and contingency. It is not evident that the Africans or any African nation as a people ever applied to embrace Christianity, to fill a felt religious vacuum or need. If Africans became Christians, it was because the Christian missionaries came to Africa; if they were Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, or of the Faith Tabernacle etc., it was through a sheer accident of history and not because of a rational option inspired by the intrinsic quality of the religion in question. Each local African community simply decided to belong to the form of Christianity at its door-steps. There was no option, for there were no alternatives. Though at the initial stages, the contacts of Ghanaian people with the Western world were marked by clashes, chaos and confusion, the dust of consternation was quickly dispelled by quite a number of beneficial positive results.

2.4.1 The impact of Christianity on Traditional Values

With the advent of Christianity in Ghana, it can be said that it has had great impact on the traditional values as well as on the people through its faith, teachings on love and life after death, and the schools and hospitals which have often accompanied the preaching of the Christian Gospel.⁶³ Christianity, at the early stages, found our Ghanaian culture in general at its low ebb. Some of the gross, gruesome and cruel aspects of our culture were conspicuously evident. The origins of Christianity beheld our culture battling with cannibalism, nudity, infanticidal destruction of twins, local and tribal strife and blood bath, mass illiteracy, total lack of sense of documentation, idolatry, superstitious beliefs, fear, human sacrifice, internal slavery, sorcery, witchcraft etc.⁶⁴ It was the negative and transitory phase of our culture that struck the early missionaries and prompted them to adopt in general a negative attitude towards the African culture. It was this negative reaction that sparked off a culture clash between Africa and Christianity.

Though the propagation of the Gospel and the promotion of Christianity through the introduction of western education were the foremost reasons for the arrival of European Missionaries to the shores of the Gold Coast, their activities brought improvement of life in general for the natives of the country. This desire stemmed from the fact that the Europeans wanted to compensate Africa for the raping of the African continent of its natural and human resources. According to Paul Bekye, not to recognize, also, the very positive and indeed tremendous contribution of the Christian Missions to changing the face of Ghana would be to deny the facts. The great upliftment that Ghana has experienced under the influence of the Christian Missions, whether in terms of human development, or the social, economic, political or religious advancement of the continent, is a fact of history.⁶⁵ In embracing the Christian message, many oppressive structures of traditional societies fell apart, the new conception of God introduced by Christianity opened

⁶³ Seth Adom-Oware, "What Do You say that I am? (Mt. 16:15) A Contemporary African Response", *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, (No.3, 1991), 14.

⁶⁴ R. Walker, *The Holy Ghost Fathers in Africa*, (Dublin: Black-Rock College, 1933), 78.

⁶⁵ Paul Bekye, *Divine Revelation and Traditional Religion*, (Rome: Leberit Press.1991), 73.

Ghanaian traditional societies to a new vision of life, man and the world. Christianity became an offer of liberation from a multiplicity of unjustified fears, giving satisfactory solutions to concrete existential problems. The affirmation of the dignity of the individual elevated the status particularly of women in traditional societies, as well as became the basis for protests against the injustices and the oppressive structures of the colonial system. And although the church was part of the colonial system, her involvement in education sowed the seed for the very destruction of the colonial system and contributed very essentially to the political emancipation of African nations. Christianity has certainly made the traditional concept of God clearer to the Ghanaian. God is now considered more accessible or approachable. He listens, hears, and grants the requests of suppliants. God is no longer considered a power to be feared but a personal living Father who is continually concerned with the welfare of his children. Jesus' concern for the poor, the weak, the sick, the hungry and the oppressed touches the heart of the Ghanaian. Such concern is what everyone looks for in life. So it makes them feel that Jesus is concerned about them and about their daily and constant needs.⁶⁶ There was corporate generosity of Ghanaians towards the Christian missionaries. The early conflicts and disputes with the European colonialists did not contaminate the goodwill and friendliness of the Ghanaian natives towards the missionaries. It was this singular and profound kindness of Ghanaians towards the missionaries that prompted them to make liberal grants of tracts of land and other donations and gifts in cash and kind to them for the success of their mission. The advent of Western civilization gave rise to the transition of our economy from trade by barter to money economy or to a more objective and rational system and means of exchange in trade and commercial transactions. This system was of immense mutual benefit to both our people and Europeans, as it constituted a great incentive to economic activities and commerce.

⁶⁶ Seth Adom-Oware, "Who do you say that I am? (Mt. 16:15): A Contemporary African Response" *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies* 3. (December, 1991), 14.

2.4.2 The Impact of Christianity on Education

Next to the spreading of the Gospel, the prime goal of missionary activity was education. Western forms of education in the Gold Coast were for a long time championed by western European Christian missions as an aid to the Christianisation process. Wherever they went, missionaries always built a mission station with a chapel and a school. This practice laid the foundation for boarding schools in the Gold Coast. The hard work and foresight of the missionaries made them pioneers of primary as well as technical and teacher training colleges in Ghana, some of which still bear their names. In the field of formal education, it is easily noticeable that our educational institutions at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary, are systematically patterned on western educational institutions and structures. It is clear that the Christian missions for a long time kept the lead in the provision of western forms of education in the country. The schools became the main recruitment ground for church membership. In consequence, the schools and churches became interdependent in the Christianisation process. As soon as missionary work began, knowledge of the local languages was considered essential. The missionaries made the first major attempt of scientifically analyzing the local language and giving them literary expression. In the case of Ghana, thanks to the missionaries the Ghanaian oral languages were developed into written languages and the recordings of local customs by missionaries have become sources for the historical and cultural study of these people.⁶⁷ Next came the compiling of dictionaries, grammars and textbooks and ultimately, the translation of the Scriptures into various languages such as Twi, Fante, Ewe, Ga etc. These efforts led to the spread of the Gospel. Thanks to the western civilization, the tradition of literacy and documentation, more effective and reliable methods of record-keeping, libraries, archives, museums and zoological gardens are becoming increasingly the significant features of our modern and contemporary cultures. In terms of science and technology, our culture has continued to inherit much from the advanced knowledge, invention and techniques of the western and European

⁶⁷ Paul Bekye, *Divine Revelation and Traditional Religion*, 74.

world. We have all become beneficiaries of the major revolutions and discoveries in the fields of medicine, industry and production, transportation and communication.

2.4.3 The Impact of Christianity on Traditional religion

In the religious sphere, western forms and patterns of Christianity have gained remarkable ground in our culture. In general the spirit of Christianity and the essential Christian way of life have enriched the spirit of our culture. Here it is thanks to western Christianity. Even if here on our soil, it requires a lot of re-thinking, indigenization and adaptation, Christianity has done a lot to humanize and elevate our culture; in terms of the institutions, social amenities and ethical values it has continued to provide and promote the development and upliftment of African cultural values. Despite this glowing tribute, we need to acknowledge the fact that missionary work in the past did not always pay adequate attention to the important role of African culture in evangelization. Consequently, the language, concepts, and world view in which the Christian message was presented were alien, and this made its impact on the people and its reception by the people less effective than it could have been. Cephas Omenyo acknowledges the impressive achievements of the Roman Catholic Missionaries in terms of their “horizontal” impact (geographical spread and numerical growth), but thinks that the “vertical” dimension (depth) of their mission, particularly with regard to Inculturation and meeting the challenges posed by African spiritual sensibility, was not something to write home about.⁶⁸ One can easily point out the weaknesses in methods and style of the missionaries in regard to the teaching of doctrine and the celebration of the liturgy. But one has to judge the issues against the background of the possibilities allowed those missionaries and the situation of the Church at its infant stages. There were hardships, poverty, disease and deaths, frustrations and disappointments. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Missionaries laid a firm foundation for the Catholic Church in Ghana, which is the largest single

⁶⁸ Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*. (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2002), 46.

denomination in the country and continues to make major impact on Ghana's development.⁶⁹

2.4.4 Tribute to the Early Missionaries

The splendid growth and achievements of the Church in Ghana are due largely to the heroic and selfless dedication of generations of missionaries. This fact is acknowledged by everyone. The hallowed soil of Africa is truly sown with the tombs of courageous heralds of the Gospel. When the Bishops of Africa met in Rome for the Special Assembly, they were aware of the debt of gratitude which their continent owes to its ancestors in the faith. According to the message of the Synod Fathers,

The effort made by missionaries, men and women, who worked for generations on end on the African continent, deserves our praise and gratitude. They worked very hard, endured much pain, discomfort, hunger, thirst, illness, the certainty of a very short life span and death itself, in order to give us what is most clear to them; Jesus Christ. The missionaries paid a very high price to make us the children of God. Their faith and commitment, the dynamism and ardour of their zeal have made it possible for us to exist today as Church-family for the praise and glory of God.⁷⁰

Every sincere Catholic would be grateful for the sacrifice which the early missionaries and their lay associates made for the implantation of the Catholic Church in the Gold Coast. In his Address to the inaugural Assembly of SECAM at Kampala, on 31 July, 1969, Pope Paul VI spoke about this debt of gratitude when he said:

By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves. The Church of Christ is well and truly planted in this blessed soil. One duty, however, remains to be fulfilled: we must remember those who before you, and even today with you, have preached the Gospel in Africa; for Sacred Scripture admonishes us to remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.⁷¹

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 18.

⁷⁰ Maura Browne, "Message of the Synod", *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 74.

⁷¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 35.

In carrying out her mission of Evangelization, the Church bears in mind two important considerations: First, there is the need for continuity, that is, the need to build on the churches in Africa established by the missionaries with outstanding dedication and zeal. It is the duty of those coming after them to water what they planted and nurture the particular plant, and by God's grace bring it to maturity. Secondly, there is the need for change, to avoid what may have been the errors of the past and to pursue unremittingly the programme of implementing the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

2.5 Some of the Challenges Facing the Catholic Church in Ghana

There are many challenges facing the Church in Ghana today. Suffice here to mention some of these challenges. It is important in our consideration to identify some of these challenges so that the Church can concretely address these challenges with evangelical charity and apostolic courage by critically examining the signs of the time which her members are concretely experiencing.

2.5.1 Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently into Ghanaian Religiosity

Many Ghanaians think of Christianity as a foreign religion. Christianity was equated with Western education and civilization which could be embraced intellectually without existential involvement. In that circumstance, Christianity came to be regarded as a foreign religion that had been transplanted in a foreign soil and did not take root. Consequently, many Christians perceived the "God" of Christianity as a "stranger-God" the god of the white man, who is unfamiliar with the local spiritual problems. To these Africans, Christianity was of no practical use in times of existential crisis.⁷²

The Word of God presented in the Latin language and mind-set failed to address the Word to the Ghanaians in the language and world-view they understood. Some Ghanaians who had embraced Christianity at that time did not allow it to take root

⁷² Imasogie Osaldolor, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*, (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1993), 69.

in their life so at best, Christianity remained a stranger to them.⁷³ The planting of Christianity is traced to the activities of the Christian missionaries since the nineteenth century. However, many commentators have pointed out that those early missionaries presented the Christian message to Ghanaians in a European outfit and thought patterns. Thus, despite the huge number of the Ghanaian converts to Christianity, Christianity has not taken root effectively in the Ghanaian soil. Christianity remained a stranger to the Ghanaian. At best, it remains skin deep in the life of many converts. Thus, on Sundays our Christian churches are packed full with worshippers, the number of Christian church denominations keeps increasing, yet it is apparent that Christianity has not taken root. Therefore, cases abound of many Christians reverting to some Ghanaian traditional religious values and practices they had earlier abandoned at the time of their conversion. Some practice these values alongside their Christianity. These phenomena apparently indicate that the Word of God has not taken proper root in Ghanaian soil. This point is also emphasized by Archbishop Peter Akwasi Sarpong as follows:

The church does not appear to be speaking to the ordinary African. She has not got the same grip on the African that the traditional religion had. She appears to have become a status symbol. In time of crisis many Christians do not hesitate to fall back on their traditional magicoritualistic devices for assistance. The worst...tribalism manifests itself with alarming frequency. A witchcraft mentality persists and many outmoded customs prevail.⁷⁴

The fact that mission Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently deep into Ghanaian religiosity is also portrayed by Seth Adom-Oware as follows: "Mission Christianity has come to mean for many Ghanaians simply a set of rules to be observed, promises to be fulfilled in the next world, rhythmless hymns to be sung, rituals to be followed and a few outward things. It is a Christianity which is locked up six days a week, meeting only for two hours on Sunday and perhaps once more

⁷³ Michael Ekowyi Apochi, *Hints for the Implementation of the Ecclesia in Africa*, (Otukpo: Catholic Star Guide Apostolate, 1997), 18.

⁷⁴ Peter Kwasi Sarpong, "A view of Africa: The Content and is Church", in *The Catholic Witness*, (Vol. IV. no.9. 1983), 1-10.

during the week. It is a Christianity which is active in a church building. The rest of the week is empty.”⁷⁵ Africans and for that matter Ghanaians who traditionally do not know a religious vacuum, feel that they don’t get enough fulfillment from this type of Christianity, since it does not fill up their whole life and their understanding of the universe. Hymns are translated from European, English and American versions and are sung to foreign tunes which have little rhythm and no bodily movements like clapping the hands or twisting the loins as a religious expression. Worship in mission churches is simply dull for most Ghanaians. The problem of the shallow rooting of Christianity is brought out in the negative reactions of many enlightened individuals to Christianity nowadays. Many people begin to repel Christianity with European colonization. Thus, the relevance of Christianity is questioned and some steps are being taken to force it out with the imperialism of the Europeans.⁷⁶ In the *Philosophy of the Christian World*, Edmund Soper made the following observation: Has Christianity demonstrated in the modern world, as it did in the two previous periods of achievement, that it can be part of the life of all kinds of people, differing in race, nationality, and location? Can Christianity become truly indigenous to the culture and life of a people?⁷⁷ Soper notes that “at the present time, indigenization is a most pressing matter. Just as there is a British, a German and American type of Christianity, so there is a demand that the Christianity of Japan be distinctively Japanese.”⁷⁸ And by way of extension, the Christianity of Ghana has to be distinctively Ghanaian. Soper demonstrated the importance of expressing the Christian faith through the art forms, architecture, and cultural customs of a people rather than with what is imported.

2.5.2 The Need to feel at Home in the Church

Ghanaian Christianity would like to be genuinely “at home” in Christianity – a chance to live in it as in a house of their own, which they might remodel on an

⁷⁵ Seth Adom-Oware, “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt. 16:15): A Contemporary African Response”, in *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, (No. 3 Dec.19991), 15.

⁷⁶ Michael Ekwoyi Apochi, *Hints for the Implementation of the Ecclesia in Africa*, 21.

⁷⁷ Edmund D. Sooper, *A Philosophy of the Christian World Mission*, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), 125.

⁷⁸ Edmund D. Sooper, *A Philosophy of the Christian World Mission*, 188.

ongoing basis through the contributions of their particular talents. To make others and ourselves feel at home or inculturated in the Church, the Second Vatican Council proposed to us the model of the Church as the people of God in communion. The people of God in their small communities in all their variety are the core and substance of the church.⁷⁹ When we act and move within our culture we feel at home. For this difficult process of making people feel at home in the Church we use the term “inculturation”. Pope John Paul II has used the term inculturation several times to express the need to help people welcome Jesus Christ in their own culture. Inculturation is about feeling at home in one’s faith and the culture of our time and place. In the New Jerusalem, everyone will feel at home, and that process has to begin now through the process of inculturation, which can challenge the bad and lift up the good in each culture. As a Church, we must organize ourselves in such a way that newcomers feel at home and that we find ourselves at home with them.⁸⁰ Archbishop Anthony Mayala of Mwanza, Tanzania, calls on pastoral workers in East Africa “to inculturate our Church so that it may be like a mirror in which we believers see ourselves and recognize our true face and feel completely at home in our faith.”⁸¹ The feeling “at home” is an important metaphor of inculturation. It involves our way of speaking, of singing, of behaving, of celebrating the events of life, of expressing joy or sorrow, of relating to others, and most of all the revered customs handed down to us by our forefathers. Thus in any attempt to establish local churches, cognizance must be taken of a particular society’s value system, since this value system influences the members. It is urgent and necessary because, in the ordinary African’s view, the church remains a replica of the church in the west, and therefore needs to be Africanized. This is spelt out in the Message of the AMECEA and IMBISA bishops⁸² given at the close of the African Synod:

We realise that Christians do not always feel at home as a family in the Church, that we do not always accept each other in the way

⁷⁹ African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspective*, 10.

⁸⁰ African Synod, *Documents, Reflections, Perspective*, 10.

⁸¹ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an Africa Narrative Theology*, 19.

⁸² Amecea; Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa Inter-regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA).

that members of the same family should. We asked ourselves why this is so, and we had to admit that the values of Christ have not yet been integrated with our own African values. Our traditional African values, which still affect us at the deepest levels of our being, in spite of the passing of so many of our traditional ways through the influence of modern life, have not been sufficiently touched by our Christianity nor has our way of being Christians become fully African.⁸³

This statement is regarded as an open confession of the real situation: that the Gospel has yet to be rooted firmly on the African soil. In other words, Africa is in transition to inculturated Christianity.

2.5.3 The Dichotomy in the Life of Many Christians

Many Christians experience a type of moral bankruptcy. Their religiosity has become somehow superficial and no longer touches sufficiently their entire personality. There is a dichotomy between the individual faith and the faith of the community, the church; a dichotomy between faith and practice; and a dichotomy between religion and morality. Many Ghanaian Christians find themselves living between two worlds, namely; the world of Christian beliefs and values and the world of Ghanaian traditions, where they live and express their inner life more deeply. Many Christians after receiving the major sacraments – Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation and Holy Matrimony, which are popularly called Christian titles, lapse into polygamy.⁸⁴ This point is also highlighted by Dr. Busia:

As one watches the daily lives and practices of the people, and takes account of the rites – that is ceremonies connected with marriage, birth, death, widowhood, harvest or installations to traditional offices, one learns that a great deal of the normal communal activities of the converts lie outside their Christian activities, and that for all their influence, the Christian churches are still alien institutions, intruding upon, but not integrated with social institutions.⁸⁵

⁸³ Raphael Ndingi Mwana, "A Nkezi, Vocation and Formation of Priests", *African Ecclesial Review AFER*, (Vol 32, 1, 1990), 17-28; "The Identity and Ministry of Priests Today", *AFER*, (Vol. 32, 2, 1990) 230-239.

⁸⁴ Seth Adom-Oware, "Who do you say that I am? (Mt. 16:15)", 15.

⁸⁵ K. A. Busia, *Address to the Closing Session of the Pan-Africano-Malagasy Laity Seminar* (August, 1971); Seth Adom-Oware, "Who do you say that I am? (Mt. 16:15)", 15.

The Gospel is often not seen as offering resources for life's most deeply felt experiences and needs. When faced with death, famine, infertility, many Christians resort to traditional rites and beliefs. There is also the issue of nominal Christians. In many areas, the Christian faith is shallow and needs to become more rooted. Lack of inculturation resulted in either total rejection of Christianity, or it never penetrated in depth the lives of the people, since it was regarded as an imported religion, which for many has turned out to be like a garment which is worn on Sunday and taken off after Sunday church service. In their reflection on Christianity in Africa, the Synod Fathers returned again and again to the dichotomy that is present in many Christians between what they profess to believe and what they live. It is as if religion has been compartmentalized, with prayers, doctrine and worship reserved for Sundays, with the result that daily life in the home, at work, in business, commerce and professional life, civic, public and political life are little or not at all affected by the fact of being a Christian. A disciple of Christ who is engaged in business, a profession or in civic or public life should be characterised by honesty, reliability and integrity. Otherwise what is the meaning of being a Christian? A Christian who is dishonest, divisive, marked by ethnic prejudices or corrupt is a Christian only in name, not at all in reality, and destroys the witness of the Christian community to the teaching and values of Jesus Christ. This shows the weakness and formality of much of our evangelization.⁸⁶ The African Synod rightly insisted that: "Evangelization must reach individual human beings and society in every aspect of their existence, and the chief means to achieve this was judged to be a profound inculturation of the faith so that it may penetrate deeply into the hearts and minds of people and so influence their way of acting."⁸⁷ The Synod saw this as one of the greatest challenges for the Church in the African continent on the eve of the third millennium

⁸⁶ Cecil McGarry, "A Community of Disciples to witness to the Kingdom" *Inculturating the Church in Africa Theological and Practical Perspectives*, (Limuru: Kolbe Press, 2001), 197-198.

⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 59.

2.5.4 The Dilemma of some Christians

The Bishops at the African Synod remarked that African Christians, because the faith has not been received into their culture, often live in two separate worlds: the world of traditional religion and customs and the world of Christian faith. Often they feel tension between their culture and their faith and move from one to the other. As some bishops said: “they are like frogs who have two legs on land and two in the water – when there is a disturbance in the water they jump on to dry land and when there is trouble on the land, these rush into the water. Or again, some Christians pray the rosary in the morning and take to witchcraft in the afternoon.”⁸⁸ Many Christians find themselves leading double lives, one foot in traditional beliefs and another in the Church. On Sundays, they are Christians when they go to Church to worship and celebrate the Eucharist or take part in a service of the word at which communion is received. During the week, the Gospel message has very little effect on their daily lives, and in moments of difficulties and crisis, they have recourse to traditional beliefs and practices. It is a Christianity which is active in a church building – the rest of the week is empty.⁸⁹ Some Christians seem to have a faith that is still fragile. The various currents of the moments seem to leave them perplexed and confused, sometimes looking for salvation elsewhere. Kwesi Dickson in his assessment of the African Christian has this observation to make: “...many African Christians hold on to traditional religio-cultural ideas and practices while calling on the name of Christ. Several writers, mostly Africans, have called for the working out of a Christian theology that suits the African situation, a theology which would give recognition to the centrality of Christ and at the same time express African appreciation of the Christian faith.”⁹⁰

There is no doubt that in times of crisis, most Christians fall back on traditional religion for answers. Many Christians at “breaking points of life” have recourse to practices of the traditional religion, or to prayer houses, healing homes, prophets,

⁸⁸ Cecil McGarry, “The Implications of the Synodal Discussions for the Church in Africa”, *AFER* 37, (1995), 15-16.

⁸⁹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 305.

⁹⁰ Kwesi Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, (London: Longmann & Todd, 1984), 36.

witchcraft or fortune-tellers. Some turn to African Independent churches where they feel certain elements of their culture are more respected. All these movements indicate that the spiritual yearning of these people for an authentic expression of the African spirituality is not yet fully satiated. There are some Christians who feel that, as long as no harm is intended for the other person, one can go to a Christian Church, meditate in a Buddhist temple, pray in a mosque, and offer sacrifices in an African Traditional Religion shrine. A dualism and a dichotomy between life and religious faith have developed which is very foreign to African culture. In talking about cultural alienation of African Christians, Gabriel Akwasi Mante has this observation to make:

On the practical level this alienation manifests itself in the form of personal and social conflicts, disappointments and frustrations which combine to produce a pervasive and severe identity crisis among Christians on the continent. As a matter of fact, the life of many Africans is a painful dilemma as regards the observance of church and traditional norms. Their daily experience of life is most often marked by a sharp tension between their Africanness and their Christian commitment. They are often confused about when they are Africans and when they are Christians. This conflicting way of life has seriously affected African attitudes towards the Christian message, attitudes which are unfavourable to the future of the mainstream church. They consist mainly in widespread nominal Christian commitment, the abandonment of the Christian religion to return to traditional roots and practices, the exodus from the mainstream churches into the new African churches and sects and recently introduced fundamentalist sects, and the adoption of foreign agnostic or atheistic ideologies ostensibly as means to personal liberation and meaningful existence.⁹¹

All these reactions represent the questioning of the value of Christianity on the continent. Fortunately this questioning is not occurring only among persons who either have somewhat become disillusioned with Christianity or have set out to exploit the mistakes of the early missionaries for their own parochial interests. Theologians working within the African milieu are also doing the questioning from a variety of perspectives, and their efforts have yielded much in terms of literature

⁹¹ G. A. B. Mante, "Christian and African Traditional Values and Priestly Formation", *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies* (Vol. 1, 1989), 55.

and, to some extent, the understanding of what being an African Christian means. This situation has an urgent invitation for the churches in Africa to intensify their efforts at evangelization. This evangelization should make a departure from the past by seeking to translate the Good News into the life of Africans instead of presenting them with doctrinal propositions which, important as they are, have little relevance to daily living. It should seek to touch the core of the African in order to transform him or her into a true African and a committed Christian, using the radical religiosity of the African as the fundamental point of departure. The need in this regard to search for and adopt new approaches to evangelization on the continent which reflect the African ethos cannot receive more emphasis than it requires.⁹² It is of prime importance, and this means also that the African cultural background can no longer be given the little attention it has hitherto received in Christian instruction and preaching. It is the translation of the Christian message into the African environment.

2.5.5 Proliferation of Sects and New Religious Movements in Ghana

Christianity has witnessed the emergence and proliferation of New Religious Movements all over the world. However, the current proliferation of New Religious Movements in Ghana is no doubt, one of the intriguing aspects of Christianity in Ghana today. As a secular and pluralistic nation, Ghana harbours many religious Sects or what some prefer to call New Religious Movements. All over Ghana, these churches exist in exuberant profusion. It is almost impossible to have accurate statistics of the number of Christian churches in Ghana. This is because by the time one might have finished counting; new ones would already have been formed. Often they have the most flamboyant names, displayed boldly on billboards, names which are usually said to have been revealed to the founder of the church in a dream or vision. Many preachers concentrate more on advertising their names and the names of their new found churches in the highly competitive church supermarkets than the Good News. In fact the fastest growing churches in Ghana

⁹² G.A.B. Mante, "Christian and African Traditional Values and Priestly Formation", in: *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies* (Vol. 1, 1989), 56.

today are those which do not stand in the tradition of the so-called mainline churches. Rather, they are those of Pentecostal or Charismatic nature which were not founded by European missionaries. The rate at which they multiply may qualify Ghana as a home of church industry.⁹³

These churches claim that authenticity is vital to their understanding of the Gospel message. They want to think like Africans, worship, sing and live like Africans. They aim at presenting the Gospel to Ghanaians in a way they can understand and interpret it in their own thought forms of worship.⁹⁴ Following the same line of thought, H. W. Turner states that, these independent churches may be described as having been founded in Africa by Africans to worship God in the African ways and to meet African needs as Africans themselves feel them and not as others think they ought to feel them. This explains their origin.⁹⁵ They are new because they are an African response in contradistinction to the old system of European centred Christianity, which is backed by western European culture and civilisation. They are a religious movement within an African perspective and were founded by Africans in protest to some features of Christianity of the missionary churches. Various reasons have been brought forward for their birth. These could include politico-religious elements anti-European feelings, colonialism among African Christians, and European superiority. Moreover, the desire to be real Christians cannot be left out. The mission founded churches are still reluctant and very slow in allowing African forms of religious expression. According to Mroso Agapit, these churches have their deeper roots in the African religious cultural heritage. In comparison, the mainstream churches are often accused of suffocating their feelings and emotions for not attending to the emotional life of the people.⁹⁶ It is

⁹³ Emmanuel Richard Mawusi, *The Proliferation of New Religious Movements in Ghana: Causes and Challenges they pose for the Catholic Church in Ghana in its Evangelizing Mission*, MA Thesis, (University of Vienna, February, 2004), 50.

⁹⁴ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization – A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientations of John Paul II*, (Roma Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1995), 331.

⁹⁵ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in African and The New Evangelization*, 331.

⁹⁶ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 332.

stressed that in the New Religious Movements religion and culture are always closely interwoven. Without any intention of despising anybody, a western form of worship may be appreciated by many an African and yet feel at the same time that something important is lacking. So, in the western type of liturgical services they feel dry and the liturgy or service remains foreign to their religious sentiments.⁹⁷

N.I Ndiokwere argues that:

For most Africans and the members of the Independent churches in particular, the place of worship is a place of free movement and total participation by everyone in the acts of worship. The movement should be vigorous and often spontaneous, able to produce some perspiration and leading to spiritual satisfaction and enjoyment. In such a gathering the singing is loud and is for all present. There is no place for carefully selected groups of “choristers”, for no one has a monopoly of this “joyful noise to the Lord.”⁹⁸

The drift of members of the Catholic Church to New Religious Movements is no doubt one of greatest challenges for the Catholic Church in Ghana today. Many of the mainstream Christian churches in Ghana including the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists have been challenged by the fast rate of growth of New Religious Movements and have tried to devise ways and means to counter the drain in their numbers to these Movements. The rise of these New Christian Movements has drawn the attention of the church to enter into dialogue with them. The presence of these churches or Movements create a pastoral challenge to the Catholic Church. The Challenge facing the Catholic Church is to understand in what ways these Movements are meeting the needs of the Ghanaian people. The Church has to develop ways and means to address the reality of New Religious Movements in Ghana. There is no doubt that these New Religious Movements have responded to the existential needs of the Ghanaian Worldview. They have offered a personal encounter with God through the power of the Holy Spirit, healing from sicknesses and deliverance from evil forces in all its manifestations.

⁹⁷ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 333.

⁹⁸ N.I. Ndiokwere, *Prophecy and Revelation*, 16-20.

2.5.6 Superstitious Beliefs

Almost every country on earth has some element of superstition in its culture. In some countries superstition is so extreme that it plays a major role in every aspect of the life of the inhabitants. Whereas some people in some countries have the tendency to become too superstitious but are kept under constraint by the laws of their countries, others just face reality and accept responsibility for whatever mistakes they make in their lives. Ghana falls into the category of countries which have extreme superstitious beliefs, which at times result in human rights abuse. In the traditional religion there is a belief that anything that takes place in our daily lives – be it good or bad, has its cause. Many Ghanaians believe strongly that before they come into the world they either receive a destiny from God or they choose their own destiny before God. The Ghanaian knows very well that there are natural causes of happenings. He knows that there are certain rules of cause and effect which are inevitable. There is no mystery about them. They require no explanation beyond the normal. What is explained by recourse to sorcerers and witches are the particular conditions in a chain of causation which relate an individual to natural happenings.⁹⁹ Therefore, the fetish priest and diviners always try to find answers to questions pertaining to mishaps or misfortunes. In their bid to find answers to such questions they usually attribute everything to witchcraft. Barrenness, impotence, accident, poverty, sudden death, alcohol addiction, mental disorder, diseases like epilepsy, aids, blindness, leprosy, irregular menstruation, mongolism, infant mortality and many more others are attributed to witchcraft. This is not a new thing. It has been the tradition since time immemorial. As a result of this, some people also evolved in the course of time as witch-doctors. They claim to have supernatural powers which they use not only to detect if somebody has a witchcraft power but also to ward off evil spirits from the people. People who are suspected or accused of having witchcraft powers are often subjected to all sorts of harassment and inhuman treatment. Unlike the fetish priest or diviners of the traditional religion, the priests of our Christian religion – Roman Catholic,

⁹⁹ Peter Sarpong, "Answering 'why' - The Ghanaian Concept of Disease" in: *Contact* No. 84, (April, 1985), 9.

Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Seventh Day Adventist are normally not engaged in the practice of fortune telling or soothsaying, but like the members of traditional religion, most of their members or followers are also superstitious. Interestingly, there are some members in the above mentioned churches who stealthily consult a fetish priest or witch-doctor to check what the future has in store for them. Some of them go to consult a witch-doctor with a conviction that a member of their family is bewitching them and that is why their business enterprise is not functioning very well. If the witch-doctor or soothsayer happens to divine that a family member is spiritually the cause of their downfall, the harmonious relations existing between them begin to degenerate into hatred and insinuation immediately.

There is also another variant type of Christian religion which is popularly known in Ghana as "Spiritual Churches". Unlike the fetish priests and diviners, the leaders or pastors of these spiritual churches claim to cast out demons. They base their belief on the fact that Jesus Christ spent some of his time casting demons and for that matter they also have the religious responsibility to search for people with demons and cast them out. It has become a common practice in Ghana nowadays to see businessmen and businesswomen, wholesalers and retailers, professors and illiterates, bank managers and levy collectors consulting pastors for some special spiritual protection against witchcraft. People who normally become victim of these superstitious beliefs are children, old and poor women and in some circumstances rich women, women who are by nature very powerful. It is not uncommon to see teenagers being brought before a pastor or a witch-doctor under the accusation that they have witchcraft powers. Superstition has eaten so deep into our moral fibre that the law enforcement body in the country normally ignores the fact that there is uncountable number of perpetrators of human rights abuse. Our aim is to call attention to the existence of such superstitious beliefs. We want to urge that unless it is recognised and dealt with on the conscious level, the commitment of most Christians to Christ will continue to remain superficial. In other words, no religion can be relevant to a people when it neglects any area of

their total experience as perceived by them. They will inevitably seek other means to cater for the neglected aspects of their total existence. The New Religious Movements are doing remarkably well in allaying people's fears and anxieties about evil forces. They organise healing deliverance services. They have succeeded in convincing their converts that Christ is all powerful and able to heal all sickness.

2.6 Conclusion

Since time immemorial, the contact of Ghanaians with Christianity had been plagued by instability, fruitlessness, and eventual failure and collapse of local Christianity. The process of evangelization and Christianization in Ghana had brought Ghanaian and European cultures into contact. Both cultures had experienced reciprocal shocks. The wave of missionary activities and westernization have cast a stifling shadow over some of the cultural values of Ghanaians. These are now in a hard struggle for survival. However, the voice of those demanding or requesting a thorough-going Africanization of Christianity is becoming audible and appreciably effective. Now the gross cultural disabilities of the early period have been overcome and Ghanaian culture is sufficiently mature and ready for a systematic and institutional indigenisation of Christianity. Christianity must recognize the authentic and honest conceptions, customs, institutions and values of African culture. The African mind, religion, psychology and personality are clearly reconcilable and harmonizable with Christian principles. A realistic fusion of the spirit and basic institutions of Ghanaian culture with Christianity will ensure religious vitality, fruitfulness and stability. Christianity must realistically recognize the Ghanaian personality, its cultural spirit and basic and honest institutions, if the earlier ecclesiastical disasters are to be avoided. It is this Africanization of Christianity that was not sufficiently provided for by the western founders of Christianity in Ghana, owing to their cultural limitations and the social constraints. It has not become an urgent task with which Ghanaian ecclesiastics must grapple with, in order to ensure for the Ghanaian Christian religious sense, stability and fruitfulness.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY, USAGE, AND THEOLOGICAL MODELS FOR THE PROCESS OF INCULTURATION

3.1 Introduction

Theology is conceived as faith seeking understanding. God, the primary essence of doing theology, is not a property of any culture. He is outside every culture, but attainable through the vehicle of any culture. This means that theology will be meaningful when it is done within the context of cultures and within given realities. Doing theology in context will make theology always actual, relevant and pertinent. This is because theology should always articulate God in a way that he will be understandable to the people.¹⁰⁰ A theology of inculturation departs from the basic principle that revelation itself is God's self-communication among men and women in a concrete historical setting. It elucidates revelation by taking seriously the factor of embodiment based on the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus. The special contribution of theology is to grasp and to explain realities from the experience of God's revelation. Christian theology emphasizes that inculturation is actually God's way of making himself known and loved. In this chapter, we seek to lay the theological basis of inculturation. We shall consider the various terms associated with inculturation, and discuss the theological models and principles of inculturation, basing our argument on the facts of revelation and the teachings of the Magisterium.

3.2. Various Terminologies prior to the Term Inculturation

Before the advent or acceptance of the term inculturation, various authors have used different terms to describe the encounter between the Christian message and African cultures. In other words, before inculturation had been widely accepted, there were other designations for the process of inculturation. Consequently, there are as many definitions of inculturation as its different conceptions. Nevertheless,

¹⁰⁰ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2008), 1-2.

the official acceptance of the term “inculturation” by the Church makes it possible to synthesize what the encounter between the Church and culture in the modern world implies. In this context therefore, a term can be said to be theologically received if it is accepted; that is, if the concept it embodies bestows clarity on the Christian belief and does not betray the Christian doctrine, and also, as a means of explanation, it assures that the ideas contained and expressed in the use of the term would not cause a decay of the faith when put into practice. Many attempts have been made to define inculturation, and these attempts have brought about many more definitions and associations. In this section, we will consider some concepts which are closely related to inculturation. We will also consider inculturation in relation to other terms which have been used or suggested to convey a similar meaning. These terms include: adaptation, accommodation, indigenisation, contextualization, enculturation, acculturation and incarnation.

3.2.1 Adaptation

The word Adaptation derives its origin from Latin “adaptare”, meaning to adjust a thing to another thing already existing, in order that we may procure its balance or its perfection or all its possible potentialities. Adaptation therefore can be described as throwing a few African or Ghanaian cultural elements into the Liturgy that still remains Roman or Western. It implies selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them within Christian rituals where there is any apparent similarity. The Church has always felt the need to adapt its way of life to various cultures. The term adaptation was used by Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.¹⁰¹ For instance in Africa, after the Second Vatican Council, the term “adaptation” was accepted with joy and great enthusiasm, but later it was realised that in practice, adaptation meant a peripheral, superficial, non-essential activity; that it contained the germs of perpetual Western European superiority and domination. It was, therefore, rejected and thus not accepted. The African Synod Fathers for instance at the 1974 Synod preferred incarnation to adaptation. The council asked for something more

¹⁰¹ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 38-40.

than mere external adaptation. During the 1974 Synod, African delegates spoke insistently of incarnation while not comfortable with the term adaptation. According to Peter Schineller, even though this term has more recently been criticized as inadequate, in principle, this term refers to a more creative method of pastoral activity, by which we try to adapt the message we share and the liturgy we celebrate to the customs of those we work among. To adapt means to make fit and this implies more serious listening to and study of the culture involved.¹⁰² Adaptation has been criticized as inadequate, in fact as a subtle form of imposition, and accused of not truly taking the local culture seriously. Aylward Shorter writes; the idea which this term suggests is one of the western missionary announcing the Gospel in terms of his own culture, and of the young, mission church adapting this message to suit local idiosyncrasies. Adaptation gives an impression of superficiality, or painting of the outside, selection and imposition from outside, and these meanings would hinder the health growth of the local church. It was rejected by the 1974 Synod of Bishops, especially by the African Bishops.

3.2.2 Acculturation

According to Peter Schineller, by acculturation we mean “the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures.”¹⁰³ In other words, the word denotes the contact between cultures together with the ensuing changes. Acculturation includes those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups.¹⁰⁴ It is used in cultural anthropology for the process of interaction between cultures rather than societies and the ensuing changes. Acculturation can be said to be a process of intercultural borrowing marked by the continuous transmission of traits and elements between diverse people and resulting in new and blended patterns distinguished from assimilation. Liturgical acculturation may be described as the process whereby

¹⁰² Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1990), 16.

¹⁰³ Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology*, 7

¹⁰⁴ Marcello De Carvalho Azevedo, “Inculturation and The Challenges of Modernity” in: Ary Roest Crolius et al. (eds.), *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures*, (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1982), 7.

cultural elements which are compatible with the Roman liturgy are incorporated into it either as substitutes or illustrations of eucharistical and ritual elements of the Roman Rite. The cultural elements should be subjected to purification and must possess a Christian meaning. It should also suit the thought and language pattern of the people. Used analogically in theology, acculturation refers to the process of insertion of the Gospel in cultures. In this context, it is much closer in meaning to inculturation, because it emphasizes the two-way process in the encounter of the Gospel with cultures.¹⁰⁵ Acculturation and enculturation have also been used but have been dropped because of their anthropological meaning. In this sense, it cannot be employed for the relation between the Church and culture.

3.2.3 Enculturation

According to Shorter, “enculturation refers to the cultural learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his or her culture.”¹⁰⁶ In the literal sense, it means that the individual teaches himself through the process of adaptive learning the rules and values of a given society. Most importantly, it establishes a context of boundaries and correctness that dictates what is and is not permissible within that society’s collective framework. It is the process where the culture teaches an individual the accepted norms and values of the culture or society in which the individual lives. It teaches the individual their role within society as well as what is accepted behaviour within that society and lifestyle. The individual can become an accepted member and fulfil the needed functions and roles of the group. It is the process by which the human individual becomes inserted into his own culture. Enculturation also happens unconsciously, through events and behaviour that prevail in a given culture. It helps mould a person into an acceptable member of society. Culture influences everything that a person does, whether they are aware of it or not.

¹⁰⁵ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II*, 93.

¹⁰⁶ Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 5.

3.2.4 Contextualization

Another term used to designate the process of inculturation is contextualization. Contextualization may be one of the most important issues in mission today. It is a perennial challenge – one that Christians have faced every time they have communicated the Gospel across language and cultural boundaries. The Church has struggled with this problem through the ages as it has evolved from one era to another. Essentially, contextualization is concerned with how the Gospel and culture relate to one another across geographic space and down through time. Contextualization captures in method and perspective the challenge of relating the Gospel to culture. In this sense the concern of contextualization is ancient – going back to the early Church as it struggled to break loose from its Jewish cultural trappings and enter the Greco-Roman world of the Gentiles. Contextualization is part of an evolving stream of thought that relates the Gospel and Church to a local context. It is often used as a metaphor for the process by which the Church becomes present within a given cultural context. It is the weaving together of the Gospel with every particular situation. It does not speak of cultures but of contexts or situations into which the Gospel must be inculturated.¹⁰⁷ It does not bring out the dialectic character that is proper to the encounter between Church and culture. This term does not speak precisely about culture but about contexts and situations into which the Gospel could be inculturated.

3.2.5 Indigenization

Another popular term used by the theologians was indigenization, often used alongside Africanization and Localization. Indigenization means that the local community with its own indigenous leadership has the primary responsibility of developing the teaching, liturgy, and practice of the local church. According to Patrick Kalilombe, “indigenization means the effort to Africanize Christian doctrine, cult, pastoral practices and art, basing them on African culture and

¹⁰⁷ Imbisa - Inter-Religious Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa, *Inculturation*, (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1993), 43.

religious tradition.”¹⁰⁸ However, in practice indigenization meant the gradual replacement of foreign missionaries with African personnel and to give an African face to ecclesiastical structures, so that the Church may appear less foreign. Thus indigenization was intended to show that the Church was at home in Africa and that Christianity was truly an African religion.¹⁰⁹ However, because of the negative sense in some languages of the term “indigenous”, the use of the term has practically been abandoned. Indigenization was not considered appropriate because of its restricted meaning.

3.2.6 Reappraisal of the Various Terms

One of the most urgent problems within many Christian denominations is how to relate the Christian Gospel to diverse cultures. A number of concepts have circulated in recent years to describe various processes at work when the Christian Gospel moves across-culturally. The most prominent terms include indigenization, contextualization, and inculturation. The term inculturation is of Roman Catholic origins.¹¹⁰ Contextualization involves the process of transmitting the Gospel message using local idioms and language and culturally recognizable methodologies. According to Gerald Arbuckle, Catholic theologians were not satisfied with contextualization as a term denoting the process of relating the Gospel to culture. They felt that it tended to emphasize external contacts between the Gospel and the local culture.¹¹¹ In other contexts, the term adaptation has been used, and rather quickly rejected, since it seems to remain on the exterior level. The analogy of text and context has led to the expression contextualization. In several cultural contexts, indigenous people are considered a sort of second class citizens; hence the term indigenization has not had great fortune. Acculturation means the encounter between two different cultures, with the ensuing changes in

¹⁰⁸ Kalilombe P.A., “Black Theology” in: D.F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, (New York/London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 202.

¹⁰⁹ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II*, 93.

¹¹⁰ Pedro Arrupe, *Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation*, (Washington: Jesuit Missions, June, 1978), 1.

¹¹¹ Gerald Arbuckle, “Inculturation and Evangelization: Realism or Romanticism?”, *Missionaries, Anthropologists and Cultural Change*, (Williamsburg, V.A: College of William and Mary, 1984), 171-214.

both cultures. For the encounter between Gospel and cultures, the word might give rise to confusion, since the Gospel cannot be identified with a given culture. Yet, the Gospel exists always within a culture, and the contact with another culture necessarily takes place in a situation of culture contact.¹¹² Enculturation is another technical term in cultural anthropology for indicating the learning experience by which an individual is initiated and grows into his culture. Accommodation is yet another term used to explain this process. It has been defined as the “respectful, prudent, scientific and theologically sound adjustment of the Church to the native culture in attitude, outward behaviour and practical apostolic approach.”¹¹³

Indigenization appeared as a common term during the 1974 Synod of Bishops. The term had been used in mission history with reference to the establishment of a Church to be governed by the local or native clergy. This use of indigenization did not in any way intend to mean that the indigenous culture becomes the exclusive norm in accepting or rejecting the Christian faith.¹¹⁴ Indigenization was not widely accepted since it has a restrictive meaning. In order to safeguard the reciprocal character of the process wherein Christianity transforms a culture and a particular culture enriches Christianity by interpreting and formulating anew the Christian message, the term inculturation was used. Although inculturation is in fact interculturalization, the term fell into disuse because it was sometimes understood as a mere transfer of faith from one culture to another. Inculturation as a way of evangelizing the cultures is topical in theological scholarship. The term is discussed in various contexts. Some theologians associate the word with liturgical adaptation, others try to identify the word with methods of deepening the faith through catechesis and Christian education. Others associate it with liberation theology or African theology. Thus the Church is faced with the difficult and delicate task of inculturation, and the use of the term in various contexts by theologians has given rise to both doubts and erroneous concepts. From this world of concepts, some authors have discovered the similarity of usages of the various

¹¹² Arij Roest Crolius, *Inculturation: Some practical Remarks*, 1.

¹¹³ Lutzbetak L. L, *The Church and the Cultures*. 341.

¹¹⁴ Agapt Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 256.

nuances used to express the Church's experience with culture. In all, the word inculturation is more widely applied than the rest and interpreted in the light of the mystery of the incarnation. Some writers have expressed the view that inculturation is one of the basic elements of the mystery of incarnation. The prevalence of this word explains the deep significance of the mission of the Church as contained in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*,¹¹⁵ and in Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.¹¹⁶ However, the use of the words re-evangelization, second evangelization, and Christianization demonstrate that the problem of the right word has not disappeared. It gives us the idea that inculturation is the evangelization of cultures on earth.

3.3 A Brief History and Usage of the Term Inculturation

Let us look at how the word inculturation has come to feature prominently in theological books, seminars and discussions in the recent past. In her report on the African Synod of Bishops, Cecil McGarry points out that "the term inculturation seems to have been created by the anthropologist Melville Herskovits in the 1930's."¹¹⁷ However, the word at this early time did not have a theological meaning. The Asian Catholic bishops used the word inculturation for the first time in their statement after the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) in 1974. However, the introduction of the term inculturation is credited largely to the members of the Society of Jesus at the 32nd General Congregation in Rome from December, 1974-April, 1975. It became popular following the publication of a Letter of the Superior General, Pedro Arrupe, in which he explained and defined inculturation as follows: " the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the

¹¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 10.

¹¹⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Cecil McGarry, (ed.) *What happened at the African Synod?* (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications Africa, 1995), 52.

culture, transforming it and remarking it so as to bring about a new creation.”¹¹⁸ The term used by the Jesuits was the Spanish *enculturación* which was translated into Latin, the language of all their documents, as “inculturation”. This was subsequently translated into English as “inculturatio”. Inculturation, a neologism¹¹⁹, evolved from different concepts previously used. The term inculturation is a term now commonly used in theological circles but one which needs a lot of explanation. It is a neologism and as such its meaning and employment has only been standardised towards the end of the 20th century. It is a theological term generally used to denote the process of “living exchange” or dynamic relationship between Gospel and culture: between the local Church and the culture of its people. The Gospel becomes inserted in a given culture, transforming it from within by challenging certain values and cultural expressions. That culture, on the other hand, offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived, thus enriching Christianity and the Church by interpreting and formulating anew the Christian message.¹²⁰ The term inculturation is definitively the best the Church has found to express this reality. Although the term may be of recent origin within Christian theology and language, the reality it signifies has been present in various degrees in the church since its foundation. There has been a noticeable development in our understanding of inculturation, and this can clearly be seen by the passage from one terminology to another. It came into use after the Second Vatican Council. The term itself does not appear in the documents of the Council. Various authors use it in relation to: “inculturation of the Church”, “inculturation of Christianity”, “Inculturation of the Gospel Message”, and “inculturation of the Faith”, all expressing the same objective and finality. It is the open attitude of the Church to the world and cultures that laid the foundation of dialogue with all cultures. It is this dialogue that has given rise to the definition of inculturation in terms of the Faith of the Church and world cultures.

¹¹⁸ Pedro Arrupe, “Letters to the whole Society on Inculturation” in *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits*, (7 June, 1978); Simon Kofi Appiah, *Africannes: Inculturation Ethics*, 20.

¹¹⁹ John Paul II, *Discourse to the Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission*, (26 April 1979).

¹²⁰ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20.

3.4 The Meaning and Significance of Inculturation

We do not intend to consider all the definitions put forward so far on inculturation. The few definitions cited here will be referred to more often in our discussions on inculturation. People have various ideas about what the term inculturation means and implies for the pastoral ministry of the Church. Laurent Magesa summed up people's views of inculturation as follows: "the process of rooting Christianity into a culture; celebrating liturgies in an African way; integrating cultural elements into Christian worship; evangelizing Africa in an African way; immersing the Christian faith in the local culture."¹²¹ The task of relating the Gospel message to the culture of the people cannot be overemphasized. According to Waliggo,

inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by people of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-pattern of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and his Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly "feel at home" in the cultures of each people.¹²²

This definition tries to emphasize the important of an honest effort which will bring about a mutual interaction between the message of Christ, which is the Good News of salvation, and the culture of the people. This understanding will result in Christianity taking deep root in the culture of the people. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is mandated to inculturate the Gospel message in the hearts and minds of the people for the full realization of the plan of God, who has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world.¹²³ In executing this task, the document emphasized that "whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in the rites and customs of people, these not only are preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up and perfected for the glory of God, the confusion of the

¹²¹ Laurent Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 62.

¹²² Waliggo J.M, "Making A Church that is Truly African." In: Crollius R.A., Nkeraminhigo et al. (eds.), *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications, 1986), 12.

¹²³ Eugene Adodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria with Special Reference to the Igbo People*, Diss. (Roma, 11988), 26-27.

devil, and the happiness of man”.¹²⁴ For this newly-coined word disclosed a vital challenge for the Church, especially in countries with non-Christian traditions.

This concern of the church with the challenges of inculturation culminated in various church documents trying to spell out what inculturation is all about. Cardinal Josef Tomko at the opening ceremony of the AMECEA¹²⁵ Plenary Session on “Families Truly Christian and Truly African” defined inculturation as follows:

“By inculturation we mean here the profound insertion of the Gospel in the very heart of a determinate culture, so that the fertile seed of the faith can germinate, develop and fructify, according to the potentiality and peculiar character of that culture.¹²⁶ With this definition, the issue of inculturation is centred on a constant factor (the Gospel message) and a variable culture and the challenges the Gospel presents to them. Arrupe also defined inculturation as follows:

the incarnation of the Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about “a new creation.”¹²⁷

This suggests that inculturation is all about making Christianity homely in every culture, assimilating the positive values attainable in every human culture, so as to elevate and sanctify the said culture.¹²⁸ The process of inculturation may be defined as the Church’s effort to make the message of Christ penetrate a given socio-cultural milieu, calling on the latter to grow as these are compatible with the Gospel. The term inculturation includes the notion of growth of mutual enrichment of persons and groups, rendered possible by the encounter of the Gospel with a social milieu. Inculturation is an integral element of evangelization.

¹²⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, nos. 2, 17, 21.

¹²⁵ Association of Members of Episcopal Conference of East Africa.

¹²⁶ Josef Tomko, “Inculturation and African Marriage” *AFER*, Vol. 28, no. 3-4, (June-August 1986), 155.

¹²⁷ P. Arrupe, „Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation“, in: *Studies in International Apostolate of Jesuits*, (2 June, 1978).

¹²⁸ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, 61.

In other words, a merely external or superficial evangelization is no evangelization at all. Individuals must be evangelized within their cultures and not be treated as having no culture at all, which means that they become victims of aggression by an alien culture.¹²⁹ As she carries out her missionary activity among the nations, the Church encounters different cultures and becomes involved in the process of inculturation. It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation means:

the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures. Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces people, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within.¹³⁰

This brings out the nature of inculturation as a process that works in two ways: on the one hand, there is the Christian life and message as transmitted by the Church, and on the other, the multiplicity of continually changing and developing human cultures. This understanding suggests that inculturation is a process and method of give and take functioning simultaneously. Inculturation as a process does not happen automatically; it is a gradual movement that involves analysis, evaluation and reciprocal assimilation.¹³¹ It enriches the Church for she uses in her preaching the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, to probe it and more deeply understand it, and to give it better expression in liturgical celebrations and the life of the diversified community of the faithful.¹³² When one speaks of inculturation, one necessarily refers to the culture because culture is the soil on which the Gospel is received. The Gospel message acts as an enriching and purifying force on human cultures. The Good News of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen humanity. It combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from sinful allurements which are a

¹²⁹ Aylward Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture*, 28.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 52.

¹³¹ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes Divinitus*, 22.

¹³² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

perpetual threat. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of the people. In the whole process of inculturation, therefore, the Gospel as the standard has to discern the local human and cultural values that are in harmony with Gospel values, as well as those that contain positive elements but stand in need of purification.¹³³

Pope John Paul also spelt out what the Catholic Church understands by inculturation in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, which he signed at Yaounde on 14th September, 1995. In this Document, he said, inter alia:

By reason of its deep conviction that the synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith, because a faith that does not become a culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived. The Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops considered inculturation a priority and an urgent task in the life of Africa's Particular churches. The challenge of inculturation in Africa consists in ensuring that the followers of Christ will ever more assimilate the Gospel message, while remaining faithful to all authentic African values...¹³⁴

In the process of inculturation, "the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates. When that power enters into a culture, it is no surprise that it rectifies many of its elements. Each culture ought to be evangelized in light of the Gospel and purified of its negative elements. Pope Paul II emphasized the process by which evangelization will be able to offer cultures the knowledge of hidden mystery and help them to bring forth from their own living traditions original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.¹³⁵ In 1980, he spoke to the Zairean Bishops thus: "One of the aspects of this evangelization is the inculturation of the Gospel, the Africanization of the Church...This is part of the indispensable effort to incarnate the message of Christ..."¹³⁶ Here incarnating the message of Christ and inculturation of the Gospel lead to Africanization of the Church.

¹³³Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

¹³⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 78.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, *Catechesi tradendae*, 53.

¹³⁶ John Paul II, *African Addresses*, (Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1981), 38.

African theologians did not just appropriate the word inculturation, but also offered their definitions of it. According to Aylward Shorter, a short definition of inculturation is: “the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.”¹³⁷ Archbishop Peter Sarpong of Ghana defined inculturation as “a way of evangelization which embraces the whole of Christian life and thinking.”¹³⁸ Sarpong argues that inculturation is not just a question of liturgical adaptation or innovation, much less of the use of drums or materials. Rather, it involves concepts, symbols, and a whole new way of thinking and doing things demanding imagination, courage and initiative. For D.S. Amalorpavadass, writing from the Asian perspective, inculturation is a way of life and he explained it as follows:

Inculturation is primarily a life-style and a way of living; how a group of Christians who have met Christ, accepted his Gospel, identified with his cause, found in him the deepest meaning and ultimate purpose of their life, preach the Gospel concretely, live their faith in practice and witness to the arrival of God’s reign by personal conversion and societal change. Nothing can be more concrete and practical than just living. When one just lives, it is a life-style. It can be according to western cultures or according to Asian cultures or a hybrid of both. For example, it will be an authentic inculturation in Asia only when the life-style is according to Asian cultures.¹³⁹

This definition is more explanatory and appealing and down to earth. The Synod Fathers who attended the African Synod did not attempt to define inculturation, instead, they described inculturation as “a marriage of professed faith and concrete life, harmony between faith and culture.”¹⁴⁰ In this description, we are not talking of the insertion of the Christian message into a non-Christian culture. The Christian message has been preached and received. Therefore, we are talking of a situation

¹³⁷ Aylward Shorter, *Towards an African Theology of Inculturation*, (N.Y: Orbis, 1980), 11.

¹³⁸ Peter Kwasi Sarpong, “Evangelism and Inculturation”, *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, 2 (1990), 1, 6.

¹³⁹ D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Theological Reflections on Inculturation*, 40.

¹⁴⁰ Cecil McGarry, (ed.) *What happened at the African Synod*, 33.

whereby the interaction between the Christian message and the African culture will be well integrated and interwoven. From all these definitions, we summarise inculturation as follows. It is the honest effort to deepen the faith already received and rooted in African culture in Christ, in order to become committed African Christians in a truly African Church which will contribute to the experience of the universal church.

The word inculturation has a theological value – a value that expresses the process and practice by which the Word of God become incarnate in a particular culture, so that a new expression of Christian life and faith is manifested. It means, in simple language, a process and a practice where Christianity feels at home with a particular culture and a particular culture feels at home with Christianity. Inculturation is primarily about living the message of Christ or the Gospel. Inculturation is a process by which the Word of God enters the people's lives so that they practice it in their everyday life. It is also seen as the process whereby the church becomes truly understandable and its teachings liveable by assimilating the customs and the traditions of the place where it is. Many Catholics conceive the notion in terms of a better understanding of the faith, making the Christian message relevant in the modern world, enabling the church to be truly local, that is African, and making the Christian faith livelier. With inculturation theology, the Good News of Jesus Christ will be allowed to be incarnated in every human culture using concepts, words and symbols that are not foreign, ambiguous and incomprehensive to the receiving culture or cultures. Inculturation is important and necessary for Africa because the Gospel must be deeply rooted in the life and culture of the people. This will enable Africans to whole-heartedly accept Christianity as their own and not as a foreign religion.

3.5 The Theology of Inculturation

Any discussion on inculturation must be theologically situated in the Scriptures and the Magisterium of the Church. God reveals Himself at various times and in various ways to humanity. The constituents of this divine self-disclosure are

enormous. Divine Revelation is God's activity of manifestation and communication of both Himself and the eternal decrees of His will concerning salvation of human beings.¹⁴¹ In Christ the Lord, the entire Revelation of God is summed up. In other words, revelation finds the most perfect expression in Christ. Christ is not only a self-disclosure of God but God as well (John 1:1-5). Humanity can know God best, and meet him best in Jesus Christ. The revelation in Christ was destined for the entire world.¹⁴² This explains why Jesus commanded his Apostles to carry the Gospel to all nations. It is through the faithful obedience to this command that the Gospel spreads from Judea to Africa and the entire world. Christianity and the Christian Bible are expressions of divine Revelation of God to humanity through Christ. This revelation is the climax of all revelations. It is also the fullness and the most perfect of all revelations (Heb. 1:1). Before the revelation in Christ, God revealed Himself in various ways to humanity. These ways and even that through the prophets were only fragmentary, occasional and progressive, no single one of them, nor all of them contained the whole truth. They were preparations building up for that in Christ. Therefore, the Son comes to give the perfect understanding of God's revelation to humanity.

The theological basis of inculturation is God's incarnation and saving presence in human cultures. Any talk or action about inculturating the Christian faith must be seen in the light of the mystery of Jesus Christ, and not just as efforts to make a system or an institution more meaningful to people of different cultures. Theological consideration of inculturation cannot fail to begin with a study of divine revelation as model and source of all inculturation. Various cultures have served the revelation of the mystery of salvation. Human history, because it is the locus of divine revelation, becomes the history of salvation. A theology of inculturation departs from the basic principle that revelation itself is God's self-communication among men and women in a concrete historical setting. The Gospel will be abstract and notionless unless and until it is manifested and effectively

¹⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, 6.

¹⁴² Beda Rigaux & Joseph Brachen, "Revelation" in: *DBT*. Ed. X. Leon-Dufour (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 441-447.

visible in the life and history of a people, in the dynamic of its actions, and expresses itself through the culture of a society or people. Hence, there will be no evangelization in fulfilment of Christ's mission without inculturation, just as there would have been no salvation of the world without the incarnation of the Word.¹⁴³ The incarnation is an historical event, but its mystery lives on whenever the Church assumes to the social and cultural conditions of the people among whom she dwells. The reality of creation attests to the fact that every human culture participates in the universal goodness of God's creation. This suggests that there can be no human culture devoid of any good value. Inculturation theology seeks these good or positive values in a culture as a stepping stone in the transformation of the culture by faith. The elevation and sanctification of culture through the process of inculturation is not only valuable for the said culture, but for the enrichment of the entire church. This means that inculturation theology is a dynamic simultaneous give and take between the Christian messages and cultural realities.¹⁴⁴ Inculturation theology should make it possible for the Christian message to penetrate the culture, to allow the culture to assimilate the message and express the message in cultural terms. Making Christianity authentic for the Africans is the primary purpose of inculturation theology. It recognises the important role that culture should play in the process of evangelization.

3.5.1 Salvation and Inculturation

Salvation is a great gift and God wants all his children to be saved. The Church has been sent by God to all nations that she might be the universal sacrament of salvation.¹⁴⁵ The Gospel message is addressed to everyone, and salvation is meant for everyone. Going to proclaim the Gospel means an encounter of persons, of cultures, of values, a giving and taking of what is common to both. According to Azorji, the history of salvation is punctuated by moments of mysteries from creation to redemption. The process of inculturation should take into account these moments and consider traditional cultures not only as a preparatio

¹⁴³ D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Theological Reflections on Inculturation*, 48.

¹⁴⁴ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, 63.

¹⁴⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes Divinitus*, 1

evangelica but as segments of religiosity from which a lot can be transformed into the newness of Christ.¹⁴⁶ D. S. Amalopavadass also emphasised the same point by saying, creation and history are the milieus and media and also content of God's revelation. The cultures of various peoples and their religions contain the treasures of divine revelation (seeds of the Word) and the response of faith and religiosity of peoples for several millennia or centuries.¹⁴⁷ That is why Christians are invited by the Second Vatican Council "to learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth to illumine these treasures with the light of the Gospel",¹⁴⁸ and to save "whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God".¹⁴⁹ Missionary activity or inculturation must free from all taint of evil and restore to Christ its maker. And so whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost. Positively, "from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their creator."¹⁵⁰ The mystery of salvation is intimately connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in situating the problem of inculturation, one must bear in mind that culture "must also die and resurrect". It is only through the process of rebirth, regeneration, and initiation into the life-stream of Christ's salvific event that the end result is achieved.¹⁵¹ We suggest that the central values of Ghanaian culture such as the sense of the sacred, the precious value of life, the concept of communal life, the reality of evil and suffering, belief in transcendent beings etc., are possible areas that need the light of the Gospel message in the context of death and resurrection of Christ.

¹⁴⁶ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation*, 81

¹⁴⁷ D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Theological Reflections on Inculturation*, 47

¹⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 11.

¹⁴⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 9

¹⁵⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 22.

¹⁵¹ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation*, 81.

3.5.2 Redemption and Inculturation

According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*;

the wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ, our Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved this task principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby “dying he destroyed our death, and rising, restored our life”. For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth “the wondrous sacrament of the whole church.”¹⁵²

The local situations are in need of transformation in order to come to their full realization in the Kingdom of God. This means that the vicissitudes of life in various cultures, various “forms of death” in the world, need the power of the risen Christ to overcome them. The risen Lord has conquered death (1 Cor. 15:25-26). The obstacles of culture, which militate against man from realizing his ultimate end, can also be overcome in the light of the risen Christ.¹⁵³ The process of inculturation cannot deviate from the same process of the mystery of redemption. This process includes the birth, the public ministry and mission of Christ, and above all, the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ.¹⁵⁴ Because the Gospel message of the death and resurrection is so central to Christianity, the process of inculturation in confronting the central values of cultures also highlights the incomplete realization of these values and points to the need of healing, of reconciliation, of repairs in human relationships, of resolution of conflicts, of salvation and redemption of all creation.¹⁵⁵ Every culture needs transformation, regeneration, and new life in Jesus. This means that the Christian faith must influence culture, with this culture enriching the faith in its expression. The goal of inculturation based on this redemption analogy demands on the part of African culture, and Ghanaian culture in particular, a rediscovery of the cultural values, even those that are hidden in many art forms, which were considered obnoxious

¹⁵² Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 5.

¹⁵³ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation*, 76.

¹⁵⁴ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation*, 76.

¹⁵⁵ R.J Schreiter, “A Framework for Discussion of Inculturation”, in: *Mission in Dialogue*, (New York: Orbis Books), 549.

by the early missionaries or by the people themselves, to be healed and rectified by the spirit of Christ.¹⁵⁶

3.6 The Christological Basis of Inculturation

Inculturation as part of the mission of the Church is essentially Christological. Every Christian theology is centred on the person of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, and the model for all Christians and the root of Christianity. Christology pertains to the understanding of the mystery of Christ. It is the theological term for discussions concerning the nature and person of Jesus Christ. Christology is the knowledge and teaching of Jesus Christ. By becoming man in order to save humanity, Jesus identifies himself with every human culture. This means that Jesus and his message have to be translated and transmitted through the vehicle of culture. Inculturation Christology calls for an authentic cultural reflection on Jesus Christ. The essence is to make him relevant and understandable to every believing Christian community.¹⁵⁷ Most African theologians have taken this demand of inculturation Christology serious in their theological reflections. These theologians conceive it necessary to use syllogisms, terminologies, predications and concepts understandable to the African in their theological endeavours. Inculturation Christology is actually necessary to make Christ more relevant for the Christian community. It is not necessarily making use of local symbols or terminologies for the sake of it, but making Christ more comprehensible to the people. Inculturation Christology makes it possible for the Africans to recognise the face of Jesus in his African face by giving him African names.¹⁵⁸ In this section we are going to discuss the Christological dimension of inculturation.

3.6.1 The Mystery of the incarnation

The incarnation of Jesus Christ can be the authentic model for every attempt at inculturating the Gospel. The most directly theological word to express the meaning of inculturation is incarnation. In imitating the incarnation of the Word of

¹⁵⁶ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Inculturation*, 80.

¹⁵⁷ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, 73.

¹⁵⁸ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, 77.

God, inculturation, therefore, is and ought to be historical and transcendent, total and integral. According to E.A. Weiss, the incarnation is the mystery of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity's becoming man, the mystery of Jesus Christ's being God and man, the mystery of His being the God-man". He goes on further to state that the word "incarnation" comes (from Latin "caro"-flesh). It means the putting on or the taking of flesh. "And the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). The word incarnation may refer to the Word's becoming man; thus it would mean the operation by which the Triune God, forming a determined human nature in the womb of the Virgin, elevated it and efficiently united it to the Second Divine Person. The word incarnation may also refer to the resultant union; thus it would mean a wondrous, singular, and eternally permanent union of the divine nature and the human nature in the one Person of the Word.¹⁵⁹ This, therefore, refers to the entire Christ-event. That is, the coming, birth, dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

3.6.2 The Incarnation as a Model for Inculturation of the Gospel

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the authentic model for every attempt at inculturating the Gospel. M. Dhavamony calls incarnation the "archetype of the inculturation of the Gospel."¹⁶⁰ This means that incarnation is the original and ideal model of inculturation. In imitating the incarnation of the Word of God, inculturation, therefore, is and ought to be historical and transcendent, total and integral. Just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life situation of the hearers of the Word, because inculturation is precisely the insertion of the Gospel into cultures. The reality of the Word of God who became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14) is the true and central model for the Church's mission of inculturation. In this light the Good News that the Church proclaims must find a home in each culture, following the example given by Jesus when he came to the Jews and shared his life and message with them in and through all the elements proper to their culture.

¹⁵⁹ E.A Weiss, "Incarnation" *The New Catholic Encyclopedia of Theology*, (vol. 7), 373.

¹⁶⁰ M. Dhavamony, *Christian Theology of Inculturation*, (Rome: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997), 95.

Christ's assumption of humanity did not happen in a vacuum, but within a specific historical and cultural setting. Jesus was born into a culture. He was a Jew. This means among other things that he assumed and lived the Jewish cultural life of his day, identifying himself concretely with his people. He lived that culture and used it to announce His message of salvation. Just as the Annunciation and the incarnation took place simultaneously, and the Word incarnated by taking flesh in a concrete human being, the Blessed Virgin Mary, so also, in the cultural context, evangelization and inculturation must take flesh from the culture of the people to whom the Good News is being preached.¹⁶¹ Inspired by Vatican II's teaching on the incarnation as basis for understanding different cultures and philosophies of people¹⁶², African theologians also speak of the incarnation as the model for inculturating the Gospel in Africa. Justin Ukpong notes that inculturation is preferable because it involves "immersing Christianity in African culture so that just as Jesus became man, so must Christianity become African."¹⁶³ The basic argument is that just as Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became incarnate in a human culture, in the Jewish milieu, the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be allowed to be inculturated or incarnated in an African culture and context.

Edward Tamba Charles explains that the term incarnation is used by African theologians in two senses. In the first sense, it means the process of mutual penetration of the Gospel and culture so that Jesus Christ may be present today in every culture. In this particular sense, the event of the incarnation continues in time; it happens each time the Gospel is made to penetrate a cultural milieu so that the people could welcome Christ in their midst as their Saviour. The second sense refers to the unique event of Bethlehem, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:13). It is the primordial inculturation of the Word of God in human flesh and history, and therefore the foundation and the model for all

¹⁶¹ Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation*, 12.

¹⁶² Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 10.

¹⁶³ Justin Ukpong, *African Theologies Now: A Profile*, (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1984), 27.

subsequent inculturation.¹⁶⁴ The Second Vatican Council also basing itself on the mystery of the incarnation, demanded that an inculturation of “the seed which is the Word of God be undertaken by the young churches in every major socio-cultural area.”¹⁶⁵

The process of inculturating the Gospel of Jesus Christ within human culture is a form of incarnation of the Word of God in all the diversity of human experience, in which the Word of God comes to take up a dwelling place in the human family. When the Word of God becomes embedded in the heart of culture, it is like a buried seed which draws its nourishment from the earth around it and grows to maturity. By virtue of the incarnation of Jesus, inculturation could be said to be first and foremost the initiative of God. In the incarnation, God becomes a person and lives his godly life in the human way. The mystery of incarnation is the basis of the theology of inculturation. Hence, the Word of God in assuming the condition of man, except sin, bound himself to the history, culture, traditions and religion of his own people. The incarnation of Jesus is the primary motivation and perfect pattern for inculturation. In virtue of the Word made flesh, the Church must become part of society “for the same motive which led Christ to bind himself...to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwelt.”¹⁶⁶ By being incarnate as intimately as possible, the Christian community is enriched with many cultural values, at the same time offering them Christ’s message and the resources for a new life. The fact that the Word became a Jew gives us the assurance that in his resurrected state he can, even today, incarnate himself in different races and cultures through the faith of the Church and the celebration of this mystery. Because he identified himself with the people of Israel to whom God entrusted the promise of salvation, the incarnate Word can identify himself with the rest of humanity whom God called to take part in the promise made to Abraham. In undertaking the task of inculturation, we need to take into

¹⁶⁴ Edward Charles Tamba, *Inculturating the Gospel in Africa: From Adaptation to incarnation*, 9; cf. Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 94.

¹⁶⁵ The Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Lineamenta*, (Vatican City, 1990), 49.

¹⁶⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 10.

consideration the Christian theology of incarnation, and how to make this meaningful to the people in their existential cultural situations. J.P. Pinto cautions that the use of incarnation to signify inculturation could be questioned. According to him, "there was only one incarnation of God the son, which took place in a given culture of Palestine in the person of Jesus."¹⁶⁷ Pinto is trying to imply here that the same incarnation of Jesus Christ cannot be repeated, since it happened once and in Palestine. However, the way the term "incarnation" is used to express inculturation is by way of intrinsic analogy.¹⁶⁸ That is, as Christ himself chose to become man in order to save humanity, Christianity has no alternative but to do the same in every culture in order to continue the work of salvation brought by Christ.

3.6.3 The Paschal Mystery and Inculturation

This is also the model for inculturation. The incarnation alone does not complete the salvific programme. It is not in itself the whole mystery of salvation. The incarnation of Christ in the history of salvation is brought to fulfilment in the death and resurrection of Christ.¹⁶⁹ In other words the centre of the Christian mystery was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Inculturation can also be related to the Paschal Mystery: cultures, under the impact of the liberating power of the Gospel, rid themselves of their negative features and enter the freedom of God's Kingdom. The Gospel brings a prophetic challenge to every culture to remove all those things which inhibit the justice of the Kingdom of God. Christ by his crucifixion and death destroys hostility, put to death the body of sin (Eph. 2:11-22), liberated people and all areas of life from error and falsehood, from sin and the dominion of the evil one, and from corruption and death. The most fruitful Christological approach is to compare inculturation with the Paschal Mystery, to which it is linked causally as well as analogically.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Prasad Pinto, *Inculturation through Basic Communities*, (Bangalore, F.M. Pais Asian Trading Company, 1985), 13.

¹⁶⁸ Anthony Amadi, *Inculturation in African Churches with particular Reference to Zimbabwe*, (unpublished Th., University of South Africa, 2002), 18.

¹⁶⁹ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria with Special Reference to the Igbo People*, 75.

Thus the process of inculturation implies a rebirth and a regeneration of cultures – “the death and resurrection” of cultures. As Jesus passed through passion and death, all cultures are called to the fullness of life and divine perfection.¹⁷⁰ Through his passion, death and resurrection, Christ became universal Lord and made himself available to people of every culture. The Paschal Mystery also offers an analogy for the conversion of culture, which dies and rises under the impact of evangelization, thus becoming more authentic and more faithful to its underlying truth. Through the Paschal Mystery, Christ assumed the whole creation in order to redeem and unify it. Nothing is saved unless it is assumed, and it has to be assumed even before it is purified and redeemed, and everything created must be saved and hence be assumed in Christ. So persons and things cannot be assumed and integrated into the Church unless they are brought into the touchstone of Christ and his Paschal Mystery; elements of culture as well as persons and groups, their activities and realities of this world should be made to pass through Christ’s death and resurrection. They should be subjected to a thorough scrutiny and Christian interpretation. When cultural elements and symbols are assumed to express the Christian mystery, they should be liberated from sin, evil, error and falsehood, and get a true Christian meaning, orientation, and fulfilment in a comprehensive whole.

3.7 inculturation under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit works in the world and in the Church. Since evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit, inculturation considered in the same context is inconceivable without the Holy Spirit as the primary motivator and counsellor. Hence in implementing the mission of evangelization we need to be docile to the Holy Spirit, sensitive to what he is working not only within the Church, but also within the entire society, and in the hearts of men and women. The mission of the Church has been motivated and filled by the Holy Spirit, and the Church cannot be active unless she is constantly guided by the Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, one cannot talk about the Church of Christ in

¹⁷⁰ Roest Crolius et al. (eds.), “The Meaning of Culture in Theological Anthropology”, in: *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, (St. Paul’s Publication Africa, 1986), 31.

isolation from the Spirit as the principal agent of evangelization. The activity of the Church from the beginning of time to the present has been under the surveillance of the Spirit, and the Spirit makes the Church know constantly the signs of the times and the germ of the word in the different cultures of the people. The Holy Spirit is present along the whole process of Inculturation revealing the richness both of Christ's mystical Body and of the cultures in which the Word event is to take place. The Spirit gives validity to the plurality verified within the unity of the Church, and testifies to the wholeness of the Church realized in so many particularities, to its catholicity.¹⁷¹ We need God's Spirit to guide us in making implicit Christianity explicit, thereby deepening the understanding we have both of the Gospel message and of our own lives.

3.8 Conclusion

Several writers posit an analogy between inculturation and the incarnation of Christ. Just as the Logos "took flesh" and entered into the culture of first century Palestine, so must the Christian faith take on the culture of each group that receives the Gospel¹⁷² It is in terms of analogy that one could say that the Gospel should be inculturated or incarnated in a culture just as Jesus Christ, the Word of God, took flesh, lived among us (John 1:14), and became incarnate in a human culture. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is a mystery. It is a divine act, a unique and entirely singular event. The mystery of the incarnation points to other realities beyond the issues of inculturation. Therefore, its usage should be understood in terms of analogy. We need to bear this in mind as we relate the incarnation to the process of inculturation.

Inculturation is a difficult, long, courageous and continuous process which is but the fruit of a progressive maturity in the faith. The process is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time it is a difficult process, for it must in

¹⁷¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

¹⁷² Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 6-7.

no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.¹⁷³ It is a slow process which takes time and implies patience and guidance. Inculturation needs to be guided and encouraged, but not forced, lest it give rise to negative reactions among Christians. It must be an expression of the community's life, one which must mature within the community itself, and not be exclusively the result of erudite research. Inculturation, however, can never compromise the Christian message – the Gospel, since the Gospel is all about metanoia, that is, conversion or change of heart. If therefore the Gospel enters a culture and it changes nothing, there is no real inculturation. Once the Gospel enters a culture, that culture must undergo metanoia at its most profound level. The change that takes place as a result of this encounter does not destroy a culture. Instead it purifies and elevates it.¹⁷⁴ A particular culture is prompted to open itself to the newness of the Gospel's truth which responds to every human person's profound longing for the Absolute and be stirred by this truth to develop in new ways to attain the fullness of life.¹⁷⁵ In fact inculturation implies purification of certain values, rites, traditions, practices that are contrary to the Gospel. Culture is a product of the human person who has been stained by original sin. Cultures could be sinful and destructive. In every culture then, there are elements of sin that need to be healed, ennobled and perfected.¹⁷⁶ Inculturation is not something that can be done overnight. It is a long process of growth.

¹⁷³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 52.

¹⁷⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 87.

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania* 16.

¹⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 54.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GHANAIAAN CULTURE THROUGH INCULTURATION

4.1 Introduction

We cannot discuss inculturation without giving due consideration to culture. This consideration of culture is important because the Christian message, which is meant for all people, has to enter into every culture. It is when the Gospel message enters into the culture of a particular place and becomes deeply rooted, that the message becomes indigenous and authentic to the people. The crisis of Evangelization is more than just a crisis of faith; it is also a crisis of culture. The African Synod participants rightly pointed out that the crisis of faith experienced today occurs in the midst of a crisis of culture, and that new evangelization requires a transformation of culture. Some have stated explicitly that the faith has not sufficiently penetrated the culture in question so as to call it and lead it to Christ. In this chapter an effort will be made to understand the concept of culture, and we will try to consider some African cultural values and see how they can help promote the inculturation of the Gospel in Africa.

4.2 The Concept and Definition of Culture

For the purpose of this chapter, we will consider a few definitions, highlighting some common characteristics of culture while pointing out how they relate to inculturation and evangelization. Since inculturation is primarily on culture, we shall describe broadly what culture is. Culture is a world-view, a complex of symbiotic expressions, a way of life.¹⁷⁷ Broadly described, culture is the way or pattern of life, acquired through learning, which characterize a human community.¹⁷⁸ Understood in this sense, it means that a person does not possess culture but rather belongs to a culture. Culture here is something very

¹⁷⁷ Robert Hardawirya, "Building the Church in a Pluricultural Situation", in: Roest Crolius et al. (eds.), *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Culture*, (1986), 5.

¹⁷⁸ N. Standaert, *Inculturation The Gospel and Cultures*, (Manila: St. Paul's Publications, 1994), 9.

comprehensive which includes habits of living, eating and dressing, ways of communicating, and the arts, family structures and systems of production, education, law and decision-making.¹⁷⁹ In the light of transmitting the Christian faith in the modern world, Vatican II Council document on the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern world describes culture as follows:

The word culture in the general sense refers to all those things which go to the refining and development of man's diverse and physical endowments. He strives to subdue the earth by his knowledge and by his labour; he humanizes social life both in the improvement of customs and institutions; he expresses through his works the great spiritual experiences and aspirations of men throughout the ages; he communicates and preserves them to be an inspiration for the progress of many, even of all mankind.¹⁸⁰

In this descriptive definition, human beings possess culture, which they develop for their own well-being. Culture means, therefore, the way in which the community knows, affirms and assesses itself in the interaction of its members and with the environment reality. This means that there is need for a constant evaluation of culture so that human beings will be able to discover new meanings and also transcend their limitations, correct their mistakes and overcome their weaknesses. The same idea can also be found in Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which states: "Culture is the total complexus of notions, beliefs, arts, usages, and all other kinds of abilities and constant activity which belong to man as a member of society. It is the sum total of the positive values which animate them, of the negative factors which weaken them, and which are shared by the great mass of members, uniting them on the basis of collective conscience."¹⁸¹ It is the dynamic relation between the Christian message and a culture; an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them.

¹⁷⁹ N. Standaert, *Inculturation – The Gospel and Cultures*, 9-10.

¹⁸⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 53.

¹⁸¹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18.

According to Father Lutzbethak, culture is basically a system of meaningful forms which provides human beings with a “shared design for living”¹⁸². It is a set of images, collectively inherited and experienced, which enable human beings to relate to one another in community and to the world in which they live, intellectually, emotionally and behaviourally. Culture is thus a historical tradition into which human beings enter, a tradition that usually takes its origin in the interface of a human society with a given physical environment, the interaction of a people and their land. Culture comprises the way of behaving. It is the way we do things. Another aspect of culture is, therefore, the means by which we do things. Implements, artefacts, paintings, figurines for religious observances, and all the integrative forces such as religion are elements of culture.¹⁸³ The various ways of behaving are part of culture. Culture consists of the ways, mores and beliefs transmitted from generation to generation; it may be shared by some population or a group of people – in other words, it should represent the collective conscience of a group of people.

According to Peter Akwasi Sarpong, culture comprises everything that you have as a social being – the way a particular people farm, the way they marry; the way they settle cases, relationships between men and their wives, the way of hunting, the type of food that is eaten and how to prepare it, one’s language, ideas about life and death, the role of leaders in the society, the way buildings are put up – in short, everything that one acquires as a member of society. All these combine to create the culture of the people.¹⁸⁴ Sarpong affirms that culture must have a bit of permanence about it. If something becomes the order of the day for a few years and disappears, you cannot call it cultural. For something to be called cultural, it must remain, it must gradually become part and parcel of the people; it must have a certain degree of stability for the people. There are almost as many definitions of culture, as there are people trying to define it. According to E.B. Taylor, “culture

¹⁸² Loius Lutzbethak, *The Church and Culture*, (New York: Orbis, 1988), 61-63.

¹⁸³ Eric Ayisi, *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture*, (London: Heinemann, 1979), 2.

¹⁸⁴ Peter Sarpong, *People Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelization*, (Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002), 41.

refers to that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹⁸⁵ From this definition, it is important to note that not only is culture an all-embracing of human social life, it is learned or acquired. Thus every society has its own culture which may differ in some significant ways from that of other societies. The culture of a place is sometimes said to be indigenous, implying that it is exclusive and peculiar to that society, but this is invalid because of cultural contact or acculturation. There is no culture that could be said to be pure. For example, Roman and Greek cultures have influenced other European cultures in many ways. Most African cultures have been influenced by western culture. In other words, culture is dynamic. It is changing all the time. There are new things introduced into the culture while certain things disappear from the culture. Culture is neither divine nor natural. It is a human product. It is evidently ensemble and totality of human efforts and achievements in the course of their struggle for existence and survival amidst the unfriendly militating forces of nature. Everyone is born into a society. It is here in the society that he lives; it is in society that he develops and realizes himself as a person. There he acquires cultural values (moral, religious etc), learns and socializes with others and makes his own contribution to the overall wellbeing of society.¹⁸⁶

4.3 Evangelization of Cultures

Christianity was intended to civilize and to save souls that were in darkness. One remarkable feature of the early phase of evangelization was the gradual move from the understanding of the goal of mission as saving of souls to that of planting of churches, which included building of schools, hospitals, and other forms of social services. This section looks at Christianity and culture in general but with more emphasis on Christianity and African culture.

¹⁸⁵ Edward Taylor, *Primitive Culture*, (London: 1971), 1.

¹⁸⁶ Francis Ogunmodede, “What is African Culture? A Philosophical Response” in: *Nigerian Cultural Heritage*, (Onitsha: IMICO Publishing Company, 1990), 24.

4.3.1 Pre-Vatican II

Evangelization itself had taken on the added dimension of cultural advancement and the civilisation of the so-called uncivilised peoples. Africans, no doubt, fell into this category. The very nature of mission was thought to be determined by this additional exigency of imparting “the light of the Gospel and the benefits of Christian culture and civilisation to the peoples sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.”¹⁸⁷ This was because the Europeans at that time saw their own culture and their religion in so bright a light that anything else seemed like night in comparison. This explains why the missionaries of old did not acknowledge African culture as they should have done, nor did they build their message upon it.¹⁸⁸ The desire to save the people from the darkness of superstition went beyond mere instruction of them in the true faith of Christ to an overall cultural advancement and civilisation of “uncivilised peoples”. We find amply portrayed the paradoxical tension between, on the one hand, the positive theoretical affirmation of, and respect for local culture, so well pronounced in church statements, and, on the other hand, the negative practical application in the missionary situation, particularly in Africa. On the level of official church pronouncements, the Catholic Church has always manifested her great solicitude for a genuine regard for, and respect of the ways of life of the people in the missions. This attitude is quite in line with the early tradition of the Church to assume into Christianity whatever was good in the ways of life of a good people and gradually to eradicate what was not compatible with it.

4.3.2 Vatican II and Evangelization of Cultures

The positive recognition of religious pluralism is a distinctive mark of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. African traditional religious experience and expression, having emerged from the limbo of negation and scepticism to eventual recognition, is gradually taking its rightful place among the religions of the world, and is considered the legitimate expression of a genuine religious experience of African

¹⁸⁷ Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 51.

¹⁸⁸ Buhlmann, *The Missions on Trial*, (Maryknoll, New York: 1979), 74.

peoples in their encounter with the divine. The recognition that African peoples do have a religious expression that is properly and uniquely African, is much in the spirit of the changed climate of the Second Vatican Council with its theological openness towards non-Christian peoples in general and non-Christian religions in particular. The Church had a generally negative attitude towards non-Christian peoples and their religions. Until the Second Vatican Council, non-Christian religions, for theological reasons, were hardly ever the subject of positive appraisal by the Church; if there was a reference to non-Christian religions, it was either to contrast them with Christianity, the only true religion, because it is revealed, or to condemn them.

The Second Vatican Council made a major breakthrough in the relationship between the Catholic Church and other religions when it directed all Christians to develop a positive attitude towards other believers. It opened the door for positive discussions about other religions. Vatican II stressed understanding: encouraging the use of the vernacular, rather than Latin, in worship, and opening the door to co-operation between Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians. Perhaps the key African Catholic response to Vatican II was the use of the vernacular liturgy and the development of African hymnody and instrumentation. It may seem odd, but it is probably true, that the most important single effect in Africa in popular terms of the Council has been the change in singing, in hymns, in music, in the use of musical instruments. In her mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all men and women of all cultures, which also always involves the inculturation of faith, the Church comes into contact with traditional religions, above all in Africa and Asia.¹⁸⁹ This is all the more important because all over the world, a whole new range of possibilities is opening up for a pastoral approach to culture to bring the light of Christ's Gospel to the hearts of men and women.¹⁹⁰ Pope Paul VI's optimistic view

¹⁸⁹ Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 26.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cult...
 (23 May 2007).

¹⁹⁰ Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 26.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cult...
 (23 May 2007).

of African religious tradition in *Africae Terrarum* the encyclical he devotes entirely to Africa, is based on his positive recognition of the worth of ethnological science in broadening the horizons of knowledge on African peoples. The Pope's recognition of the reality of the African religious heritage was therefore not only in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, but it indicated radically the changed times in which we live. He was the first Pontiff to set foot on African soil. He challenged African Christians to have "an African Christianity" based on African human values and characteristic forms of culture. Pope John Paul II was much more personally involved in African reality. He has been loud in the praise of African cultural and religious heritage. In his numerous pastoral visits to Africa, he impressed upon Africans to have high regard and respect for African traditional cultural heritage, and how this should be brought into the service of the Gospel, and for the enrichment of the universal church. Addressing the Bishops of Kenya, on an ad Limina visit, he asserts:

I am close to you, in praise and encouragement, in every undertaking of yours to communicate Christ, to make his Gospel incarnate in the lives and culture of your people...The "acculturation" or "inculturation" which you rightly promote will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought. By respecting, preserving and fostering the particular values and riches of your people's cultural heritage, you will be in a position to lead them to a better understanding of the mystery of Christ, which is to be lived in the noble, concrete and daily experiences of African life. There is no question of adulterating the Word of God, or of emptying the Cross of its power, but rather of bringing Christ into the very centre of African life and of lifting up all African life to Christ. Thus not only is Christianity relevant to Africa, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself African.¹⁹¹

When we talk of Christianity and culture, we recall that Christianity has its own beginnings rooted in culture, when Jesus Christ was born in a particular culture,

¹⁹¹ John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Kenya*, (Nairobi, 7 May 1980), 1.

the Jewish culture. The importance of evangelizing culture was noted by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

what matters is to evangelise man`s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in-depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*, always taking the person as one`s starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.¹⁹²

In order that a people be Christian, it is necessary that Christianity become incarnate in its culture. The fact that Christianity incarnates itself in a culture does not mean that it is identified with the particular culture. The Church does not propagate a parallel culture. Her mission is to evangelize all cultures. Speaking of the relation between Gospel and culture, the Second Vatican Council outlines three links between them. 1) God revealing Himself to His people, up to the full manifestation of Himself in Jesus Christ, has spoken according to the type of culture proper to diverse historical epochs; the Church in the course of history has made use of different cultures to communicate the Gospel message to peoples and to express it in liturgy and life of the community the faithful. 2) The Church is not tied down to any particular culture and is conscious of its universal mission. The Church should enter into communion with diverse forms of culture; such a communion enriches both the Church and the various cultures. 3) The Gospel purifies, elevates, and renews the cultural values of a people.¹⁹³ According to Mariasusai Dhavamony, the first two comprise what we mean by inculturation of the Gospel, while the third can be considered as the evangelization of cultures. The process of inculturation concerns the Gospel in as far as it has to be inserted into a culture; this is formally called the inculturation of the Gospel. If it concerns the culture in as far as it is assumed and purified by the Gospel, then it is called the

¹⁹² Second Vatican Council, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20.

¹⁹³ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

evangelization of culture.¹⁹⁴ Evangelization of culture is therefore aimed at transformation of culture and unjust structures of society. Benezet Bujo, in talking about evangelization of culture, has this to say: “it is not denied that there were in the African cultural tradition elements which had to be challenged by the Christian Gospel. The failure was to distinguish the positive and negative elements in the culture.”¹⁹⁵ Vatican II has always encouraged Christians to renounce every negative and aggressive attitude to culture, and to participate in the building up of human culture. We can say that Christianity, especially since Vatican II has promoted and continues to promote the development of cultural values everywhere. In the process of evangelization of cultures, those aspects of culture that are not good are transformed and those that are good are elevated, then both are made use for the service of the Gospel. There are many good cultural values in Africa which are useful for the spread of the Gospel.

4.4 The Transformation of some Ghanaian Cultural Values

In the ongoing process of inculturation, Gospel values challenge African culture and African people. African Christians need to live out deep Gospel values that sometimes go counter to certain values of African culture. It is worth mentioning that the African continent is geographically a vast land occupied by people of many tribes, languages and groups. The people’s religious experience vary considerably from one place to another. Despite the common features in the ways of life of these groups, there are a lot of differences as one moves from one place to another. Consequently, what constitutes elements of African culture is diverse, and differs considerable from one place to another.¹⁹⁶ In this section we shall examine some Ghanaian cultural values that are peculiar and of relevance to inculturation of the Gospel. Some of the Ghanaian cultural values can enrich the universal Church.

¹⁹⁴ Mariasusai Dhavanony, “The Christian Theology of Inculturation” in: *Inculturation Gospel and Culture*, (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1995), 6.

¹⁹⁵ Benezet Bujo, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, (Nairobi: St. Paul’s Publications Africa, 1998), 48.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Ekwoyi Apochi, *Hints for the Implementation of the Ecclesia in Africa*, 9.

4.4.1 The Family

The family is the basic cell of society. It is a generative unit to which people belong by nature. It serves human beings as a centre for love and care, a place of refuge and shelter, a home of security and solidarity as well as a school for the transmission of social and cultural values. In the family one is given recognition, acceptance and a sense of belonging. In it one enjoys respect and understanding. One need not pay for services received in one's family and consequently renders services to other members without counting the cost. Generally, people take pride in their family and would avoid anything that could bring it shame. The family is dear to the heart of the Ghanaian. The family is the basic unit of the society and therefore of the church. In Ghana, this basic fact is a living reality. It is evident that family is not something peculiar to Ghana alone, since it exists everywhere and many common elements are found, particularly in the traditional societies. The African originality of the family goes beyond the ordinary accentuation of the term. For instance, in many non-African societies, a family is made up of the husband, wife and their children. However, the Ghanaian designation of family is more extensive. It includes all living members of these groups, besides being mystically connected to the ancestors and, through social pacts, to outsiders such as friends and others. The term family in Ghana evokes not only blood communal membership of few living members, but also the themes of clan, tribe, affinity, maternity.¹⁹⁷

Central to Ghana's social institutions is the family, but it is important to define what the Ghanaian concept of the family means. While in the non-Ghanaian sense of the word the family includes only the parents and the children of the home. In Ghanaian society it embraces a whole lineage. Among the Akan, the family includes all the maternal relations, while the other groups, the family include all the members of the paternal lineage. The Ga and the Ewe are patrilineal; the Fante, Asante and other Akan peoples are matrilineal. Thus, inasmuch as blood relation in Ghana is concerned, the family embrace many more persons than in the western

¹⁹⁷ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion*, 107ff.

and other civilizations. It is usual to refer to members of the blood relations as the “extended family”.¹⁹⁸ Family in Ghana goes beyond spouse and children. There are parents, siblings, uncles, cousins, aunts, grand-parents and great-grand relations. Behind every Ghanaian, there is the extended family which is a source of strength and assurance. In times of difficulty, they share the cost of relief and also share in times of joy.

4.4.2 The Church as the Family of God

In their efforts to inculturate the Gospel on the African soil, the Fathers of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops recommended the image of the Church as the family of God, as the guiding principle for evangelization on the African continent. In the words of *Ecclesia in Africa*, “not only did the Synod speak of inculturation, but it also made use of it, taking the Church as God’s family as its guiding idea for the evangelization in Africa. The Synod Fathers acknowledged it as an expression of the Church’s nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust.”¹⁹⁹ This image of the Church has received great attention in the wake of the African Synod. Theologians in Africa have been challenged to explore its riches in order to build up an ecclesiology of the Church as the Family of God. Throwing down this challenge, Pope John Paul II says: “It is earnestly to be hoped that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the church as family with all the riches contained in the concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the church.”²⁰⁰

The idea of a community built on family realities and ideals as basis of communion emanates from Vatican II’s understanding of the family as a “domestic church”. This is contained in *Lumen Gentium*: “...from wedlock of Christians comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born. By the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism these are made children of God, thus perpetuating the

¹⁹⁸ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion*, 43.

¹⁹⁹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 63.

²⁰⁰ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 63

People of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic church.”²⁰¹ *Ecclesia in Africa* corroborates this and reminds us that: “In African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere to be fundamental. Open to this sense of the family, of love and respect for life, the African love children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God.”²⁰² This is important for inculturation and particularly for that aspect of it that is realized most effectively in the family. That is the Christian family where the faith, through catechesis, the process of teaching the faith and its explanation, becomes a way of life. There in the family, the faith is rooted because it has become home made. The evangelizing mission of the church in Africa today need the family – parents, to be first preachers of the faith to their children, by word and example. The Church in Africa has adopted the model of church as family. This model does not pretend to eliminate or deny the other models. It taps on an outstanding human and African value, thus providing a fresh insight and impetus to the understanding of the church within the particular African mentality and context. The portrayal of the church as family is an effort to forge a synthesis of biblical tradition and a symbol very dear to the African psyche.²⁰³

4.4.3 Family Solidarity

Every tribe in Ghana, as in other African countries, is divided into groups technically called clans. The number of clans differs from tribe to tribe. Clans may be patrilineal or matrilineal. In other words, in a patrilineal society a person belongs to the clan of his father and in a matrilineal society, to that of his mother. In Ghana, Akan societies are matrilineal. All others are patrilineal. Inheritance, succession, status, are lineally determined. Where one traces one’s descent through the male line one acquires property from one’s father’s group. If it is through the mother that one traces one’s descent then one succeeds in or inherits

²⁰¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

²⁰² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

²⁰³ Jude Thaddaeus Ruwaichi, “The Newness and Pastoral Implications of the Church as a Family” in: Patrick Ryan et al. (eds.), *New Strategies for a New Evangelization in Africa*, (Limuru: Kolbe Press, 2002), 24.

from one's mother's clan.²⁰⁴ Members of one clan are held to be related to one another and bound together by a common tie. The tie is the belief that all members of the clan descend from one ancestor or ancestress. Hence members of one clan are held to be relatives – brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, etc. Local communities – villages or towns – are composed of people from different clans. The section of the clan located in a particular place is called the lineage. Every lineage has a head. All lineage heads form the council of the headman or chief of the village, who is chosen from one lineage which is the ruling lineage of the village, but is not the head of his own lineage.²⁰⁵ Thus, it is unusual to see someone isolated. In the extended family system, everyone is cared for. No one looks for his or her own fortune alone.

4.4.4 The Extended Family System

In Ghana, as noted earlier, the concept of family has a rich meaning. One of which is that the family is not made up of only those who are still living in the flesh. The unseen ancestors and those yet-to-be born are part of the family and are every inch interested in it. ²⁰⁶ In addition, the Ghanaian sense of the family extends beyond the husband, wife and children. It is an extended family which includes all the descendants of a particular progenitor or ancestor.²⁰⁷ The extended family therefore derives from the extension in time through matrimonial links of relationships between parents and children. Besides, it includes individuals without any parental relationships, but considered members of the family. Such a family with its members sometimes make up an entire village. Put together, in Ghana, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and immediate relatives. It is larger than that referred to by the ethnologists as primary family meaning that which comprises parents and their children. Each person is born into an extended family. Cardinal Francis Arinze explains:

²⁰⁴ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 36.

²⁰⁵ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 36.

²⁰⁶ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 104-167.

²⁰⁷ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion*, 108.

Africans are at home both in the nuclear family and in the extended family. The sense of family belongingness is rather strong. Many African languages have the same word for brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews and nieces, the same word for grandfathers and uncles, and sometimes even the same name for fathers and mothers. The sense of family belongingness pervades all these scales on the genealogical ladder.²⁰⁸

When we talk of the Church as a family of God, the extended family becomes an ideal. This is because everyone is a member. No one is excluded. The support each member receives helps to make one grow and feel a sense of belonging. The Ghanaian Church can be modelled on the extended family system, where all are catered for and there is no one in need. That is, a situation where no one lacks the basic needs for physical and spiritual growth.

4.4.5 The Church as the Extended Family of God

In the great extended family of God, the Son is the eldest Brother, who is a loving and caring brother. The saints are the Christian ancestors. This family incorporates all peoples, all races and all ethnic groups. All people are sons and daughters of God who are spread over a world-wide family of past and future generations. This extended family includes the distant ancestors, the living dead, the living and those not yet born. The Christian church can be visualized as a large extended family homestead with different houses in the same compound and other similar homesteads in the same neighbourhood. The Church can be pictured as a great family with Jesus Christ as the head serving under the Father. Humankind is bonded together in a universal brotherhood and sisterhood. All Christians are adopted sons and daughters. Jesus is the eldest brother. One part of this great family is the African community in Christ.²⁰⁹ At the centre of the Church is communion, and everything is done in order to strengthen it. The best that Africa can offer to the world church stresses the human dignity and equality of each and every member. The church universal is seen as the mother of all clans, never

²⁰⁸ Francis Arinze, *Reflecting on the Church as a Family*, (Unpublished lecture, Rome, 1995), 2.

²⁰⁹ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 127.

excluding anybody but always all-embracing. The African values of community, participation, consensus and solidarity support the communitarian model of church that Africa can contribute to the world church. The African experience of living ecclesial communion of communities enriches the universal church.

4.4.6 Sense of Community

Ghanaians are communitarian people. A person's life is geared to the well being of the community. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole community, and whatever happens to the whole community happens to the individual. The emphasis on personal relationships is closely connected to family values. Whether people are members of the immediate family or the extended family or close friends or even visitors, everyone participates in the close family relationships and friendships. One aspect of the Ghanaian family is the sense of community. The authentic Ghanaian is known and identified in, by and through his community. Ghanaian value of solidarity means unity, togetherness and fraternity. People enjoy being together and doing things together; thus there are expressions such as, "let us celebrate together, to help each other and pray for one another". In their personal relationship and friendships people become at home with each other and with others. In Ghanaian community life, people who have sudden misfortunes are readily helped through communal spirit. This community spirit is a common ground between the traditional Ghanaian family and the domestic church – the Ghanaian Christian family. This value, community spirit, should be central in family catechesis as a form of church building today, because African or Ghanaian community spirit is built on the principles of familyhood, team work, sharing, and togetherness. *Ecclesia in Africa* recommends that we focus on the ways and means of bringing the church to the grass roots of African society, beginning with the smallest cell of society, the family – the African family – that becomes the domestic church, through proper evangelization, without domesticating the church. The family would thus become the church at the fount of human society, which is the basic community, where community per se, in the

ecclesial spirit, is built in Africa on the principles of community spirit.²¹⁰ The Ghanaian world-view emphasizes the values of family relationships, parental care, self sacrificing concern for others, sharing and even hospitality. The African gift of community is sharing the little one has, sharing from want, making sure everyone has something. Everyone eats from the common pot, however small it is. It is often pointed out that usually during times of famine very few people starve because the little available food is shared among everybody. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* states: "African cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family."²¹¹ Africans emphasize harmony in the community rather than division. They will go to great lengths to promote peace and reconciliation. Sharing one's deepest values and dreams is one of the special calls of the Christian life.

4.4.7 Sense of Hospitality

Hospitality is a very important cultural and social value in African society. Traditional Africans have a good and welcoming spirit towards visitors. Hospitality is a way of life that is intimately bound up with personal relationships and community. According to A. Onwubiko: "African traditions of hospitality are deep and sincere. The Africans sense of hospitality is one of the African values that is still quite alive."²¹² Africans have a tremendous spirit of welcoming in their culture. African traditions of hospitality are very strong but vary according to local customs.²¹³ Extending both hands in welcome is a special African symbol of hospitality. Even when guests come without an invitation, the household shows kindness to all guests and welcomes them with open hands and open arms. There are various symbols of African hospitality.²¹⁴ When a visitor enters a house, a very hearty greeting is expressed by the clapping of hands which is followed by a

²¹⁰ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

²¹¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

²¹² A. Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 23.

²¹³ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 170.

²¹⁴ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 168ff.

conversation and entertainment. Africans have a symbolic way of expressing welcome. In Ghana, water is served as a symbolic gesture of welcome. In Nigeria, the Igbo's use kola nuts to show love, peace and unity which are very important to life. This is why it is said the person who brings kola, brings life.²¹⁵ Hospitality is a very important cultural and social value in African societies. The value of hospitality is closely linked to the personal-centred values and personal and community relationship values. Hospitality in Africa is a "way of life" that is intimately bound up with personal relationship and community. A key African value is inclusiveness, which is seen concretely in expressions of African hospitality. African traditions of hospitality are very strong but vary according to local customs. According to Peter Kwasi Sarpong, the abhorrence of disgrace may well be the underlying rationale for the Ghanaian's sense of generosity, especially to strangers. He may not like a tribe and its members, but this will never prevent him from treating with kindness a guest from that tribe. ²¹⁶ Welcoming visitors is an important African value. The host or hostess drops everything to welcome the guest and make the person feel at home. Greetings, hospitality, food, drink and rest are the first priority. Visitors are a special blessing. They are always given a warm welcome and genuine hospitality. ²¹⁷ This is similar to the value of hospitality in the Bible. "Extend hospitality to strangers" (Rom. 12:13). Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Heb. 13:2).

What new and fresh ideas and insights can African hospitality give to universal Church? African Christianity can remind the world church of the importance of hospitality. At the heart of hospitality is the relationship with God and with each other, which is what the Christian life is all about. Jesus welcomed strangers, outsiders, pagans, outcasts, sinners and the diseased. Both the theology and praxis of his ministry reflect this basic value of African hospitality. Real African hospitality challenges the trend in our modern world where strangers are viewed

²¹⁵ Anthony Amadi, *Inculturation in African Churches with Particular Reference to Zimbabwe*, 69.

²¹⁶ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 66.

²¹⁷ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 173.

with suspicion. Thus a theology of hospitality is closely connected to confronting all kinds of social, racial and sexual discrimination. Hospitality as an African cultural value and a deeply Christian value challenges the pervading individualism, selfishness and exclusivism of the contemporary world.²¹⁸ African hospitality should help Africans first and foremost to welcome Christ so that he will not only settle among them, but he will become part of them and deeply rooted in their culture.

4.4.8 Sacredness of Life and Sense of Respect for Elders

Since Ghanaians value life, they regard it as sacred. Ghanaians value the life of an individual not because of what he or she has or what the person has achieved in life. Since the traditional Ghanaians value life and hold it as sacred, they also respect and protect it. Ghanaians, like other Africans, have deep respect for their elders. The Ghanaian culture encourages the young to respect their elders. According to Onwubiko: "Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him the right of courtesy and politeness."²¹⁹ There are certain reasons why Africans have deep and genuine respect for their elders. They are believed to be people of custodian of wisdom, truthful and regarded as teachers. They are consulted for information. A person who desires to know the history of his village or society has to consult the elders. Elders are regarded as teachers since they are people who have experienced a lot of whatever life could offer. They share their life experience with the young through storytelling and pieces of advice.

4.4.9 Pouring of Libation

One feature of traditional Ghanaian life that poses a problem for the Christian is the pouring of libation. This is a traditional rite that is found in Ghanaian and some other African ethnic groups. Libation is a simple rite in which one takes some

²¹⁸ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 188.

²¹⁹ A. Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1991), 28.

liquid and pours it on the ground or sometimes on an object while pronouncing some words. The liquid may be palm wine, schnapps, whisky, gin, or even water. The liquid used for the ceremony must actually be poured out. The accompanying prayer is most often improvised or inspired by the occasion. But sometimes stereotyped formulae are used, especially on formal and official occasions.²²⁰ These include festival days and the funeral obsequies of some dead person. But whether the prayer is improvised or whether it is a stereotyped formula, the way it is said follows a more or less defined pattern. In general it is enough to mention the name of the person to whom the libation is being poured and then the liquid. When all the names have been mentioned, the person pouring the libation continues with his or her petition.

Libation may take the following form. With water or alcoholic drink in hand, the person pouring the libation raises the drink to God Almighty as he or she says words like: "we show you drink, we do not offer you drink." Some then go on to invoke God's blessing on the drink by saying: "We show this drink to you so that you may touch it and remove from it all evil, so that as we pour it, whatever we say or implore for ourselves may be efficacious unto our good." Next comes the invocation of the gods and the ancestors and the declaration to them of the purpose of the prayer. Libation is poured at important moments of life, especially at birth, puberty, marriage and death. It is also poured when members of the family are about to undertake certain ventures, e.g. travel, trade, etc. The pouring of libation is usually the responsibility of the head of the family, or tribe, or the linguist or priest, but ordinary individuals can also pour libation. It can be poured at home, at the stool house, in private, or in public. Any important visitor to Ghana will have experienced the ritual of libation. All senior dignitaries who visit the country – Presidents, Queens, Government leaders – observe the ritual as a mark of respect for their safe arrival and to seek divine intervention for their protection. Normally this is done alongside Christian and Moslem prayers to signal the country's religious pluralism. The pouring of libation holds a special place in the

²²⁰ Ecclesia in Ghana, 124.

Ghanaian cultural setting. Traditionalists see it as a means of communicating with God. They seek the intervention of their Ancestors with their messages, and call for God's guidance, blessing and protection when libation is being poured.

When we examine the prayers that accompany libations, we discover that the supernatural beings that feature in libation include the Supreme Being, the ancestral spirits, the lesser deities and the earth goddess. With regard to the significance of libation for those who pour it, at least three points can be made. First, those who pour libation express the wish for blessings and earthly benefits on themselves and on those whose behalf they pour it. Secondly, through libation they seek to honour the particular group of spiritual beings whom they address in the libation. Thirdly, libation creates an atmosphere of solidarity among members of a community. From time to time the people of a given community come together to find solutions to their common problems through libation. Can a Christian pour libation which includes the mention of minor deities and the invoking of a curse on enemies? Must the Christian refrain altogether from the pouring of libation, or is it possible to adapt the traditional rite in the light of Christian concepts and principles? Although libation has been in vogue over the years, considerable opposition seems to be growing now regarding the practice of libation at state functions. Some Christians interviewed say the practice smacks of idolatry. They further contend that by giving it a tacit approval, the State is encouraging a practice which, in the main, has serious repercussions for the country. The attitude of Christians to libation varies. For some it is unbiblical and unchristian. For some Christians with a Pentecostal or charismatic orientation it is not only unbiblical, it is demonic. Many of the mainline Churches have not officially pronounced on libation. For many Christians libation is a ritual that is incompatible with Christianity and for this reason it should, in their view, not even be contemplated by Christians. Libation is an age-long institution among human beings. As a form of prayer, libation is poured to the Supreme Being, the deities and the ancestors. The mention of deities and ancestors in libation has offended many Christians who have therefore described it an unacceptable form of superstition. Other Christians

believe that whatever the character libation may have had in the past, it is now to be considered one of the riches of our heritage that should not be done away with. Some would argue that even if libation was a religious act in the past, it has lost its strict religious character and taken on a purely civil or semi-religious character.

Libation cannot be dismissed outright as a practice that is incompatible with Christianity. It is possible to have a form of libation that is reconcilable with Christianity. Is it not possible for a Christian to pour libation in which God is addressed and the good ancestors are invoked? The reference to the lesser deities would have to be omitted. Those who may not be comfortable with the mention of the ancestors might go further and leave them out of the libatory prayers altogether. The invocation of curse on enemies would either be omitted or it could be turned into a prayer in which God would be asked to change the hearts of these enemies so that they would have the welfare of the society at heart. This would be a good example of inculturation. It should also be noted that the Roman Catholic Church has had a long tradition of Christianizing non-Christian rituals which were not necessarily bound up with superstition. Libation has not yet been sufficiently proved to be bound up with superstition. What may be done therefore in a useful adaptation of libation as a Christian ritual, is to reformulate the prayers which accompany the pouring of libation so as to shift the emphasis from lesser deities to Jesus Christ, who for the Christian is the centre of worship.

4.4.10 Veneration of Ancestors

Traditions concerning ancestors vary with different ethnic communities. It is difficult to generalize as varied conceptions exist. Ancestors are always related by blood, as members of one's family or tribe. Thus Ancestors are those members of a clan, a lineage, a town, chiefdom or a tribe who have departed from this life and have gone ahead to the other world to be with God. Shorter said that ancestors were "created beings who lived an historical life on earth and who maintain

solidarity with their descendants.”²²¹ They are elevated to the status of ancestors by their living kinsmen because of their exemplary earthly existence, and most often by their historic acts and services to their community. Thus not all the dead qualify to be ancestors. According to Charles Nyamiti, “no one can attain ancestral status without having led a morally good life, according to traditional African moral standards. For an ancestor is regarded as a model or exemplar of conduct in the community, and as source of tribal tradition and its stability.”²²² In Ghanaian culture in which old age has a touch of venerability, the ancestors are respected because they are regarded as our elders and predecessors who have trodden the path of life which we the living are now treading. Peter Sarpong summed up the Ghanaian understanding of ancestors as follows:

the Ghanaian does not worship his ancestors as Christians worship God or Moslems Allah. He venerates them, honours them and respects them, and this deferential attitude occupies a big part of his religious life. As an individual the Ghanaian serves his ancestors privately as well as he can. He remembers them often. When in need or in difficulty, he calls upon them to come to his aid. He may invoke them to bear witness that what he is saying is true. He often commends himself and those who are dear to him to their care.²²³

Sarpong tries to explain the fact that ancestors are not worshipped in traditional religion, but they are venerated. Their veneration maintains the unbroken relationship between the living and the dead. Of particular importance is the question of relationship of the living to their dead ancestors. In order to understand the importance of ancestors, one must realize that in the Ghanaian world-view, death is not thought to end human relationships. Rather, those who die enter the spirit world in which they are invisible. Deceased ancestors remain close by as part of the family, sharing meals and maintaining keen interest in family affairs, just as before death. Yet they are thought to have advanced mystical power, which enables them to communicate easily with both the family and God. Thus, they are considered indispensable intermediaries. Dead ancestors are

²²¹ Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology*, 103.

²²² Charles Nyamiti, *Ancestor Veneration in Africa*, 4-5.

²²³ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian culture*, 35.

integral to the traditional Ghanaian social structure. In a culture where tribe, clan and family are of utmost importance, ancestors are the most respected members of the family. They occupy a paramount place in traditional African religion because they are believed to be nearer to the Supreme Being and as such capable of interceding for the living members of their community.²²⁴

4.4.11 The Mediation Role of the Ancestors

An ancestor, who was once living a natural life among the people, now enjoys a quasi-supernatural or super sensible mediatorial status. He is an intermediary between God and the ancestor's people. He plays a role in the life of the people. People pray and makes offerings to the Ancestors. There are festivals in their honour. As spirits, they are believed to have enhanced powers which they use mainly to protect the interest and welfare of their families and clans. They are considered indispensable intermediaries. In the view of ATR, ancestors act as intermediaries between God and the members of their families. They are believed to maintain discipline in the families, and may inflict serious punishments on those members whose behaviour threaten the peaceful existence and progress of the family. As members of the family, the ancestors are invited to be present and participate in most family activities. Through the pouring of libation, they are invoked to share at gatherings, ceremonies and ritual communion. They are seen as symbols of peace, unity and prosperity in the family. The living approach the ancestors as they did before, when they were still alive. According to Mbiti,

respect given them is that of comrade and elder kinsmen who have as much interest in the welfare of the family as their living kinsmen. The form of the prayer is direct; the requests are straightforward as if to say it is also to their interest to grant them. The tune of submission and pleading supplication which appears in prayers to God and the deities is significantly absent. They may be rebuked, insulted or even threatened.²²⁵

Ancestor veneration has received special attention in the writings of a good number of African theologians. They have demonstrated the possibility of using

²²⁴ Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Umeh, *African Theology of Solidarity*, 19.

²²⁵ J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 68-69.

the ancestor model for an African reading of the Mystery of Christ, the Church, Christian morality, spirituality and liturgy.²²⁶ This implies that for the theologians, the mediation role of the African ancestors can serve as the basis for the incarnation of some aspects of the Christian faith.

4.5 Veneration of the Saints

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a Saint as a disciple who has lived a life of exemplary fidelity to the Lord.²²⁷ The veneration of the Saints consists in internally and externally acknowledging the supernatural excellence of these outstanding men and women of faith as friends of God deserving praise, admiration and emulation. The Catechism goes on further to state that: “by canonizing some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the Saints to them as models and intercessors.”²²⁸ Catholics venerate their Saints in many ways. They celebrate their feast days, display their statues or images and adorn them with flowers and candles. The imitation of the lives of the Saints is another way of venerating them. However, the most usual way is by asking them to intercede with God on their behalf. In other words, Catholics turn their pleas to the Saints to obtain for themselves and others spiritual as well as material benefits from God. The Catechism talks about all believers, living and dead, as part of the communion of Saints. “Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.”²²⁹ These passages state that all believers are part of the communion of saints those already in heaven, those in purgatory, and those Christians on earth. The Catholic doctrine of the communion of saints teaches that the living, who by reason of their baptism are members of the Church – the Church militant, the souls

²²⁶ Francis Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II*, 99.

²²⁷ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (CCC), 2156.

²²⁸ CCC, 828.

²²⁹ CCC, 1479.

who are in purgatory, and the Blessed, who are already in possession of the Beatific vision – the Church triumphant, together constitute one Church. On account of this community of charity, the souls in heaven, the kingdom of holiness, peace, unity and love, do not fail to present to God the pleas and petitions of their brethren on earth. They take a very active interest in us, pilgrims on earth, and help us in our spiritual and temporal necessities. Catholics do not attribute any autonomous powers to Saints. They pray to Saints, so that they, in turn, may pray to God on their behalf. They are mediators: but even their mediation remains secondary. The unique, perfect and principal Mediator between man and God is Jesus Christ. His mediation is more than sufficient. Saints are able to intercede for us by virtue of the merits of Christ.²³⁰ A close examination of the Saints of the Catholic Church shows that almost all of them are considered to be great and therefore highly venerated. The Ghanaian conception of the ancestor is quite similar to the Catholic doctrine of the Saints in many ways. Based on the similarities between the Saints and ancestors, the question left to be answered is whether ancestors could be integrated into the Christian belief of sainthood.

4.5.1 The Integration of Ancestors into Christian Worship

The basic question is the possibility of integrating ancestors into Christian belief. In other words, could it be sustained theologically that God has received the ancestors into the communion of Saints? Catholicism holds that outstanding men and women are to be venerated and imitated as Saints. We find a perfect instance in the traditional cultural and religious practices of Ghanaians in the veneration of the ancestors. According to Sarpong, “when Christians call their dead saints and refer to those of pagans as ancestors, they are not expressing different ideas. Both words express ideas about people who once belonged to their religious group, are now dead, and are supposed to be in a position of influence over the living.”²³¹ In the Zairean Rite of the Mass, not only are the Saints invoked, but also the ancestors who led holy lives; they are asked to be present during the celebration.

²³⁰ Peter Sarpong, *The Ancestral Stool Veneration in Asante*, (Takoradi: St. Francis Press Ltd.), 31-32.

²³¹ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 33.

Notwithstanding the similarities between ancestors and Saints, there are many striking and essential differences between them. The goodness that makes one a Saint is in reality not the same goodness which a Ghanaian must manifest in order to become an Ancestor. The essence of the goodness of a Saint is humility, while that of the goodness of the Ancestor can be compared to magnanimity.²³² It is worth mentioning is that the interest of Saints is not limited to any particular group of people. They help anybody who stands in need of their assistance and intercedes with God for them. Therefore, their veneration is, in general, carried out by the whole church. The ancestors, however, occupy themselves with members of their own lineage only.

The manner of approaching the Saints and Ancestors are the same but Christians go further with a deeper understanding. There are some scholars who argue in favour of the integration of the Ancestors into the Christian belief based on the belief in the survival of the dead and their proximity to God and the living. Such scholars are of the opinion that Ancestor veneration is a sign of reverence for the great men of one's family, tribe or clan. The Ghanaian Ancestor can be incorporated in the Church's doctrine and rituals. Nevertheless, some aspects of the cult definitely need to be refined or modernised. A purified Ancestor cult can be baptized into the Christian practice without doing violence to the Christian belief. A more prominent approach is to define the relationship with the Ancestors in terms of the communion of the Saints. By defining the communion of Saints as a spiritual fellowship which is based upon union with God in Christ through Baptism, Edward Fashole-Luke leaves open the question of whether this holy company includes all Ancestors or only confessing Christians.²³³ In the opinion of Faschole-Luke, we cannot say that the African Ancestor can be embraced within the framework of the universal church and included in the communion of Saints. But the Christian can remember with confidence that the death of Christ is for the

²³² Peter Sarpong, *Ancestral Stool Veneration*, 30.

²³³ Edward Faschole-Luke et al. (eds.), "Veneration and Communion of Saints" in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and for the World*, 214, in: Partain Jack, *Christians and their Ancestors: A Dilemma of African Theology*, <http://www.religion-online.org/schowarticle.asp?title=1078> (13 April 2008).

whole world and no one either living or dead is outside the scope of the merits of Christ's death.²³⁴ From this perspective, church leaders can readily accept the Ancestors into the framework of the universal Church. The value held by the Ancestors may be evaluated in the light of the Church's teachings and the Gospel of Christ. As Faschole-Luke und Mbiti suggest, the communion with the dead is described best in terms of intercession. Since Christians do not believe that the "living dead" have power to bless or harm, no one suggests that it is correct for African Christians to pray to the Ancestors. But it is inconceivable that the relationship to one's forebears which is so intrinsic to African tradition should be totally erased by death. The intercession of the departed who are with Christ, Faschole-Luke writes, "is a legitimate consequence of the fellowship in prayer which unites the whole body of Christ."²³⁵ But what about the intercession by the living on behalf of the Ancestors, especially those who were not Christians? Such intercession is a Christian responsibility. Harry Sawyer asserts that because intercessory prayer is a two-way exchange, the firm bond that cements us to the Ancestors, some Ancestors might be saved as an outcome of this intercession.²³⁶

Bishop Watio draws an analogy between Catholic Saints and the role of Ancestors in Ngyemba spirituality. The Ngyemba are a sub-group of the Bamileke ethnic group, and they live in the western part of Cameroon. Their local religion is centred on the veneration of ancestors. Bishop Watio makes all due qualifications. But at the end of his comparison, he makes the following valuable suggestion:

I hope, then, that the Church can gradually accept the possibility of acknowledging that Christians can invoke their ancestors too, just as they invoke the Christian saints: having recourse to them as mediators and intercessors with God at difficult moments, and this without fear of possible excommunication on the Church's part. I have already stressed that the cult of the ancestors is not idolatry, but rather an expression of filial piety. It seems to me that if a good catechesis about the mediation of saints and ancestors were to be given to our Christians, and if for its part the

²³⁴ Ibid.,

²³⁵ Ibid.,

²³⁶ Harry Sawyer, *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa*, (Lutterworth, 1968), 95, 137.

Church could accept the need to look more seriously into the cult of the ancestors in order to capture better its spirit and actual function, then Christian recourse to and invocation of the ancestors would be possible, just as it is now for the Christian saints.²³⁷

This quotation of Bishop Watio sums up our views on ancestors and their integration into the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, the church expects her members to be conscious of the centrality of Jesus Christ.

4.5.2 The Analogy between Jesus Christ and Ancestors

Recently, in the name of inculturation, some African theologians have attempted to move the dialogue to a different level by comparing African Ancestors with Jesus Christ. Benezet Bujo and Charles Nyamiti in their theological investigations presented Jesus Christ as an Ancestor, but on the condition that the African concept of Ancestor be purified of its negative connotations. The concept of Jesus Christ as an Ancestor is aimed at making the figure of Jesus Christ more intelligible and communicable to the African. Jesus as an ancestor does not mean that he is one among the many other ancestors, he transcends them. Hence, in their attempts to fashion Christological titles consonant with African religions and cultures, Bujo called him the “Proto-Ancestor” in whom the totality of African Christian life can be rooted and elevated.²³⁸ It is from this context that Bujo reflects on the mystery of Christ, whom he sees as the “Ancestor Par Excellence”, “Proto-Ancestor”, that is, the “Unique Ancestor” who is the source of life and the highest model of all ancestorship.²³⁹ His view is that it is meaningful to speak of Jesus as Ancestor Par Excellence, for in him are fulfilled all the qualities and virtues that the African ascribes to his or her ancestors. In other words, the historical Jesus fulfils the highest ideals ascribed to the ancestors in African thought – he heals, he cures, he

²³⁷ Dieudonne Watio, “Le culte des ancêtres chez les Ngyemba (Quest-Cameroun) et ses incidences”, Dissertation (University of Paris-Sorbonne, 1986), 361-362; in: Ludovic Lado (ed.), *The Roman Catholic Church and African Religions, The Way*, (45/3), 13. (Dieudonne Watio is currently a Catholic Bishop in Cameroon.)

²³⁸ Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, 74.

²³⁹ Benezet Bujo, *A Christocentric Ethics for Black Africa*, 143-144.

raises the dead, and so on. In short, he imparts life force in all its fullness.²⁴⁰ And Nyamiti sees him as the “Brother-Ancestor” who unifies all believers in the one supreme God and in the one Family of God.²⁴¹ The concept as applied to Jesus, however, needs to be qualified. Jesus is not just one of our Ancestors, but Ancestor par excellence, a unique Ancestor. There is pre-eminence, a priority, to Jesus’ Ancestorship. It is clear that Jesus for African Christians is not just like all the other Ancestors, but it is also clear that he is totally unlike the Ancestors. The limitations in applying the concept of Ancestor to one’s interpretation of Christ has been voiced out by some scholars. Clearly the concept of Ancestor cannot be applied to Christ in a literal, non-metaphorical way. Aylward Shorter is the strongest critic of Jesus as Ancestor Christology. His is positive appraisal of the role of Ancestors in African Christian life. In his opinion, whereas the Ancestor concept does not illuminate or develop our understanding of the person and role of Christ, the person and role of Christ can and does illuminate and redeem the African understanding of the Ancestor.²⁴² Certainly the Ancestor concept has to be purified or further theologized as it is applied to Christ. The major strength of an Ancestor Christology is that it enables the development of a Christology that is thoroughly African and also thoroughly Christian. Among the strengths of the image is that Christ as a common Ancestor can help Africans overcome a destructive ethnocentrism, as all are one family in Christ, one tribe, and one community. Even if Ancestor traditions wane, or become less significant in the face of westernization, the concept of ancestor and its accompanying world view remain particularly African. Whether Jesus or Ancestor, it is an attempt to inculturate Jesus within African cultures. It inserts Jesus into African soil. It incarnates Jesus as the Word of God in an African context. In the inculturational Christology of Kabasele Francois, Christ is seen as Elder Brother, as Chief and Ruler.²⁴³ African theologians have depicted or qualified Christ’s ancestorship in varied ways. In other words many African theologians have used different terms in their

²⁴⁰ Francis Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II*, 104.

²⁴¹ Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, 61.

²⁴² Aylward Shorter, “Ancestor Veneration Revisited” *AFER*, 25, no. 4, (1983), 202.

²⁴³ Françoise Kabasele “Christ as Chief” and “Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother”, in: *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, 103-127.

theological reflections to make Jesus Christ more intelligible to the African Christians. But for the purpose of this paper it suffices to limit us to the Ancestralship of Christ.

4.5.3 The Healing powers of Jesus over Witchcraft and Evil

The belief in witchcraft is widespread in Ghana. It shows Ghana's struggle with the reality of evil. The witch is the most powerful image of what not to be. Thus Christ is a non-witch, an anti-witch, a witch healer or doctor, a physician who has power over the powers of evil. There are many positive aspects to this way of naming Jesus in Ghana or Africa, and it is surprising that this approach to Christology in Africa has not received much attention. But Ghana and for that matter Africa needs Jesus as a healer. Here again the African Jesus offers himself to the universal church as a way to rediscover who Jesus is for us today. There is great need in Ghana and Africa as well as throughout the world for personal healing – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. But not only for personal healing. Economic, political, social, tribal and national wounds are staggering in Africa. Can Jesus' healing power reach these wounds? ²⁴⁴ Healing need not only imply personal needs and, in an Ghanaian or African context, it always implies something communal. The nations of Africa have been wounded by the slave trade, colonization, the post-colonial formation of the nation states, neo-colonialism's economic dependency, intertribal violence and war, the corruption of many post-independence national leaders and so on. Could not the healing Jesus have a strong appeal in Africa today? He is what Africa needs today more than ever.

4.6 Conclusion

We have tried to consider transformation of culture in different ways. We also examined the values in Ghanaian culture. Today, many scholars are of the view that the Gospel message has not taken a deep root in the life of the Africans. This is stating the obvious. However, it explains why many people feel that Christianity in

²⁴⁴ Donald Goergen, "The Quest for the Christ of Africa" *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 17, No.1, (March 2001), 5; <http://www.op.org/don/Africa.htm> (13 April, 2008).

Africa is still delicate, especially since our African nature has not yet blended well with our Christian nature, for difficulties are seen at both personal and cultural levels of the life of the African Christians. The Fathers of the Synod on Africa were aware of this situation of Christianity in Africa. They felt concerned about it. At various times and in various ways, they sought ways to tackle the problem. For instance at the Synod on Africa, they reemphasised the need to embark on effective evangelization of the Africans as one of the ways to provide a cure for the problem. This evangelization, they stressed must give priority to witnessing to the faith, preaching and catechesis. Thus today in Africa, the Christian churches pre-occupy themselves with the search for more effective evangelization strategies that may make Christianity not only relevant to the African but make it speak to the African in their life situations and thought patterns, addressing their needs and challenges.²⁴⁵

Ghana has a rich cultural heritage which can be used to promote inculturation. There is the need for the Gospel to take root in Ghanaian culture. For their part, Ghanaians must make use of their cultural values in order to build up an authentic Ghanaian church. However, inculturation is not just a matter of baptising our cultural elements into the Christian faith. For any meaningful and useful inculturation to be done in our Ghanaian context, the church must make use of experts of Christian theology, traditional African Religion, musicians, good liturgists, social anthropologists, scripture scholars, old men and old ladies, and our Christian families. The major aspect of our inculturation is how to make the people experience Christ in their family and social life at all times. Culture is the proper place for the inculturation of the Gospel. It is the place where the experience of the faith finds new expressions in the concrete existential life situations of the people. By respecting, preserving and fostering the particular values and riches of a people's cultural heritage, the evangelizer is in a position to lead them to a better understanding of the faith, which is to be lived in concrete and daily experience of the African life. Inculturation is actually necessary to make

²⁴⁵ Michael Ekwoyi Apochi, *Hints for the Implementation of the Ecclesia in Africa*, 101.

Christ more relevant for the Christian believing community. It is not necessarily making use of local symbols or terminologies for the sake of it, but making Christ more comprehensible to the people. Inculturation makes it possible for the African to recognise the face of Jesus Christ in his African face by giving him African names. The foundations of the faith have already been laid in Africa. What the Ghanaian or African church needs now is to grow into maturity. This is possible only by taking seriously and accepting the process of inculturation. Christ wants to be a friend and a brother of the African people as he has been to the Jews of old when he chose to be born in their midst. Likewise, he desires to be born into our cultural environment and communicate with us in our cultural milieu.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEW EVANGELIZATION FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GHANA

5.1 Introduction

The Church's mission to evangelize derives from the Lord's mandate: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations..." (Mt. 28:19) Throughout the ages the Church has responded to this command of the Lord to evangelize using various methods according to different situations and times. Mission in Catholic tradition has consistently been defined as "preaching the Gospel and implanting the Church among people who do not yet believe in Christ."²⁴⁶ Therefore, the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise."²⁴⁷ Born of the evangelising mission of Jesus and the Twelve, the Church is in turn sent forth. Having been sent and evangelised, the Church herself sends out evangelisers.²⁴⁸ Evangelization itself is nothing new because the Catholic Church has been involved in evangelization throughout its long history.

Christ commanded his apostles to carry his message to the whole world. They were not to lose sight of the essence of the message entrusted to them. They must however, look for the means to bring home the message and make it relevant to the people. Since God has endowed the human race with multiplicities of cultures, evangelizers must reckon with this fact. If they attempt to proclaim the message regardless of the cultures of the people, the message will be superficially planted and received and will be faced with the danger of being regarded as foreign.²⁴⁹ Every evangelizer is therefore called upon to make the message of Christ at home

²⁴⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 39.

²⁴⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 14.

²⁴⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 15.

²⁴⁹ Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation: An African Perspective*, 11.

with the culture of the evangelized and at the same time bring the culture of the people in tune with the Gospel message.

5.2 The Meaning and Significance of Evangelization

Evangelization as a term appeared very late in the missionary and theological literature. Many expressions existed which were connected with the concept of evangelization. According to Dulles Avery, the term is biblical and goes back to the Old Testament. In the Greek Bible, the verb “evangelize” means to proclaim good news.²⁵⁰ The term evangelization until post-conciliar times was not in frequent use and when used signified only the first announcement of the Good News. According to Mroso Agapit, before Vatican II, the term evangelization was not very much in use because of its Protestant connotation. Instead words like missionary activity (mission), the propagation of faith (propagatio fidei) and the planting or extension of the Church (predicatio evangelica) were used.²⁵¹ With the advent of Vatican II and its aftermath, the term evangelization acquired quite a significant and precise meaning. Evangelization, for example, is presented in *Lumen Gentium* as the preaching of the Gospel through the word and witness of life to primary and secondary recipients of the message.²⁵² Another word employed was pre-evangelization, with the meaning of arousing interest in religious questions and disposing people to hear the Christian message. Thus evangelization involved the announcement of Christ’s death and resurrection to those who had not heard of him. With such an approach, someone who had received the first announcement of Christ ceased to be the recipient of further evangelization. He is instead eligible for catechetical instruction or elementary doctrinal instruction, which in principle preceded the reception of the Sacraments. Evangelization means bringing the Good

²⁵⁰ Avery Dulles, *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, 167.

²⁵¹ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization*, 170.

²⁵² Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 1: Peter Sarpong of Kumasi, Ghana talks of the same issue but using a different terminology. Primary evangelization is termed “missionary evangelization” and with secondary evangelization he prefers to talk of pastoral evangelization. This is only a difference in terminology and not in essence.

News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.²⁵³

5.3 A Call for a New Evangelization

The Church has been entrusted with an evangelising mission of proclaiming the Gospel. This proclamation aims at penetrating all societies and cultures with special attention given to those which have not yet heard the Gospel. The proclamation of Jesus who is himself the Good News is the essence of evangelization.²⁵⁴ John Paul II first mentioned the “new evangelization” in a speech at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on May 9, 1983. He defined what this new evangelization is all about as follows: “the new evangelization begins with the clear and emphatic proclamation of the Gospel, which is directed to each and every person. Therefore it is necessary to awaken again in believers a full relationship with Christ, mankind’s only Saviour. Only from a personal relationship with Jesus can an effective evangelization develop.”²⁵⁵ The message of the Pope is that all missionary proclamation must have its centre in Christ. John Paul II consistently emphasised the need for a new evangelization in the modern world. His insistence on the need of a new evangelization in the modern world coloured his African Apostolic pilgrimages.²⁵⁶ The words of the Pope such as: “Your fathers accepted the Word of God”, or “from humble beginnings the Church has grown and flourished”, or “the seed of God’s Word planted on Ghanaian (African) soil has taken root”,²⁵⁷ bear witness to the missionary endeavour which brought the Good News to Africa and the response it has had from the African peoples. Evangelization, according to John Paul II, is an act of faith which consists in bearing witness in a simple and direct way to God as revealed by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is to proclaim the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the whole world.²⁵⁸ In a homily given

²⁵³ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 18.

²⁵⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 18, 23.

²⁵⁵ Ad Limina visit of Bishops of Southern Germany, (December 4, 1992) in: ORE (23/30 December 1992), 5-6.

²⁵⁶ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization*. 172.

²⁵⁷ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization*. 173.

²⁵⁸ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization*. 174.

at Bamako in Mali, Pope John Paul II stated among other things that, “I hope that at the vigil of the Third Millennium the Church of Africa will spread the Good News of Christ with renewed energy through a life-giving encounter of the Gospel with authentic African values. I earnestly invite everyone to enter into this general mobilization of the spiritual force of the African Catholicism.”²⁵⁹ This new evangelization launched by Pope John Paul II must be new in its zeal, new in its ardour, new in its methods and in its expression. It should embark upon a new quality of evangelization and employ methods attuned to the sensibility of our people. The challenge of the new evangelization demands that the saving message permeate human hearts and society’s structures so as to bring about an interior change, a transformation of humanity from within and making it new. It involves the evangelization of the personal and collective conscience of men and women in accordance with the ways which unite the whole church, while finding a concrete application in line with the African culture and the present situation. It is only in doing this that it can address man and woman as in each’s milieu.²⁶⁰ A new evangelization must be launched based on the Church’s creative talent, pastoral inventiveness and courage. It has to speak to people in their daily lives and circumstances. In the past evangelization has generally been understood as consisting in direct proclamation of the Gospel. Without neglecting the importance of personal conversion, the new evangelization takes cognizance of the general cultural setting.

John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio*, distinguishes three phases of evangelization. The first evangelization is missionary proclamation in regions where Christ is still unknown or where the Church has not yet taken root. The second phase consists in the pastoral care of Christians who are seeking to put their lives more fully under the influence of the Gospel. Finally, the process includes the re-evangelization of those who have fallen away or allowed their faith to grow cold.²⁶¹ The Cardinals at

²⁵⁹ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization* 177.

²⁶⁰ V. Shirima, “Evangelization and Inculturation” in: *A Light on Our Path A Pastoral Contribution*, (Nairobi, 19992), 72.

²⁶¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 33.

the Extraordinary Consistory (April, 1991) echoed the message of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II in calling for a new evangelization which would correspond to the needs of the times. They emphasised the need to promote a greater familiarity with the knowledge of Scriptures, a knowledge which would be rooted in tradition, and which would be able to nourish personal prayer and an authentic spirituality. The continuation of evangelization and the strengthening of the faith demand an adequate knowledge of the Word of God. Such knowledge only comes about through continual encounters with the written Word of God.

The Bishops of Ghana also added their voice to the call for a new Evangelization. In their communiqué, they reminded the faithful of the urgent call of the Holy Father for a new Evangelization – new in its intensity, method and expression:

We have to make Christ present in our hearts so as to make him present in the hearts of others. We have no choice in the matter. The Lord himself it was who gave us the command to preach him. In line with this mandate, we invite all of you to undertake a profound renewal for the spread of the Gospel of Peace and Love so that you may play your part as evangelisers. Young people should realise that this call to evangelization is directed to them in particular and they should respond to it eagerly and magnanimously.²⁶²

The Church has been entrusted with an evangelising mission of proclaiming the Gospel. This proclamation aims at penetrating all societies and cultures with special attention given to those who have not yet heard the Gospel. The participation in evangelization includes also women, and deals with not only areas of family and academic life but also with cultural, economic, social and political areas. When we all take evangelization seriously we shall, in a concrete way, be contributing to a new national and moral consciousness.²⁶³ The reunification of the two aspects of the missionary mandate, to preach the Gospel at all times and to the whole world, has opened a wider avenue for inculturation and evangelization. Therefore, it is clear today that no people, no culture can outgrow the relevance of

²⁶² Ghana Bishops Speak, 164.

²⁶³ Ghana Bishops Speak, 164-165.

the Gospel message, and that the Church cannot shy away from preaching the Gospel to any culture anywhere and at any time. Hence the Gospel must be preached in season and out of season till the Lord comes. The goal of evangelization is the conversion of unbelievers; the planting or implanting of the church, and the birth and growth of a church as it becomes genuinely and fully itself. The essential role of the missions is to heal, to convert, to Christianize, and the missionary's essential task is to proclaim the Gospel – to be the herald of the Good News of Christ.²⁶⁴ The apostolic vocation of the church is an encounter with Christ in order to continue his mission. Inculturation is part of the mission of the Church because evangelization and inculturation are intimately related. There is only one common and ultimate mission that Jesus wishes us to pursue as partners of his mission. That is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to bring his love to all people. The proclamation of the Kingdom of God is a call to a change of heart, a profound transformation of one's way of life so that it would be in accordance with the Gospel. Presenting Christ to men and in all cultures is one of the greatest challenges facing the Catholic Church today. The primary duty of the Church in her mission to the world is to make all men and women members of the people of God. Though the Gospel has been preached to various cultures, it is still a challenge to the people of various cultures till the present age. With the emergence of new challenges in the modern world, the Church is faced with new but complicated problems.²⁶⁵ Some of these problems are intrinsic to the Gospel message, while some are extrinsic, originating from the giving and receiving of the Gospel message and, above all, the confrontation of the Gospel message with the world religions that make legitimate claims of salvation.

The second century of evangelization in Ghana calls for a unified mobilisation of all the Church's resources if the mission is to achieve its end successfully. Reflection on the first century of evangelization in Ghana enables us to assess better the

²⁶⁴ A. Ngindu Mushete, "An Overview of African Theology", in: Rosino Gibellini (ed.), *Paths of African Theology*. (London: SCM Press, 1994), 13.

²⁶⁵ Eugene Edodzie Azorji, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria with special Reference to the Igbo People*, 2.

blessings of the Lord and the merits of our missionary predecessors. Theirs is a way which has known difficulties and sorrows as well as joys and hopes. This period of Christian history should give us not only a new impulse in our faith but also a new impulse to begin anew the work of evangelization. According to Pope John Paul II, "the mandate of the risen Lord, 'Go and make disciples of all nations', (Matt. 28, 19) constitutes for the Church a fundamental and continuing norm of her service of people in every age. Her commitment to evangelization is rendered more urgent in this twilight of the second Millennium of the Christian era in view of the growing numbers of people who have not yet received the gift of faith in Christ."²⁶⁶ The proclamation of the Gospel in Ghana has led men and women to the faith and the establishment of the Church. During a short span of about 120 years an enthusiastic, vibrant and growing Church has come into being. But given the changing times, a need for a new evangelization is needed to enable the Christian life to flourish in a new and vigorous way as we enter the second century of evangelization. Evangelization needs to be renewed at this time because the rapid development of society gives rise to new challenges similar to those experienced by ancient Churches. We are witnessing a rapid development or evolution of society: urbanisation, globalization, secularism, family breakdown and indifferentism, etc.

5.4 Integral Elements of Evangelization

There are certain elements that must be present in any valid description of evangelization but evangelization must not be reduced to any single one of them. In the Church's work of evangelization, there are undoubtedly certain elements and aspects which are deserving of special attention. Some of these are indeed of such importance that they may at times be regarded as constituting in themselves the whole of evangelization. The contents of evangelization in our Ghanaian context should be the deposit of faith as found in the Bible in the Church's tradition as well as ideas and beliefs in the traditional African religion which do not conflict

²⁶⁶ John Paul II, World Mission Sunday Angelus LOR (October 31, 1988) in: Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 169.

with Christianity. For the Church to determine properly what the contents of evangelization in Ghana should be, a number of factors must be borne in mind.

5.4.1 The Good News

The proclamation of Jesus, who is himself the “Good News”, is the essence of evangelization.²⁶⁷ It is a work of bringing the Good News to those who have not heard it and of strengthening the faith of those who have already heard of it. The Gospel message is necessary; it is irreplaceable. It does not admit of any indifference, or any accommodation to the principles of other religious beliefs or any compromise, for on it depends the whole issue of man’s salvation and in it are contained all the splendours of divine revelation. It expresses wisdom not of this world and by virtue of its content evokes the spirit of faith – a faith which rests on the power of God. The Good News has power and irresistibly urges those who receive it to share it with others. One cannot accept it without passing it on to others. Preaching Jesus is the core of evangelization. We acknowledge and rely on the powerful Word of God, that Word that liberates and cleans, as contained in the Bible. We believe in the power of God’s Word and have no problem making the Word of God in the Bible central to life. ²⁶⁸ The meaning of evangelization will ultimately be understood only in the life, words and deeds of Christ. His person and mission are paradigmatic for any work that claims to be evangelization and any form of life that seeks to be evangelical. Christ is not simply an external model for the evangelizer; he is the intimate, effective cause of evangelization. Christ is the central focus of evangelization. He is the totality of our lives. If there was concern at the African Synod about failure to talk of Christ as the centre of evangelization, there was equal concern about the lack of talking to Christ as the principle of all authentic apostolic work. Evangelization cannot be understood without reference to Christ as portrayed in the New Testament, nor can it be understood or undertaken apart from the Church because it is the essential

²⁶⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 18, 23.

²⁶⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 5.

mission of the Church. The Church is the normal, most immediate and most visible fruit of evangelization.²⁶⁹ Christ is the central focus of evangelization.

5.4.2 Interior Conversion

The precise aim of evangelization is conversion. The Church through all her members has the intrinsic desire to convert individuals, communities and the collective human condition. There is no evangelization without, at least, the desire to convert. Pope Paul VI wrote “the purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change.”²⁷⁰ And if this had to be expressed in one sentence, the best way of stating it would be to say that the church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. The Christian by a supernatural instinct seeks to convert everyone and everything to Christ. However, the conversion which is the specific goal of evangelization must not be understood in a narrow sense as if it were simply a course of instruction leading to baptism and insertion into the life of the visible church. It is much deeper and wider: All this may be summarised thus: Evangelization is to be achieved, not from without as though by adding some decoration or applying a coat of colour, but in depth, going to the very centre and toots of life. The Gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man.²⁷¹ It consists of preaching a message of hope, bringing the Good News to all parts of society and inviting individuals as well as communities to interior change. It begins in the human heart, in that intimate dialogue between each one of us and God. The seed of God’s Word needs to be sown in the soil of a people’s mind and the heart before new life can spring up and grow.

²⁶⁹ Bede McGregor, “Commentary on Evangelii Nuntiandi” *Evangelization Today Doctrine and Life*, (March-April, 1977), 57-58.

²⁷⁰ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 81.

²⁷¹ BEDE MCGREGOR, “Commentary on Evangelii Nuntiandi” *Evangelization Today*, (March-April, 1977), 64.

5.4.3 Inculturation

Jesus set off the history of evangelization. This evangelisation process has brought the Gospel of Jesus into direct encounter with people and their cultures. History has taught us that this encounter has not always been easy. The Gospel has often encountered adverse factors, a dominant counter-Christian mentality, racial prejudices and assumptions of every culture, to mention but a few. One thing is certain: for evangelisation to produce the desired fruit, the African cultures must be taken seriously. They must be seen as containing seeds for evangelization. On their part, the cultures must allow themselves to be challenged and purified by the Gospel but without being only passive recipients. A cross cultural process is unavoidable when the Church evangelises.²⁷² The Kingdom that the Gospel proclaims is lived by people deeply tied to their particular culture. At the same time, the Gospel is not identified with any one culture but transcends them all. While the work of the Gospel cannot proceed apart from culture, the Gospel serves to purify and uplift the cultures it encounters. The process of evangelization should help the cultures to bring forth out of their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought. With respect to African culture, the process is rightly termed inculturation or the Africanisation of Christianity.

Pope Paul VI simply sets down some principles aimed at Evangelization of cultures. In *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, he states:

The Gospel is not identical with culture and is independent of all cultures. But although independent of culture and cultures the Gospel is not necessarily incompatible with them. The Gospel is capable of permeating and transforming all cultures without becoming subject to any of them. Because of the incarnational character, evangelization will inevitably borrow elements from the culture it penetrates and this fosters the building of the Christian community and enables Christians to feel more at home in the Church.²⁷³

²⁷² Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and The New Evangelization*, 248.

²⁷³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20.

On several occasions the African Synod Fathers stressed the particular importance for Evangelization of inculturation, the process by which catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures. This Synod considered inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular churches. Only in this way can the Gospel be firmly implanted in the continent's Christian communities. It is a requirement for evangelization, a path towards full evangelization, and one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the Continent.²⁷⁴ The challenge of inculturation in Africa consists in ensuring that the followers of Christ will ever more fully assimilate the Gospel message, while remaining faithful to all authentic African values.

5.5 The New Evangelization for the Church in Ghana

In addressing the question of the forms or modes of evangelization, we need to draw attention to a number of things. In our evangelization there are a number of important issues that we need to address. The following need consideration.

5.5.1 Biblically-Oriented Evangelization

Our Ghana Catholic faithful, literate and illiterate alike, are often said to be ignorant of the Bible. It is not surprising that most of them cannot sustain any discussion on the Bible, especially when members of other faiths confront them on issues relating to their faith and the Bible. Christians are requested to turn with renewed interest to the Bible. The Bishops of Ghana described the situation in Ghana as follows:

we are very heartened that Ghanaians have come to accept the Bible as important. Ghanaians are eager for the Word of God. Many Ghanaians would stop buying and selling to listen to "evangelists" preaching the Word of God in the market places. The belief in the Bible and its message has given rise to a proliferation of religious movements and sects in the country. Each in its own way trying to bring the Word of God in the Bible into the life of our people. However, we are saddened that there is a problem with the use and interpretation of the Word of the Scriptures. We believe that the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the teaching authority of the

²⁷⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 62.

Church alone. The fundamentalist approach to the interpretation of the Bible has given rise to religious conflicts of all forms: Christians against Christians, Christians against Muslims, Christians against followers of traditional religion whom they condemn as belonging to the devil.²⁷⁵

The Biblical Apostolate, simply put, is every activity aimed at making the Word of God written down in the Bible known and loved, and sharing this knowledge and love of the Word of God with other people.²⁷⁶ The promotion of the Biblical Apostolate in Ghana should not only be a goal but above all achievement-oriented, free and flexible. More emphasis is to be placed on the study of the Bible, given the important place of the Bible in the Church. In our modern world, religious instruction in its traditional forms has greatly declined. In families, religious instruction is almost entirely lacking. Catechism in schools is abolished because the government has taken over all the schools. In most of our parishes, adult instruction is limited to the Sunday homily and an occasional sermon during the administration of the sacraments.

The evangelization of Ghana has been to a large extent based on and oriented by the old catechism. Unlike in the Protestant churches, where the Bible has been the official text book both for evangelization and for the liturgy, the Catholic Christian had in the past, and continues to have in some places, no direct access to the Bible except through select Bible stories. Bibles were not considered necessary except as reference books reserved only to the clergy and theologians. The so-called “penny catechism” is no longer sufficient for evangelization. Among the new methods to be adopted should be a “Biblical” or Bible oriented evangelization. The Bible should be given its rightful and preferential place in evangelization. As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council rightly stated: “all the preaching of the church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture.”²⁷⁷ The Biblical Apostolate is certainly one of the means, if not the most adequate means, of meeting a number of pastoral challenges facing the Catholic

²⁷⁵ Ghana Bishops Speak, 53.

²⁷⁶ Ecclesia in Ghana, 25

²⁷⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 21.

Church in Ghana today, namely the formation of the laity to become true agents of evangelization, inculturation, ecumenism as well as dialogue. In the new evangelization, we need to avoid at all cost a catechism without the Bible and vice versa. Our national and diocesan catechisms, following the example of the New Catechism of the Catholic Church, must be biblically oriented and rich. We need to develop a pastoral praxis in which the Bible is at the basis of everything and in which comes dialogue with the life of the church in all its dimensions. The Biblical Apostolate is putting the Bible at the basis of all our pastoral work and of our endeavours of evangelization, because the Bible should be at the source of the life and activity of the Church as well as of the individual Christian. It is not so much the question of a new evangelization as of an evangelization in a new way, a new method with new instruments based on the Bible as the preferential handbook.²⁷⁸ The Bible should be seized from the hands of experts and theologians and given back to the people of God, for whom it was intended as the word of life.

5.5.2 The African Bible

The Bible is the Word of God to people, to all peoples throughout the centuries. It is the History of salvation that God planned and carried out in Jesus Christ, a salvation for all, without exception. In answer to the appeal of the African Bishops and the invitation of Pope John Paul II, the Daughters of St. Paul courageously undertook the project of publishing the African Bible for the people of Africa with the collaboration of African biblical Scholars and other experts in different fields of knowledge. This is an effort to inculturate the Bible in Africa. We can say also that this is a step forward in the process of evangelization. Up to now we have been using Bibles inculturated for the people of America, of or Europe. Now we have a first effort to inculturate the Bible for the people of Africa.

In 1993 the pontifical Biblical Commission issued a very important document approved by Pope John Paul II, entitled “the Interpretation of the Bible in the

²⁷⁸ Cornelius Esua, Bishop of Kumbo, Cameroon, “Intervention”, in: *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 109.

Church.” Talking about inculturating the Bible, it says, “inculturation of the Bible has been carried out from the first centuries, both in the Christian East and in the Christian West, and it has proved very fruitful. However, one can never consider it a task achieved. It must be taken up again and again, in relationship to the way in which cultures continue to evolve.”²⁷⁹ The document goes on to point out something very interesting and very important: “In countries of more recent evangelization, the problem arises in somewhat different times. Missionaries, in fact, cannot help bring the Word of God in the form in which it has been inculturated in their own country of origin. New local churches have to make every effort to convert this foreign form of biblical inculturation into another form more closely corresponding to the culture of their own land.”²⁸⁰ The African Bishops on their part stressed “the particular importance for evangelization of inculturation, the process by which Catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures.”²⁸¹ They consider “inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa. It is a requirement for evangelization, a path towards full evangelization, and one of the greatest challenges for the church on the continent on the eve of the Third Millennium.

In 1994 Pope John Paul II launched the new evangelization for the Third Millennium, inviting Christians to “turn with renewed interest to the Bible.”²⁸² In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, he wrote: “In order that the Word of God may be known, loved, pondered and preserved in the hearts of the faithful, greater efforts must be made to provide access to the Sacred Scripture.”²⁸³ It is clear that the Bible is a very special Book. The Church considers the Bible as Word of God, addressed both to itself and to the entire world at the present time. It stands above everyone and cannot be changed. Therefore the biblical text is the same for everyone and for all times. Christians are invited to read the Bible in the Church, meaning in the light of the long tradition of the Church. Everyone knows

²⁷⁹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, (1993), 2.

²⁸⁰ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 2.

²⁸¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 59.

²⁸² John Paul II *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 40.

²⁸³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 58.

that the Catholic Bibles always have introductions and notes. These introductions and notes are the result of many years of study from the time of the Apostles. It is a means to understand the Word of God today in this present situation. Here, then, is where the work of inculturation can be done, and where the African Bible is inculturated.

Inculturation looks to the diversity of place. It ensures that the biblical message takes root in a great variety of terrain. However, there is not total diversity of cultures because every authentic culture is, in fact, in its own way the bearer of universal values established by God. Therefore, in the African Bible one finds the universal richness of the tradition of the Church, the updated information in the fields of exegesis, theology and African culture, that is, elements which try to bridge the Word of God to the people of Africa. The translation of the Bible into the vernacular has had positive repercussions. The people now have the Bible in a language in which they can understand. The acquisition of the vernacular Bible gave the Christians the possibility of comparing Christianity as presented by the mission-founded Churches with the message which they were able to read from the Scriptures. In view of the many languages in Ghana and the urgency of bringing the Word of God to the people in the language they understand, it might be useful to put up a programme of translating the lectionary into those Ghanaian languages, in which we do not yet have a full Bible translation. New Bible translations into Ghanaian languages in co-operation with other churches must have pastoral notes and explanations for Catholics.²⁸⁴ The Church in Ghana needs to formulate a programme for the distribution of the Bible to the people at a price they can afford. The Church in Ghana is making a lot of efforts in Bible translation but greater efforts must be made to provide easy and enlightened access to the Sacred Scriptures where efforts are already being made.

²⁸⁴ Ecclesia in Ghana, 31.

5.6 Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization

The General Catechetical Directory (GCD) distinguishes four closely related forms of the ministry of the Word: evangelization, or missionary preaching, catechesis, liturgy, and theology. By evangelization the GCD understands “the activity which has as its purpose the arousing of the beginnings of faith...so that men will adhere to the Word of God.”²⁸⁵ Catechesis proper, which generally presupposes evangelization, is that form of ecclesial action which leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to maturity of faith.²⁸⁶ The GCD defines evangelization as the first proclamation of the Gospel to those who have not yet known Jesus. With regard to catechesis it is said that through catechetical instruction, people learn the “fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an even richer fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional.”²⁸⁷ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* insists on the necessity for evangelization to translate or transpose the Gospel message without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the various conditions of the anthropological and cultural language in the field of liturgical expressions, and in the areas of catechesis, theological formulation, secondary ecclesial structures, and ministries.²⁸⁸ John Paul II acknowledged the complex character and the several elements of evangelization, of which catechesis is a stage, and affirms that there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization. Nor can the two be simply identified with each other. Instead, they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other.²⁸⁹ The specific difference of Catechesis lies in its aim, namely, the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the

²⁸⁵ General Catechetical Directory (GCD), 17; Peter Phan, “Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization: reflections from the Perspective of Asia” in: *Studia Missionalia*, Vol. 48, (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universtia Gregoriana, 1999), 291.

²⁸⁶ GCD, 21

²⁸⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 44.

²⁸⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 63.

²⁸⁹ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18.

one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavours to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know His mystery, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him.²⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II made this observation:

In the beginnings of Christian Catechesis, which coincided with a civilization that was mainly oral, recourse was had very freely to memorization. Catechesis has since then known a long tradition of learning the principal truths by memorizing. We are all aware that this method can present certain disadvantages, not the least of which is that it lends itself to insufficient or at times to almost non-existent assimilation, reducing all knowledge to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood.²⁹¹

Ecclesia in Ghana lays bare the state of catechetical instruction among Ghanaian Catholics and its impact on them as follows; It is observed that the method of educating people in the faith has not been effective in Ghana since it was more a process of sacramentalization rather than of making disciples for the Lord. The emphasis was on the question and answer method of catechesis and on knowledge of doctrine instead of on a Christian way of life. This did not suit the Ghanaian way of learning and, consequently, it has not made the desired impact on the people's lives. ²⁹² In our modern world, religious instruction in its traditional forms has greatly declined. In families, religious instruction is almost entirely lacking. Catechism in schools is abolished because the government has taken over all the schools. The evangelization of Ghana has been to a large extent based on and oriented by the Catechism. The so-called "penny catechism" is no longer sufficient for the evangelization of Ghana. It is now time for us to focus our catechesis on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a programme that insists on the involvement of the community, the development of the catechumens' faith, the making of the catechumens into disciples of the Lord. It should be adopted in all our parishes

²⁹⁰ Peter Phan, "Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization: Reflections from the Perspective of Asia", in: *Studia Missionalia* Vol. 48, (1999), 293.

²⁹¹ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 79.

²⁹² *Ecclesia in Ghana*, 25.

for the formation and invitation of the catechumens into our Catholic faith. It is a valuable strategy for Evangelization. The number of young children attending catechism classes faithfully throughout Ghana is astounding. Much catechesis is geared to children preparing for baptism, first communion and confirmation. But do the catechisms reflect African or Ghanaian way of thinking and learning? Should there be more inclusion of proverbs and stories in catechesis, both of which feature prominently in Ghanaian life as well as in the life and ministry of Jesus? In a sense, Ghanaian Catechesis should develop its own book or proverbs that are deeply rooted in Ghanaian tradition and imagery. More effort should be given to adult catechesis, so that adults working in schools, the marketplace, and the business world can inculturate Christian values into those spheres. A lot of emphasis needs to be put on pre-baptismal catechesis. It is gratifying to note that the National Catechetical Office has come out with a catechism that has departed from the question-and-answer type and is relevant to our cultural context. It must be borne in mind that after Baptism and Confirmation there is usually no further catechesis. The Sunday sermon is one sided, with no feed-back, no contribution from the pew. Whenever possible, priests should spend some time after Sunday Mass for further catechesis. This may take the form of a short talk followed by questions and answers. Post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogia must be given top priority. As we have noted, there is usually no follow up after Baptism and Confirmation. As a result many Catholics are not well grounded in their faith and tend to waver in times of trouble or when confronted by some of their Protestant brothers and sisters who seek to win them over to their side.

5.6.1 Inculturation of Catechesis

There are three situations for the Church's missionary activities. First, there are people, groups and social contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known. Secondly, there are Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures with Christians who bear witness to the Gospel. Thirdly, there is an intermediate situation, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church, and live

a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. Here the church exercises a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization”.²⁹³ These situations pose a great challenge to the church and in trying to solve this problem; the General Catechetical Directory discusses how the contents of the Catechism should be inculturated into local churches. It speaks at great length on how catechesis should be carried out and especially how the Catechism should be composed at the local level.²⁹⁴ The message of the Gospel must be presented as a message of both salvation and liberation. The message of salvation and liberation must be inculturated. It is not simply an external adaptation designed to make the Christian message more attractive or superficially decorative. On the contrary, it means the penetration of the deepest strata of persons and peoples by the Gospel, which touches them deeply, “going to the very centre and roots of their culture”.²⁹⁵ There are two basic principles governing this process: Compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal church. Compatibility with the Gospel, which is one of the two principles governing inculturation, is further explained in terms of integrity or authenticity, and comprehensiveness. This inculturation of catechesis is both a need and a right of every Christian individual and Christian community and involves the community. There is the need to adapt Catechesis first according to age, i.e., adults, infants and young children, young people and the aged, and then according to special conditions such as the disabled and the handicapped, the marginalized e.g. immigrants, refugees, nomads, travelling people, the chronically ill, drug addicts, prisoners, professionals e.g., workers, artists, scientists, university students, and rural and urban people.²⁹⁶ Christians today live in a multi-religious context and in this context Catechesis has three tasks: deepening and strengthening the identity of believers; helping Christians not only discern the elements in those religions which are contrary to the Christian message but also accept the seeds of the Gospel which are found in them and which can sometimes constitute an authentic preparation for the Gospel; and promoting a lively

²⁹³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 33; Peter Phan, *Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization*, 294.

²⁹⁴ General Directory for Catechesis, 98.

²⁹⁵ General Directory for Catechesis, 109.

²⁹⁶ Peter Phan, *Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization*, 299-301.

missionary sense among believers.²⁹⁷ Catechetical inculturation follows a series of methodological steps; a listening to the culture of the people, to discern an echo of the word of God; a discernment of what has an authentic Gospel value or is at least open to the Gospel; a purification of what bears the mark of sin (passion, structures of evil or of human frailty); an impact on people through stimulating an attitude of radical conversion to God, of dialogue and of patient interior maturation.²⁹⁸ Catechetical inculturation must not be restricted to a few experts but must involve the whole people of God; it must be guided and encouraged, and not forced; it must be an expression of, and mature in, the community, and not exclusively the result of erudite research; and that it requires the cooperation of all the agents of catechesis.²⁹⁹

5.6.2 The Use of Ghanaian Proverbs in Catechesis

In the process of communication, various devices are used to get our ideas, feelings and attitudes to people: proverbs are some of these devices. A proverb is an indirect way of communicating what people want to say to others. A Proverb is another way of saying something to people. It has its own characteristics which could be said in plain words. They are generally short and pithy sayings used to express symbolically certain ideas, ideal, values and beliefs. A proverb is therefore more than a wise old saying. It is a symbolic expression that leads us to conceive of situations, events, ideas, patterns of behaviour and of values.³⁰⁰ A proverb may be compared to a palm-nut; you may have to crack its hard shell of symbolism before you can see the “kernel” inside it. A proverb has “a shell” and “kernel” i.e. a form and content. The content is always some moral truths, principles, values or attitudes and the linguistic structure provides the form. A proverb develops a metaphor, namely a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the word used. Some proverbs appear to be literal. Even then, they ultimately relate to a meaning that goes beyond their material expression. Metaphors constitute an

²⁹⁷ General Catechetical Directory, 200.

²⁹⁸ General Catechetical Directory, 204.

²⁹⁹ General Catechetical Directory, 206.

³⁰⁰ Noah Dzobo, “African Cultural Heritage Studies “in: *The Triple Heritage of Contemporary Africa*, (Accra: Studio 7 KAT, October 2004), 6.

important maker for many proverbs, and it is exactly this vivid imagery of most proverbs that makes them so appealing to us. This feature of proverbs makes learning more memorable and effective, because it moves from the familiar to less familiar, and it provides a mechanism for the changing of our modes of representing reality, in thought and language.³⁰¹ Furthermore, the beauty and uniqueness of proverbs catch the attention of, and invite the involvement of, the hearer.

The Bible contains a genus labelled as Wisdom Literature. It includes such books as Proverbs, Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes. Jesus made use of proverbs in his style of teaching. According to the Synoptic Gospels, proverbs function in at least two ways in the words of Jesus. On the one hand he used them to illustrate an idea, but on the other hand, he used them as disjuncture “jolts” that challenge the status quo or demand reorientation. The earliest missionaries in the Gold Coast identified proverbs as a vital and important mode of communication of the peoples and with that, key to penetrating the world-view of the Africans. In contrast to that, one is struck by the fact that missions did not make more use of proverbs in evangelization. Sermons by Africans use them, but there is no concerted systematic effort at the use of proverbs to explicate the Gospel. There is a close association between African proverbs and instruction or teaching. Nyembezi explains this point as follows: “All proverbs, whatever situation they describe, are they humorous or grim, seem to have a common base in that they all serve to instruct. It would not be correct, however, to say that the proverbs are framed with the specific purpose of teaching. What happens is that the expression, after being evolved, may be regarded by the people as an appropriate means of instructing.”³⁰² The many positive features of African proverbs make them most invaluable and unavoidable as instruments of teaching. At this point in Africa’s history when there are calls everywhere for moral and social education, the use of proverbs is urgent. The Church has always been interested in people living morally good lives; thus

³⁰¹ Vann Heerden, “The Proverbs is the Drum of God”: On the use of African Proverbs in the Interaction between African Culture and the Christian Faith”, in: *Scriptura* 81, (2002), 466.

³⁰² C.L.S Nyembezi, *Zulu Proverbs*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1954), xii.

the need to use proverbs even more earnestly, especially in preaching and teaching. Their use will help immensely to teach the truths of many biblical themes and stories, and to affect the moral, social and spiritual lives of the people for the better, for when a proverb is used correctly, it speaks to the intellect, the soul and the heart – that is, to the understanding, the feeling and the will. They can, thus, be used to great advantage in Christian preaching and teaching. The use of African proverbs in African congregations has great advantage.³⁰³ The citing of relevant proverbs makes the audience interested, stay awake, and pay keen attention to the message. It also gets them involved by using their imagination. Thus, they understand the message better. Moreover, they enjoy the message, remember it, and see themselves agreeing with the truth being proclaimed

5.6.3 Small Christian Communities and the New Evangelization

A Small Christian Community is the smallest cell of the Church. It is the basic place of evangelization and catechesis. SCCs are means by which the Church is brought down to the daily life and concerns of the people to where they actually live. The role which the SCCs can play in deepening of the faith is immense. In short, SCC is a praying, meditating, sharing community.³⁰⁴ In fact, the SCCs are evangelizing communities within the outstation, the parish, the diocese and the nation. Calling active believers into ever deeper faith, bringing the message of Christ to inactive members, and inviting onlookers to join in the Church's belief and worship are the primary goal of these communities. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are new models or new ways of being Church – an effective means of both personal and ecclesial renewal. Missionary outreach is a significant Ghanaian contribution to the universal church. Ghanaian local church communities have developed a community ministry approach to evangelization. The whole community is involved in the apostolate. The 1979 AMECEA Study Conference described the missionary role of Small Christian Communities (SCC) in these words: "SCCs are an effective

³⁰³ Joshua Kudadjie, "Using Ga and Dangme Proverbs for Preaching", in: John Pobee (ed.), *Proverbs and African Christianity, Papers from the Consultation of African Proverbs and Christian Mission* held at Ricatla Theological Seminary, Maputo, Mozambique, (27-30 March, 1995), 53-54.

³⁰⁴ Agapit Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelization*, 115, 125.

way of developing the mission dimension of the Church at the most local level, and of making people feel that they are really part of the church's evangelizing work."³⁰⁵ More and more SCCs are involved in evangelization and mission outreach. In Ghana a group of pastoral workers realized that parts of their parish were only 2 to 5 percent Catholics and decided to embark on outreach programmes. As the Christian community expands, the pastoral care gets more and more time consuming and absorbing. So a new ministry started in the SCCs: Evangelizers or Evangelists. These lay people focus on primary evangelization – reaching out to those belonging to the African Traditional Religion in the geographical radius of their SCC. This includes home visitations, welcoming people to church celebrations and SCC meetings, and linking the Christian faith to the local Ghanaian culture and customs – for example, inculturation through songs, proverbs, and stories. The plan of SCC calls for young people to visit homes, schools, and offices inviting people to return to the Church and to the sacraments. It is clear that if the new evangelization is to be effective such efforts on the part of the whole community will be necessary.

5.6.4 Schools of Discipleship and Evangelization in Kumasi Archdiocese

Faced with tremendous challenges, we need new methods of evangelization. It would appear that in the circumstances, serious formation of small groups of disciples geared towards evangelization is urgently needed. In this regard, we cite the example from the Archdiocese of Kumasi –Ghana.³⁰⁶ They have tried to adopt the method of Jesus who chose a small group of committed apostles and entrusted the gigantic task of evangelization to them. These schools of discipleship and evangelization are becoming popular in Africa as a follow up to the African Synod. The aim and objective of such schools of discipleship and evangelization are the following: There is what is called a novitiate for lay people, men and women. This novitiate is not preparing people for entry into a religious community but for entry

³⁰⁵ Amecea Study Conference – Conclusions, 1979, *African Ecclesiastical Review (AFER)*, 21:5, (October, 1979), 2.

³⁰⁶ Peter Sarpong, "The African Synod and the powerful word of God in Evangelization at the Threshold of the Third Millennium" *Studia Missionalia*, (Vol. 48, 1999), 363.

into the Christian life in the midst of the world; of family, of job and civic responsibility. The focus of the formation given is not to acquire head knowledge but heart understanding. The emphasis is not on talks, lectures and conferences but on one-to-one exchange that will ensure the basic character formation of the novices. There is emphasis on prayer, study of Scriptures and other holy or apostolic writings, and manual work. In this way, the student-novices are together initiated in a practical way into a deeper Christian life. Again, the emphasis is on the practice of the Christian life, and not on the theory.

The school is expected to last for six months full of intensive studies. It comprises four months of basic discipleship training in the light of the Gospel. This is followed by one month field work. The students are sent out, as Jesus sent out his disciples, to apply the training given and test their spiritual strength and weaknesses. Then follows another month spent on return to the school. This helps to integrate the practical experience gained with the more theological knowledge acquired earlier. Once the students have completed their six months training, they are expected to spread the Good News or be multipliers of the Gospel life. Some will simply return to their situation which they left, be it prayer groups or parishes or solidarities and be vision carriers there. Others are employed full-time to reach out to different groups of people. Each year the former students are brought back for deepening courses and retreats. Some will reach out to the various groups of people who require sympathetic attention, such as victims of AIDS and their families, praying for and with them, and leading them to conversion and a holy death in Christ. Every graduate of the school is expected to be a lay apostolate in the deepest sense of the word, except that they are better prepared than lay apostles of past generations. It is hoped that they will bear mutual fruit to revitalize the Church and bring the vision of a deeper Christian life to many, the vision of evangelizing Christianity, as it was in the early church. The Archdiocese of Kumasi-Ghana has benefitted enormously from these schools of Evangelization in the past eight years. Some of the graduates of the school have been able to make scores of converts in villages that did not have a single Catholic. They are involved in primary

evangelization in its strictest sense of the word. There have been many lay movements that have emerged in the Church in the latter decades of this millennium which have proved important to the missionary effort of the Church in general and more particularly to the new evangelization. John Paul II has observed that “the commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life.”³⁰⁷ Such groups are particularly important for the new evangelization because their members, as lay, permeate society. Through their daily contacts they reach countless individuals that official missionaries cannot

5.7 Conclusion

We have tried to consider the need for a new evangelization and explore the various ways and means for effective evangelization in the Ghanaian context. The mission of the Church to evangelize has been one of the priorities of the social teaching of the Church. The Church must continue to evangelize because if she fails to do so, the mission of propagating the teachings of Jesus Christ may fail even to exist. Another reason why the Church must continue to evangelize is that the presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. There is the need for a new form of evangelization in the world and more especially in Africa. This is because of the rapid civilisation in Africa and because there are millions in Africa and other parts of the world who are not yet evangelized.³⁰⁸

In papal documents since Vatican II a distinction has been made between evangelization and what has been called re-evangelization or the new evangelization. The former activity is directed towards those who have never before heard, or heard effectively, the proclamation of Christ, the latter designation covers a variety of situations whose common denominator is that the Gospel has been previously proclaimed and in some sense accepted but no longer has the

³⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 2.

³⁰⁸ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 72.

effect in the lives of individuals and societies that one might otherwise expect.³⁰⁹ Evangelization should spread to all forms of life. The renewal of society and the various aspects of life - marriage, the family, business, community life, professional life, and political life – through the impact of the Gospel message on individuals is the specific concern of evangelization. It means that the proclamation of the Gospel should be carried out from place to place among the poor and the rich. The Church will have been effective in evangelization if it can help produce good people, good citizens and people fit for the Kingdom, since this is the primary concern of evangelization. Since evangelization touches all persons, it should not be left to the Pope, bishops, priests and religious, but every baptised Christian is called upon to evangelize according to his or her capabilities. The Church cannot be separated from evangelization because “evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.”³¹⁰ The new evangelization aims at making the people both truly African and truly Christian. We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. Africa is rooted in a rich cultural heritage. For this purpose, catechesis will seek to know these cultures and their essential components; it will learn their most significant expressions; it will respect their particular values and riches. This rich cultural heritage of Africa would be a major aspect of evangelization. This is necessary so that the Church can take root in whatever culture she finds herself being one with the people almost in all things.

The deepening of faith requires conversion. The call for conversion aims at transforming lives. The small Christian communities meet this need through their understanding and assimilation of the Word of God, celebration of the sacraments and being a praying, worshipping, serving and reconciling community. Through their home visitation, mutual hospitality, visiting the sick, helping the poor and the like, they become a real visible Christ, an instrument of love and indeed a

³⁰⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 11.

³¹⁰ John Paul II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 21.

sacramental community. They become communities which challenge those outside to change their way of living. In so doing the function as powerful agents of evangelization and respond to a specific need of the Church: making it alive wherever it finds itself. The idea of basic Christian communities should be vigorously pursued for the growth of the Church.

CHAPTER SIX

SOME ATTEMPTS AIMED AT INCULTURATING THE GOSPEL IN GHANA

6.1 Introduction

A whole range of areas of church life calls for inculturation. Worth mentioning are the following: catechesis, liturgy and sacraments, church art and architecture, church structure, the mission of the church, prayer and spirituality, and Christian theology. All of these are areas where the process of inculturation must take place, and where Christian Gospel values should influence and mould behaviour.³¹¹ In this chapter, we will like to highlight some successful attempts or efforts aimed at inculturating the Gospel in Ghana. We also hope to find a way forward and make some recommendations which will help the Church in Ghana in inculturating the Gospel. It is our hope that Christianity in Ghana will be deeply rooted in Ghanaian culture. We need to recognise and acknowledge the efforts which have been made so far to inculturate certain aspects of Ghanaian values in the Church. We can call these efforts achievements or successes. They are singular efforts to promote inculturation in the Ghanaian Church. We look at how the Church in Ghana is struggling with the issue of inculturation and offer suggestions which would enhance effective Evangelization for the church in Ghana.

6.2 Liturgical Inculturation

Perhaps the most important means of inculturation which has taken place in Ghana is liturgical inculturation. Worship and liturgy are especially privileged fields of inculturation. It is in this domain of the liturgy that the great majority of attempts at inculturation have been undertaken. In some places, the development moved rapidly from simple adaptations to creative efforts. Several initiatives may be mentioned here; a rediscovery of the importance of the Word of God; usage of the vernacular, use of Ghanaian art in liturgical vestments, in decorating places of worship and on sacred vessels; and the use of Ghanaian traditional forms of art to

³¹¹ Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 83.

express certain elements of the faith; the use of drums, clapping of hands, dancing and body language. Liturgy, especially the sacraments and sacramentals, as well as various rites and rituals need inculturation. According to Ecclesia in Ghana, those part of the liturgical celebration which can be changed in order to enhance the understanding and meaningful and active participation should be inculturated according to agreed norms.³¹² There is a lot to be done.

6.2.1 The Eucharist

We would like to examine the efforts made so far to inculturate the Eucharist in Ghana. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, in which He is present under the forms of bread and wine, offering Himself in the sacrifice of the Mass and giving Himself as a spiritual food to the faithful. The Eucharist is the centre of Christian life and worship. The Eucharist can be understood as a place of communion between God and human beings. In Ghana, much has been achieved in terms of inculturation. But we can say that the efforts of the Church in Ghana are at its initial stages in terms of inculturation. A few attempts have been made but not on a significant scale. The Ghanaian liturgy makes no change of order of text. It is simply a manner of celebrating the Roman rite. There are a few introductions in the Mass but it remains generally the Roman rite. At offertory, the celebration becomes more lively because everybody becomes involved. The singing, the drumming and the rhythms evoke participation. Men and women, old and young dance to the altar in a single file, bringing their gifts cheerfully. Dancing during offertory helps to awaken those who are drowsy and sleepy, making them lively and active. It has helped to attract many more people to the church. Generally, remarkable progress has been made in inculturating the Eucharist in many churches. There is greater participation in Ghanaian churches during the Eucharistic celebration. The structure of the Mass makes this participation possible. With the Choir leading the singing, the whole congregation joins in. Therefore everybody participates. This is the characteristic of Ghanaian celebration, where everyone actively participates.

³¹² Ecclesia in Ghana, 47.

6.2.2 Preparation of the Gifts

This is the time when the congregation bring their gifts to the altar accompanied by singing and dancing. The people bring what they produce as a way of thanking God. The offering of Ghanaian food crops gives people a sense of belonging. Ghanaian worship is characterized by joy, spontaneity, participation, flexibility, and adaptability. The problem here is how to move the praying beyond the excitement, the joyfulness, the celebration. If the celebration does not bring about the realization of the aim of the Mass, then we are engaged in entertainment and not in worship. Yes, there should be joy in the celebration but the joy must lead to or result from something deeper. Dancing and clapping would be meaningless if they do not cause or arise out of deep internalization of our relationship to God. What takes place here is a simple nucleus gesture. In our local Ghanaian situation this rite has taken on exaggerated proportions beyond imagination. It has become a dancing session with people dancing up front many times but putting into the collection once. Dancing in moderation to the collection box and back is the order; but it must be remembered that this rite is not the climax of the celebration. It is harmful to the liturgy if this part becomes entertainment time. Procession to the altar with the gifts is part of the Church's tradition and can be so beautifully Africanised.

6.2.3 The Consecration

Adoration during the elevation at the Consecration is receiving an exaggerated and lengthy attention these days. There is firing of guns and beating of talking drums and long singing during the elevation of the Consecrated Bread and Wine; but there is the need for moderation. The place of honour must be reserved to Jesus. A post-consecration dance at the Doxology does not seem appropriate, while a post-communion dance, coming after the Prayer, consciously and beautifully executed, is in the right direction. This example of inculturation comes from the Ashanti Region of Ghana, specifically the Archdiocese of Kumasi. The greatest success has been the inculturation of the consecratory part of the Mass. The Preface is sung in

dialogue form with typical Asante melodies. After the Sanctus, the royal drum begins to beat softly, as it were, in the background. At the Epiclesis, the priest stops and the choir begins a very solemn song announcing the coming of the Lord. The Epiclesis and the song end together. Then there is complete silence for the priest to say the first set of words of Institution. All this while, the drumming at the background continues. When the Sacred Species is raised, the volume of the drumming goes up and then the choir joins in with another song heralding the actual arrival of the Eucharistic Lord. When the priest puts down the Consecrated Bread, the drumming goes down, the singing stops and the priest says the next set of words of Institution over the wine. As he raises the consecrated wine, the drumming heightens and is joined by the choir. The gradual placing down of the Chalice on the Corporal coincides with the stopping of the singing which invites all to kneel in adoration. It is here that the priest also kneels. The drumming continues for a while and a most touching proclamation of faith in song takes place in the form of a dialogue between the priest and the community. Sometimes when the Species are raised, a boy comes to recite the wonderful and victorious deeds of the Eucharistic Lord. The Consecratory Prayer continues until the Doxology. The Amen is then proclaimed in a very excited way as the climax of the whole celebration.

In the Eucharistic celebration, a number of ritual sequences are meant to foster active participation, to express and expand the prayerful intentions and involvement of the numerous participants. These include hands raised in prayer; dance-like body movements expressing praise, as at the beginning of the celebration and the presentation of the gifts and praise and supplication at the final song; the undulating movement of the whole person as an expression of the total involvement of mind and heart in the singing which rises up to the Lord. What is currently taking place in Ghana is adorning the Roman Mass with some Ghanaian cultural cosmetics. We have tried to inculturate different parts of the Mass. We have done something about the announcing of the Good News, and the Offertory procession. The use of the drum and dancing is very prominent throughout the Mass. Ghanaian cultural symbols and bodily signs are employed to express sorrow,

joy, expectation, honour, love, dependence and so on. The display and waving of handkerchiefs at various stages of the celebration, including the Preface, add to the solemnity of the occasion. The use of Ghanaian liturgical garments helps to depict the Ghanaian symbols through the designs made on them. The materials used to make these garments are produced and woven locally. This shows a sign of a maturing church which is able to produce its own liturgical garments. Many priests in the mission churches celebrate much more comfortably with the Ghanaian liturgical garments because they feel at home with such garments.

6.2.4 Inculturating Ghanaian Music into the Liturgy

It would be difficult to deny that music plays an important part in the worship of every religion, yet the idea of making Ghanaian religious music serve the liturgy is of comparatively recent origin. It was once taken for granted that only Western music was suitable for all Christian worship. But the teaching of the papal encyclicals, the stimulating liturgical movement and the Second Vatican Council have now changed that concept. The Vatican II document on Sacred Music has this to say:

In certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, there are people who have their own musical traditions, and they play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music, and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only by way of forming their attitude toward religion, but also when there is question of adapting worship to their native genius.³¹³

In order to make Christian worship intelligible to the people and insure that they take an active part in it, indigenous music must be allotted a high priority. The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in its publication, "Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy", in September, 1958, had this to say about indigenous music in liturgy:

³¹³ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy* (September, 1958),

The popular religious songs are sometimes admitted in devotional functions themselves. Special attention must be given to the introduction and accommodation of the Sacred Liturgy and Sacred Chant in mission lands. A distinction must be made between possessing a culture of their own, sometimes very ancient and very rich, and those still lacking a high culture...hence, (a) priests who are sent to foreign missions must have suitable training in the liturgy and the Sacred Chant; (b) if the people in question have a highly developed musical culture of their own, missionaries should seek to adapt the indigenous music also to sacred use, observing due precautions. Pious exercises should be so arranged that the faithful can express their religious sentiments in their own language and melodies, suiting the traditions of the race.³¹⁴

Ghanaian Christians have become accustomed to other liturgical arts, such as architecture, religious pictures, statues, sacred vestments and vessels. But they cannot abandon their traditional music. The songs chosen for celebrations must express the soul of the people, the genius of Ghanaians, and reflect that musical tradition which is very important in their religious and social life. The use of indigenous music in the liturgy is a necessity, because western music cannot fully satisfy Ghanaian Christians. The western melodies, especially the hymns brought by the missionaries are of a different genre. Fully aware of the importance of sacred music in the liturgy, missionaries have tried to use native music. The first attempt was the use of vernacular hymns but most of them were inappropriate and sung to western melodies. The result was that Church music was of poor quality. These melodies, however, good and devotional in themselves, could not fulfil their object in worship; they were unintelligible and uninteresting to the Ghanaian Christians.

Native clergy as well as missionaries are now beginning to recognise the urgent need to develop an indigenous church music. Many are making significant advances in this field, and their work is beginning to yield appreciable results. Individuals have done much pioneer work in recent years and there are a few Ghanaian compositions which have long been very popular. Even some native

³¹⁴ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy*, (September, 1958).

Masses have been composed and sung during Sunday and solemn liturgical celebrations. Music for the Mass by native composers can be found in Ghana, for instance the Mass composed by Rev. Brother Pius Agyeman and the centenary Mass of the Ho Diocese composed by Martin Amlor. In inculturating Ghanaian Music into the liturgy, the Church has to follow certain laid down norms for Sacred Music. While every nation is permitted to admit into the Church compositions which constitute its native music, they must be subordinated to the characteristics of sacred music. A full development of Ghanaian music cannot be achieved unless the ground is well prepared. The creation of Ghanaian liturgical music is an art, and, like any other art, it must evolve from within. The inculturation process must be done by Ghanaian musicians and liturgists. In order that this inculturation become worthy of acceptance, it should be built on an exact study of what we are, the Ghanaian people, what we mean and feel when we pray and sing. Then only will the music be intelligible and appealing to our mentality.

6.3 The Zairean Liturgical Rite

The Church in Zaire grasped the opportunity presented by the council and began in 1969 to research into a new rite. The principles of the rite are “fidelity to the values of the Gospel; fidelity to the religious and cultural heritage of Zaire. Thus the service has freely adapted parts of the Roman tradition.³¹⁵ The Rite is outwardly African, but inwardly Roman.³¹⁶ What is known today as the Zairean Mass began with many years of reflection, research and perseverance. This long research and waiting was rewarded on the 30th of April 1988, when the Zairean Mass and the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire received final approval from Rome. The structure of the Zairean Mass can be outlined as follows: Entrance Procession, Veneration of the altar, Announcement of the theme of the celebration, invocation of the saints and ancestors, Songs of praise and dancing around the altar, Opening prayer, Readings, Procession with the book of the Gospel, Proclamation of the

³¹⁵ Philip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), 126.

³¹⁶ Godfrey Chukwunyere Oleri, *The Dynamic Character of the Mass Media in the Evangelising Mission of the Church in Africa*, 41.

Gospel, Homily, Profession of faith, Penitential rite, Universal prayer, collection and Procession of gifts, Preface and Canon in the form of dialogue, Our Father, Lamb of God, Communion, Songs of thanksgiving, Prayer, Blessing and dismissal. We will not discuss all these headings in detail. Rather, we will try to explain some of them, pointing out the various aspects that give it African or Zairean character. The invocation of the ancestors is an important aspect of this rite because Africans have deep respect for the ancestors. The proclamation of the Word of God is also important. Therefore, the Zairean rite gives it the place it deserves by the ceremonial enthronement of the Bible. The members of the congregation sit down when the Gospel is read. Sitting down offers one the opportunity to listen attentively and to assimilate well the Word of God. It is also a mark of respect to the elders in some parts of Africa. Attention has been paid to all aspects of the service. Music has been locally composed. The vestments used are those of the Roman rite. Dance is integral part of the service. The Zairean rite represents a big step forward in that it points the way to a possible "African rite" in the not too distant future.³¹⁷

6.4 Baptism

Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.³¹⁸ Therefore, Baptism is the sacrament by which the Church maintains and expands its existence through the acceptance of new members. However, it is essentially more than a mere membership ceremony. It is the act of entrance into the people of God and a decisive act towards salvation. Talking about Baptism, Michael Schmaus states; "the saving effect of Baptism includes, liberation from sin; inner renewal and sanctification; being incorporated in the Church, being incorporated in Christ; receiving a share in the life of Christ, in his saving death and his resurrection."³¹⁹ In

³¹⁷ Philip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship*, 128.

³¹⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213.

³¹⁹ Michael Schmaus, *The Church as Sacrament*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 146.

many doctrinal pronouncements the Church has taught that Baptism was instituted by Jesus Christ.

6.4.1 Integration of Ghanaian Naming Ceremony into the Rite of Baptism

Several authors have suggested ways in which Baptism can be inculturated. Traditionally there are certain rites that mark important stages in a person's life. For example, there is the naming ceremony among Ghanaians that takes place eight days after the birth of a child. This is the day on which the living acknowledge the child as a living soul and individual human being. It is a communal affair and the entire community celebrate with the family to welcome in their midst the newborn. At this traditional naming ceremony, the child is named after one of the members of the extended family which includes the ancestors. Eric Ayisi describes the naming ceremony as follows:

After birth, the baby is not considered a member of the community. Both the mother and the baby are removed from everyday contact with the outside world. On the eighth day, they are brought out of seclusion into the community by the rite of aggregation. This will involve the mother wearing new clothes, usually white clothes, silver earrings and white beads. The baby is similarly clad, and the father will give a name for the baby. This ceremony is the naming of the baby, which coincides with the outdooing, meaning the naming of the baby and introducing both the mother and the baby to the community. The mother and the baby are showered with gifts from well-wishers and there is drinking and eating throughout the day. Usually a name is selected from a living or dead member of the lineage, a friend, or improvised. Most names only have nostalgic, and sentimental symbolism, but in some African societies, they articulate specific message. This is true among the Yorubas, and the Ibos, and the Ewes. The procedure of conferring names is very simple but it is essentially ubiquitous. There may be some variations, but the structure of the main ceremony follows a common pattern.³²⁰

Being an African and a Christian in this context means that one has to go through two sets of rites: African and Christian rites. There are efforts towards integrating the rite of baptism into the traditional naming ceremony. It is possible to have a

³²⁰ Eric Ayisi, *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture*, (London; Heinemann, 1979), 25.

fused rite which will go something like this: the traditional rites begin the ceremony and are carried through till the part where the name is given. If the parents have decided to name the child after a saint, they make this known at this stage, and the priest, who would have been present at the ceremony, will step in and speak about the initiation of the child not only into the traditional society but also into the community of the Church. He will emphasize that the Church, like the traditional society, has outstanding people called saints who are examples for Christians to follow and after whom Christians are named in Baptism. The venue of this fused ceremony can be either the Church or the home. This can be decided by the various Episcopal conferences. There are efforts to integrate the naming ceremony into the Rite of Baptism. This is because in both the traditional naming ceremony and Christian Rite of Baptism, the child is given a name. Baptism however makes the child a member of the Church. By Baptism a person becomes part of God's people and assumes certain responsibilities.

6.4.2 The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the most mature and creative theological-liturgical document of the Second Vatican Council. How is this programme implemented in Ghana? We believe that this rite offers tremendous possibilities for inculturation. If it is implemented properly it will go a long way in forming mature, adult Christians who will then have the proper attitudes and resources for collaborating and contributing in the overall process of inculturation.³²¹ To promote a committed Christian living, one must take time for an in-depth Christian initiation, based on the Word of God and touching upon the points of life and traditional initiation to provoke a true mental transformation. In this wise, initiation rites common in many African cultures, as for example, what goes on in the rite of the first pregnancy and what goes on in the rites of birth and at the initiation ceremonies especially of women, can enrich and offer a powerful symbolism for the Christian rites of initiation, the sacraments and sacramental and even the religious life. Baptism by stages as presented by RCIA must be adopted

³²¹ Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 85.

and adapted as the common way to introduce the non-baptized into the Catholic fold. After all, the catechumenate is a journey which passes through a number of successive stages, where the process of conversion is marked by liturgical rites. Its communal spirit is something to be very much appreciated. The profuse involvement of parents and sponsors in the rites is close to the African heart. In this connection the continuous “sponsoring” of the baptized by their godparents should be something to be appreciated and encouraged in the Christian communities. The Christian community must play an active role in the rites. It will be meaningful to bless the parents immediately after the baptism of their infants. The rite of exorcism should be elaborated a bit to suit the local background where false worship, evil spirits, fear etc., are prevalent. This rite can set people’s minds at ease. In fact, some people come for baptism precisely to drive away evil forces from them.

There are good reasons why we choose saints’ names at Baptism. However, that should not be a condition for Baptism. There are calls for the use of African names. Catechesis on it is however necessary. Its symbolism is spelled out well. If the Baptism is done by immersion, either the entire body or just the head is submerged three times. Copious use of the oil of Catechumens and of the Chrism edifies the faithful. The “clothing” rite has lost its meaning especially with that little piece of white cloth. It is suggested that loose kind of dress that fits everyone should be made for this rite to keep its symbolism. While Baptism represents the culmination of the initiation journey, that journey continues into what RCIA calls the period of “Mystagogia” or post-baptismal catechesis. It is the responsibility of the pastors and their associates to search for ways and means by which this progressive and continuous growth of the faith of the newly baptized will be strengthened and renewed.

6.5 Traditional Marriage and Christian Marriage

The Catechism of the Catholic Church looks at marriage from a religious perspective and sees it as: “A covenant by which a man and woman establish

between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, which is by its nature ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptised persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”³²² A covenant means an agreement between two persons. As a sacrament, the purpose of marriage is twofold: it is ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. One of pastoral problems in Ghana is the question of Christians in monogamous marriages who have been married according to the traditional rites but not in Church. This raises the question of “canonical form” and traditional marriage. In the Catholic Church it is required by law that the “canonical form” be observed, i.e., that mutual consent be exchanged before a priest and two witnesses. However, it is a well-known fact that in Africa the percentage of Catholics who celebrate their marriages in accordance with this “canonical form” is very small indeed. A study of the situation of the Christian family in Ghana in the late 1970’s revealed that almost 70% of all baptized adult Catholics are not married according to the regulations of the church. The relationship between the “canonical form” and the traditional marriage in Africa is described by Bishop Henry Karlen of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe as follows:

From time of their traditional marriage, even Catholics consider themselves to be properly married. They are nevertheless, aware that they cannot receive the Eucharist as long as they remain unmarried in the eyes of the Church. If it takes place at all, the Church marriage is often celebrated years after the traditional marriage and this rite loses its meaning for the couple and many Catholics consider that a Church marriage contributes little, if anything, in itself to the married state. At best it regularizes a couple’s position before the priest and thus provide access to the Eucharist.³²³

For most people the customary marriages have value and are real, while a church wedding is seen as a blessing, an ornament or condition for reception of Holy

³²² The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 358.

³²³ Henry Karlen, *Canonical Form and Traditional Marriage*, 59; Cf. Joseph Osei-Bonsu, “Christianity and Culture”, *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, (no.3, 1991), 62.

Communion. The ceremony in the Church is a blessing for people who are already married customarily, as demanded by the church, hence the problem is not so much the celebration of the rites but the totality of the institution of marriage as lived and experienced by Ghanaians. To do away with this duplication it is vital that ways be found of fusing the two rites into one. The instructions given in the Introduction to the Rite of Marriage give the conference of bishops the right to prepare completely new marriage rites, stating that each conference of bishops may draw up its own marriage rite suited to the usages of the place and people and approved by the Apostolic See.

In the light of the foregoing the following guidelines can be proposed for fusing the traditional rites and the Christian rites into one. It should be realized first of all that in most Ghanaians and other African societies marriage is not seen as the result of a single contractual exchange of consent. It is an evolutionary process, involving many stages or steps. For a proper incarnation of Christianity in Africa, it is important for the Church to be involved in this whole process right from the beginning. Thus the priest should be present at the various stages of the traditional rites, especially at the stage where, among a particular people, the consent is exchanged. It is hoped that this will fulfil the canonical requirement of marriage. Right from the beginning of this whole process an intensive catechesis on the sacramentality of marriage and its indissoluble nature should be given by the priest to the couple. The catechesis should be programmed in such a way that it is completed before the last traditional rite is performed. It is during this time that it is suggested that the bans be published, so that if anyone has any objections to the marriage, they are brought to the notice of the priest and the members of the two families. Forming part of the premarital catechesis will be preparing the couple for the reception of the sacrament of Penance as a preparation for receiving the Eucharist after the marriage. The priest should be present at the last traditional rite to be performed, and the nuptial blessing should be given to the couple during this last rite. After this the couple will be legally and validly married in the eyes of both the traditional society and the Church. For the civil validity of such a fused

marriage rite, the Bishops' Conference of a particular African country should try to obtain the State's recognition of such marriage taking place in the home and not in church. On the Sunday or major feast day following the marriage rite the couple will go to Church where they will receive communion.

6.6 The Upliftment of the Dignity of Women

The African culturally has derogatory attitudes towards women. The physical or psychological violence directed against the woman, the socially induced feminine low self image, political, economic and even religious intolerance and exploitation, the depriving of women of educational opportunities, denying them the chances to develop their full potential as human beings, the perpetuating of customs and laws that not only discriminate against women but also mutilate or completely eliminate their common right to avail themselves of the opportunities of modern science and technology – all these are calculated attempts at blacking out women, rendering them invisible. They are forms of human degradation that can be identified in varying degrees in the existential experiences of women in Africa. On the dignity and Role of man and woman, John Paul II has this to say: "In creating the human race 'male and female' (Gen. 1:27), God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person."³²⁴ This means that man and woman, although different, are essentially equal from the point of view of their humanity. However, this is usually not so in the Ghanaian family. Here the culture finds it difficult to appreciate and accept this fact. Women are usually deprived of their rights and the respect due to them. This must be deplored.

6.6.1 Widowhood Rites

Perhaps the most abhorrent treatment of the Ghanaian woman is the ritual of widowhood. One can identify the following common characteristics of the ritual of widowhood: Sitting on the floor for a number of days before and after burial; Keeping the hair unkempt for a period before complete shaving. Being forbidden to

³²⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22.

take a bath for a period of seven days or more; Confinement almost imprisonment within the deceased husband's homestead; Compulsory wailing and recounting of husband's virtues; Wearing black cloth; Being forbidden to inherit the husband's property; Being forbidden to have sexual intercourse for a year after burial; Public confession of guilt should one have an affair and then a sacrifice to appease the deceased husband; Presentation of items such as a goat, fish, drinks, plantain, yams, to the elders of the family to be permitted to terminate the mourning ordeal. In some of the unique cases in Ghana, the widow's ordeal begins with the people's suspicion that the widow is responsible for the husband's death. Among the Ewes of the Volta Region of Ghana, the widow cannot trim her toe or finger nails nor wear shoes during the mourning period. While the widow is subjected to these indignities, a widower is not. He can remarry, if he so wishes, at will. These acts of oppression, humiliation and dehumanisation of women identified in one aspect of Ghanaian culture, namely social organisation, are observable in other aspects of culture and are themselves part of the culture of Ghanaian womanhood with which inculturation is to engage the Gospel of Liberation in meaningful dialogue.

Widowhood rites differ from ethnic group, but in most African societies no matter what form they take, they pose a problem for the women, especially those who are not well educated and those in the rural areas. The question of the widowhood rites makes it clear that here we have a problem that faces African women who are Christians. Must they comply with the traditional widowhood rites even if certain aspects of those rites are incompatible with Christian morality? In many African societies widowhood rites create all kinds of moral and psychological problems for the widow. However, it will simply not do to say that African Christians should not take part in these rites. They form part and parcel of the people's way of life and banning Christians from them will not work. Is the solution to evolve a church rite that will replace the traditional rite? This cultural captivity of African womanhood calls for the liberating force of the Gospel.

6.6.2 The inculturated Rite of Widowhood in the Diocese of Ho-Ghana

The Catholic Church in the Ho Diocese has evolved a Christian ritual for widows and widowers. This is an example of inculturation because in making the rite the Church in this part of Ghana has taken into account the cultural context of the Ewe people as far as widowhood rites are concerned. The rite is called “Initiation into Widowhood: A Ritual for Catholic Widows/Widowers in the Kea-Ho Diocese. We highlight the main features here. The ritual is divided into three parts. Part one deals with “Initiation into Widowhood.” Part Two deals with the clothing of the widow/widowers. Part Three deals with the “Outdooring” of the Widow/Widower.

6.6.2.1 Initiation into Widowhood

The widow is to be initiated into a three-day retreat which corresponds to solitary confinement in the traditional rite. This starts either from the day after the public mourning or the day after the burial. On that day the priest enters the house of the widow. He sprinkles the house with holy water, imposes his hands on the widow and prays for her. A bit of her hair is cut to be disposed of later by the priest. This replaces the shaving of the widow’s head and her private parts in the traditional rite. The widow then begins the three-day retreat.

6.6.2.2 Clothing of the Widow and Widower

On the third day, the priest goes to the house of the widow and blesses clothes to be used by her. The prayer said mentions protection against assault or temptation of wicked spirits. After three months, a day is fixed for the taking off of the mourning clothes. During the period of three months of widowhood, it is recommended that the widow lead a modest and a chaste life. Consultation of diviners is forbidden.

6.6.2.3 The Outdooring of the Widow and Widower

On a day, preferably Saturday the widow presents the new (white) clothes to the priest to be blessed in Church. She will wear those on the following Sunday. At mass the next day, just before the final blessing, the priest may give the widow a

special blessing. There are some people who are sceptical whether widows who go through such a Church rite will think that they have fulfilled the obligations that their traditional society requires of them. There is no easy solution to the problem. Probably the best solution is for Christian widows to go through all those traditional rites which do not conflict with Christianity. If there are elements in the traditional rites that are incompatible with Christian doctrines or Christian ethical standards, these can be replaced with Christian elements. A crucifix could be placed in the room of the widow, and the priest should explain that these objects are symbols of God's protection against all harm and evil. The priest should be involved at some stages to give his blessing to the widow and to give her moral support.

6.7 Church Art and Architecture

When Latin Rite missionaries came to evangelise Ghana, they forcefully replaced Ghanaian religious symbols with western Christian symbols. Medals, statues, tabernacles, candles, altars, and churches replaced the sacred trees. One notices a tremendous gap between traditional Ghanaian art and the western art and statues of most Catholic churches. Instead of coming from the local soil, most church art has been imported from Europe. The imported Christian symbols had already lost much of their symbolism in the west before they were brought to Africa.³²⁵ In Ghana, religious symbols serve various purposes. They evoke the presence of God and the ancestors among the people. The insight and imagination of indigenous artists should be made use of in the church's art and architecture. With the widespread building of new churches and the expansion of old churches, architecture is basically simple and functional. Yet questions should be raised about the design of church buildings and how they encourage enriched liturgical celebrations. Relevant questions worth considering are the following: is there room for movement, for procession in and around the church? Must the long and narrow church, with those in the back far distant from the Altar, be the normal pattern? Are pews called for, or perhaps other forms of seating that allow more

³²⁵ Ecclesia in Ghana, 85.

interaction among the participants? An opportunity is present because there is so much building in progress. And yet so much art and architecture seem to be imitative, importation, rather than a creative, indigenous rethinking of what a church building should be and how it should function in the Ghanaian village or city in accord with Ghanaian patterns of meeting and celebration. Inculturation seeks to utilize the wonderful Ghanaian values in order to promote the Kingdom of God.

6.8 Conclusion

We have tried in this chapter to review and evaluate the implementation of inculturation, pointing out its successes, failures and its benefits. Some remarkable inculturation has taken place in the Eucharist, liturgy, music and widowhood rites. We can term these as humble beginnings aimed at inculturating the Gospel in Ghanaian culture. But there is still room for more inculturation. Much needs to be done for effective inculturation. In this light, we have made some recommendations aimed at facilitating inculturation in Ghanaian context. Inculturation is not just about mixing faith and culture. It is about the faith becoming a culture in the church and this culture becoming the culture of the people in the church. The challenge of inculturation consists in ensuring that the followers of Christ will ever more fully assimilate the Gospel message, while remaining faithful to authentic Ghanaian values. Since evangelization means transformation, the inculturated Word of God must always address the central values that give form to a culture. There is the need to continually deepen the inculturation of the Gospel in Ghanaian context by confronting traditional values and practices with its faith in Jesus Christ and by transforming them. Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness, if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, not use their language, their signs and symbols, nor answers the questions they ask; and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. Through the process of inculturation, the Gospel becomes an inexhaustible source of new life. Inculturation of the faith in every area

of Christian and human life is an arduous task which can only be carried out with the help of the Spirit of the Lord who lead the Church to the whole truth.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the struggle for inculturation, some people were not in favour of it. The reason is that some people think it would not favour the church as a whole. According to Eugene Nida,

“they feel inculturation aims at creating a different type of Christianity, a faulty Christianity. They fear the movement would dismantle the central doctrine of the faith and lower the Christian standards established at such as high cost of lives and efforts. They suspect it would divert the Christian growth by introducing in it ‘superstitions’ long condemned elements of ‘paganism’ long forgotten and create a syncretistic Christianity. They think one of the aims is to make Christianity easier for the African people. Some fear that the movement may bring division in the Church, create an unhealthy imbalance between the local and the universal church and perhaps lead to some schisms.”³²⁶

In spite of the above fears, the facts cannot be denied that the Church requires inculturation so that the church in many parts of the world will flourish, being able to address the people in their cultures and customs. Inculturation is necessary so that the Church can take root in whatever culture she finds herself being one with the people almost in all things. The message of inculturation is nothing other than to incarnate Jesus Christ in the life of Africans. It also inculturates the Gospel making use of what is there among the people.

The Bishops of Africa were challenged by John Paul II to promote the course of inculturation among the people of Africa. The 1994 Synod Fathers also emphasized the need for inculturation because the culture of a people speaks their mind and way of life. No one would like to evangelize a people neglecting their culture. Without inculturation, the Church in Africa will continue to suffer and undermine the evangelization process in Africa.

³²⁶ Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission* (London:1960), 166; Cf. Godfrey Chukwunyere Oleril, *The Dynamic Character of the Mass Media in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church in Africa with particular reference to the Nigerian Church*, (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2007), 156.

Making Jesus an African is a real task for every African. To achieve this, more priests and catechists are to be trained who will in turn carry out the work of evangelization. They will definitely play key roles in the evangelization of Africa. Every African is called to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Inculturation is one of the fundamental aspects of the church's evangelizing mission and points to the mutuality between the Gospel and the cultures it engages. The Christian Gospel is to be open to all cultures, bound to no single culture and made accessible to every human person through a process of inculturation, by which the Gospel introduces something new into the culture and the culture brings something new to the richness of the Gospel. The aim of inculturation is to ensure authenticity and depth of faith in African Christianity; to heal cultural alienation, to bridge the gap between faith and life, and thus resolve the many instances of spiritual schizophrenia and double life affecting many of our people.³²⁷ Inculturating the Gospel means allowing the Word of God to exercise a power within the lives of the people, without at the same time imposing alien cultural factors that would make it difficult for them truly to receive that Word. The process of inculturation has always been a part of the life of the Church. In Africa, there is a great desire to create a truly African Christianity, in which the Church and African cultures form an inseparable union. There is also a desire to free the Gospel from a colonial legacy, which undervalued the quality of indigenous African cultural values, and to bring it into a more profound contact with African life. We need to recognize that the Gospel will always provoke resistance; it challenges men and women and requires of them a conversion of mind, heart, and behaviour. It seeks to dispose people to receive Jesus Christ in an integral manner. In this regard, we can conclude that inculturation is not only a blind acceptance of all the values of a culture or an external adaptation or accommodation of the Gospel to a particular culture with the desire to make the Christian message more attractive and superficially decorative. It is clearly a two way process. It is the

³²⁷ Introduction to the Press Conference. *Synodus Episcoporum-Bulletin*, (26-27 April, 1994), 2.

integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a food that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Universal church.³²⁸ Inculturation, then, is necessary and essential.³²⁹ It is a delicate task, which consists in inserting culturally the Gospel in all levels of ecclesial life: language used in preaching and catechesis, in liturgy, in sacred art, in theological research.

According to Roest Crolius, inculturation is not the work of an elite or of leaders who create a new way of living in the Christian faith in their laboratory, then communicate it to the people. Experts and leaders certainly play an important role, however, the primary agents of inculturation is the local community. The local Church is, in fact the “locus of inculturation.”³³⁰ The laity’s role is of paramount importance here because it is they who are called to transform society by infusing the mind of Christ into the mentality, customs, and traditions of the society they live in. The real agents of inculturating the Gospel are those who belong to the culture itself. Crolius warns against caricatures of inculturation by saying: in order to make sense of inculturation, it might be helpful to direct our regards to the nonsense that goes with it. Among the various ideas and projects concerning inculturation, there are some which overlook one or the other aspects of this process, and thus do not become pure nonsense, but only a caricature of what inculturation should be.³³¹ Inculturation cannot compromise the Christian message – the Gospel. Since the Gospel is all about metanoia, that is, conversion or change of heart, if therefore, the Gospel enters a culture and it changes nothing, there is no real inculturation. Once the Gospel enters a culture that culture must undergo metanoia at its most profound level. The change that takes place because of this

³²⁸ Arrupe Pedro, “Letter to the Members of the Society of Jesus”, (1979), in: Alfred Maravilla, *The Challenge of inculturating the Salesian Charism in East Asia and Oceania*, Manila: Paranaque, (2003), 1—8.

³²⁹ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (25 March, 1992), 55.

³³⁰ Arig Roest Crolius, *Inculturation: Some Practical Remarks*, 8.

³³¹ Arig Roest Crolius, *Inculturation: Some Practical Remarks*, 5-6.

encounter does not destroy the culture; instead it purifies and elevates it. In fact inculturation implies purification of certain values, rites, traditions, practices that are contrary to the Gospel. In every culture then, there are elements of sin that need to be healed, ennobled and perfected. We know that it will take some time before the African culture is fully Christianised and accepted by the Church. There is however, the need to begin from somewhere.

ABSTRACT

John Paul II convoked the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which lasted from 10th April to 8th May 1994. Many issues concerning the church in Africa were discussed – such as proclamation of the word, inculturation, justice and Peace and social communications. The successful outcome of the Synod was summarised by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*. The purpose of summoning the African Synod was to formulate a new method of evangelization in Africa. The Fathers of the Synod deemed it very necessary that, although Africa had many problems at the time of the Synod, its first work or achievement is to bring Christ to the People of Africa, and to make Christ more meaningful to them. The idea is to bring Christ nearer to the people in their own way of life, style and language. The focus of the African Synod was Evangelization, but the Fathers noted that a meaningful Evangelization must pass through inculturation. This is because Evangelization is an integral element of Evangelization. The Evangelization of cultures and inculturation of the Gospel go hand in hand, in a reciprocal relationship. The inculturation of faith and the evangelization of culture go together as an inseparable pair. A meaningful Evangelization must pass through inculturation. Inculturation is therefore an urgent priority in the life of the particular churches aimed at rooting the Gospel of Christ firmly in Africa. It is a requirement for Evangelization – a path towards full evangelization, and one of the greatest challenges facing the Church on the African Continent.

The foundations of the faith have already been laid in Ghana by the missionaries about 120 years ago. The Catholic Church in Ghana has come a long way and made great strides passing from a missionary Church to a Ghanaian Church. The Church needs to grow into maturity through the process of inculturation. The task of creating an inculturated Ghanaian Church, a Church relevant to the particular context and life-situation of Ghana is urgent and necessary for effective evangelization in Ghana. There is the need for serious deepening of the faith. This is because formation in the faith stops too often at the elementary stage. There are

many Christians who are not deeply rooted in the faith. Their religiosity has become somehow superficial and no longer touches sufficiently their entire personality. There is dichotomy in the life of many Christians, between what they profess to believe and what they live. Many Christians find themselves living between two worlds, namely; the world of Christian beliefs and the values of traditional religion. Inculturation is therefore aimed at bridging the gap between faith and practice, faith and culture. Thus if the Gospel message is to bear desired fruits, it must be understood and lived by the people in their concrete life situations. There is therefore the need to make the Gospel part and parcel of life of the people.

Inspired by the II Vatican Council's teaching on the Incarnation as basis for understanding the different cultures and philosophies of people,³³² African theologians speak of the incarnation as the model of inculturating the Gospel in Africa. Just as the Son of God became incarnate, the Gospel message too must incarnate itself in the various cultures. So inculturation is also based on the mystery of the incarnation as its model. Inculturation or the evangelization of culture does not belong to one or two fields of encounter, such as liturgical or catechetical experimentation, or to the realm of religious or family life. It belongs to the whole of Christian experience. The fields of inculturation include: theology, catechesis, liturgy, religious life, marriage and family life, health and healing, secondary ecclesial ministries and structures. The Church in Ghana must be local in its songs, in its artistry, in its Architecture, in its thoughts and language, in its way of life. The African Synod as well as *Ecclesia in Africa* encourages theologians in Africa to work with the theme of "God's family" in order to develop a theology of the Church as Family with all the riches contained in this concept. Among the African values extolled under this image are the following: "care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust."³³³ Clearly the image of the Church as God's family needs further development in

³³² Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, 10.

³³³ *Ecclesia in Africa*, 63.

order to become a symbol of the nature and praxis of the inculturated African church. What we are concerned about is the faith becoming a culture in the church.

Inculturation is urged upon the Church by Vatican II and by Popes and Synods since Vatican II. The starting point towards inculturation is a comprehensive knowledge of the African culture, its system of symbols and meanings through systematic scientific and sustained effort at research into the elements of African culture.

Inculturation is a process and not something that can be done overnight. It is a difficult, long, courageous and continuous process, which is but the fruit of a progressive maturity in the faith. It is a slow process, which takes time and implies patience and guidance. This process of inculturation is not easy and quick, but with perseverance, the Church can make tremendous and inspiring progress. Inculturation becomes a pilgrimage of local churches towards full integration into Christ.

RESUME OF ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Three Hundred copies of the Questionnaire were sent out in January, 2008 to different Dioceses in Ghana. The response was about 70 percent. Replies were received from many people with different backgrounds- the laity, priests and religious, and some of the Bishops. The following is a summary of the answers as they came, with perhaps a little summary at the end.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Inculturation: Rooting the Gospel firmly in Ghanaian Culture – A Necessary Requirement for Effective Evangelization for the Catholic Church in Ghana.

Concrete areas of Investigation: a) Evangelization

b) Culture

c) Inculturation

Question 1

What is your understanding of inculturation?

Answer:

Inculturation as a concept proved to be too much of a technical term. Most of the respondents asked for a translation or explanation of the term in their vernaculars. Various views were expressed. Salient among them are the following: integrating Christian doctrine with useful Ghanaian traditional cultural values; making Christianity acceptable to all. Some saw inculturation as upliftment of Ghanaian cultural values.

Question 2

In which ways can inculturation be facilitated in your local community?

Answer:

Many responded by saying that inculturation can be facilitated in many ways. Some of the ways mentioned are; the introduction of Ghanaian Music and rhythms into the Church together with drums; research into Ghanaian cultural values to be carried out; research materials should be documented and the importance of

inculturation should be explained to the people before any change or experimentation is carried out. Those facilitating the process of inculturation should be knowledgeable in cultural anthropology and church doctrine.

Question 3

What areas need inculturation?

Answer:

Several areas were mentioned. Among them are: language and worship. For many respondents, liturgy and worship were of paramount importance – liturgical inculturation accompanied by musical instruments, clapping and dancing, the use of Ghanaian liturgical vestments, Church structure and government, allowing women to play more roles in the church administration; Baptism and Outdooring.

Question 4

What in your opinion are some the challenges facing the Catholic Church in your area?

Answer:

Generally, what many people considered as the most urgent problem facing the Catholic Church in their respective areas is the deepening of the faith of the people in concrete day-to-day life. In other words, many people were of the opinion that, in her work of inculturation, the church has passed beyond “the proclamation level”. What appear to be urgent are the “relationship”, the “incarnation”, “re-expression” levels of inculturation. These levels complete the whole panorama of authentic Christian inculturation. Some argued that the Christian is faced with the problem of Christian identity.

Question 5

Does the Catholic faith differentiate a Christian from a non-believer in day-to-day living?

Answer

While some were of the opinion that the traditionalists were more faithful to their religion, some argued that Christians live a life of isolation in their day-to-day interaction, some used external signs like the “sign of the Cross”, “the Stations of the Cross”, “the Rosary” etc., to differentiate a Christian from a traditionalist.

Question 6

Do some Catholics practice both Christian belief and at the same time traditional belief?

Answer

Many affirmed that there are many Christians who go to Church and engage in traditional practices. During cultural festivals, funerals and marriage ceremonies, some Christians revert to the traditional rites without feeling guilty of breaking any Christian principle. There are many Christians who consult diviners and fulfil the traditional obligations imposed on them. Libation sometimes substitutes Christian prayers.

Question 7

What is the root cause of the dualism in Christian practice and beliefs?

Answer

About 65 percent argue that the cause is due to lack of faith in Christianity. Some say it is because of ignorance of the basic Catholic doctrine; yet others say that it is because of crisis situations which need ready-made answers to daily problems. Many feel that Christians are only increasing in number without a corresponding increase in faith; and so there is a danger of secularism in the future if nothing is done to deepen the faith of Christians. A few respondents argued that divided Christianity is a hindrance to the Gospel message. There are many denominations preaching different messages and it is difficult to ascertain what the true message is.

Question 8

Give reasons why some Christians leave the Church in favour of traditional beliefs and practices?

Answer

Because of the shallowness of the Christian doctrine as presented in the Ghanaian catechism, which is abandoned after the reception of First Holy Communion, there is constant reference to loyalty to the traditional gods of the land. Some Christians feel that the abandoning of the custom would aggravate the anger of the spirits; therefore, there is the constant fear of being struck by the gods. In spite of the increasing number of Christians, the traditional religion holds a great influence on Christians. There is discordance between faith and practice. It is not easy to get statistical records of those who have reverted to traditional beliefs, but my respondents say that an alarming number has reverted in secret. The number of Christians who have deviated are many.

Question 9

How many religious denominations do you have in your locality?

Answer

There is no village or area that has only one denominational church. In some areas there is a preponderance of the Catholic church and in some areas there is a majority of the Protestant denominations. The response from the big cities in Ghana gives a different picture of uncountable number of New Religious Movements spreading all over the place.

Question 10

Give reasons for the proliferation of New Religious Movements.

Answer

The reasons for the proliferation of NRMs include the hunger for leadership, dissatisfaction with one's parent church, adventure for money in a quick way, freedom to be authentically African without outside legislation, hunger for

spiritual satisfaction in moments of crisis. Many who leave exaggerate their reasons. Some leave because of their personal problems.

Question 11

Why do people leave the Catholic Church to join other Churches?

Answer

Some leave the Catholic Church because of their dissatisfaction with Church laws and regulations. Others leave because of polygamy and their inability to receive Holy Communion. Some leave because of the moral behaviour of the religious leaders, clergy and religious. Some leave the Catholic Church because for them it is uninspiring or boring. They are looking for more participation and something to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Some leave because it has not got much to offer them in their existential problems as Ghanaians or Africans.

Question 12

What aspect of traditional belief do Christians practice most in your locality?

Answer

Christians practice divination in secret, they use charms and amulets, and at times believe in totem. During funeral rites, marriages, initiation ceremonies, they are more inclined to traditional belief.

Question 13

What are the foreign aspects of the Catholic religion in your community today?

Answer

Some still maintain that the use of Latin liturgy is foreign. English is also foreign, but has been well assimilated in urban centres, since the majority of the urban dweller are literates. The English language has remained a source of national unity and will continue to be useful in Catholic worship, though the Mass is celebrated in some of the local languages. Other areas of foreignness include the rite of Christian marriage, some liturgical vestments, foreign names used during baptism instead of African names.

Question 14

How can one feel at home with the Christian religion and at home with Ghanaian culture?

Answer

One Bishop answered by saying that the search for an African Theology should begin by living authentic Christian lives. Authenticity means accepting the salvific cultural values and assimilating the Christian values. This is the only way to be authentically Ghanaian and Christian. Any Ghanaian can become a Saint only by feeling at home with authentic and legitimate cultural values and Christian values.

Question 15

Mention briefly the major areas of conflict between Christianity and Ghanaian culture.

Answer

There are various irreconcilables – monogamy versus polygamy, monotheism versus deism, reincarnation versus resurrection, divination versus proclamation of the Word of God, traditional worship versus Christian worship, Christian idea of medicine versus traditional charms and amulets, belief in God, spirits and ancestors versus belief in the Trinity. In all these differences, there are areas of convergence: the concept of the sacred, of life, sense of community, hospitality, family solidarity and Small Christian Communities.

This is the synthesis of the Questionnaire.

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LEBENS LAUF

Ich heie Emmanuel Richard Mawusi und Ich stamme aus Ghana (im West Afrikas), wo ich am 21 September, 1961 in Anfoeta Tsebi als drittes und jngstes Kind eines Lehrerehepaares geboren wurde. Ich habe zwei ltere Geschister, einen Bruder und eine Schwester.

1977 – Eintritt in das Seminar und Gymnasium. Nach meiner Gymnasialzeit in 1982, entschloss ich mich Theologie zu studieren und Priester zu werden.

1984-1990 – Priesterausbildung in St. Peter`s Major Seminary, Cape Coast (Ghana) wo ich zwei Jahre Philosophie und vier Jahre Theologie studiert habe. Alle Studien absolvierte ich in Ghana mit akademischen Grad Diplom in Theologie.

Am 21 Juli, 1990 wurde ich zum Priester geweiht.

1990-1995 war ich Kaplan in zwei verschiedenen Pfarreien in Ghana.
1995-1997 war ich als Spiritual in einem Gymnasium ttig und unterrichtete Englisch und Religion.

1997-200 war ich Sekretr des Bischofs der Dizese Ho (Ghana), der mich zu studienwecken beurlaubt hat.

Seit 2001 bin ich in der Pfarre Korneuburg als Kaplan zugeteilt von Stift Korneuburg. Meine Aufgabe in der Pfarre besteht darin, in der Seelsorge mitzuhelfen.

2004 habe ich Magister in Theologie von Universitt Wien erlangt. Weitere Studium zu Doktor der Theologie mit Schwerpunkt Dogmatik an der Universitt Wien ist gerade abgeschlossen.

