

**INCULTURATION IN AFRICAN CHURCHES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO  
ZIMBABWE**

**by**

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**submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

**in the subject**

**SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

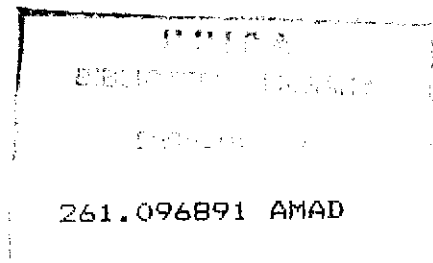
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**JUNE 2002**

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**DECLARATION**

**“I declare that Inculturation in African Churches with particular Reference to Zimbabwe is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”**



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### **SUMMARY**

This study tries to investigate the extent of inculturation in African Churches in general and in Zimbabwe in particular. Some mission churches, like the Catholic, the Anglican and the Methodist Churches were selected for the study. The main areas of investigation are baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, burial and healing. The study discovered that there is some inculturation going on in all the churches under discussion, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. On the other hand, it was also discovered that the African Independent Churches, such as Vapostori and the Aladura, churches are much more at home with the implementation of inculturation especially in the area of healing.

We concluded that Christianity is not yet deeply rooted in African soil, in particular in Zimbabwe. This is because not much inculturation has taken place in the mission churches. Some recommendations are made to help facilitate the implementation of inculturation and to enable Christianity to take flesh in Africa so as to become an authentic African Christianity.

### **Key Terms:**

African Independent Churches;

Culture;

Evangelisation;

Healing;

Incarnation;

Inculturation;

Mission Churches;

Old and New Testaments;

Religion;

Sacraments.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

My early eye operation in 1995 as a result of a childhood accident led me to conclude that I would never use my eyes again for any serious studies. I thank God for my vocation to the priesthood, for restoring my sight, for sustaining me throughout the course of this study and for giving me patience, which has helped me to persevere to the end. I would like to thank my congregation for sending me on a mission in Zimbabwe, where I found the inspiration to work on inculturation, and for supporting me morally and financially. My many thanks go to my confreres in Zimbabwe for their friendship and prayers, especially my present district superior, the Very Rev. Fr. Leo Eke. He not only created a good environment for me to study, but also helped me with some materials that were useful to my study.

In a very special way, I give my sincere thanks to my supervisor Prof. Mokgethi B G Motlhabi, who not only supervised my work but also taught me. He was patient with me, especially when I was finding some part of the study very difficult at the early stages. Because of my work as a missionary, I was out of touch with most of the research that has been done in the area of mission. Thanks to my family members for their prayers and encouragement. Both Fathers J C Okoye, of the Catholic Theological Union in America and S Igboanyika, of Gregorian University in Rome were very inspirational and supportive. I thank them very much. I would also like to thank Sr. E Kadzere and Mr R Mapanzure, both of the English department at St. Joseph's Catholic High School, Mutare, for proof-reading the manuscript.

My thanks go to Miss Edna Chikuvire of the Catholic University in Harare for typing the manuscript, and my subject librarian, Natalie Thirion, at Unisa for her prompt services. Some Catholic donor organisations helped to fund part of this study and to them, I say thank you for your kindness. Mrs Munodawafa of the provincial hospital, Mutare, was very helpful in providing e-mail services. In general, I would like to remember and also thank many others who contributed in a special way for the success of this study but whose names are too many to mention here. They include those whose books and articles were made use of, those who gave me audience during the interview sessions and those who permitted me to use their pictures as illustrations. To all these people I say, may God bless you.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

#### **1.1 Statement Of The Problem.**

Sometime in the past, around the early sixties, people around this part of the continent were looking at Christianity as a foreign religion, something forced upon the Africans and a religion associated with Europeans. This way of looking at Christianity made people regard the Catholic Church, for example, as “Uka fada”, that is, the father’s Church, or “Cheche yafata,” Igbo and Shona languages respectively. This is because mass at that time was celebrated only in Latin, which the priest alone knew and the language in which only a few other people could sing without knowing the meaning of the chants. During the celebration of the mass itself, the priest normally faced away from the congregation. Culturally, this was seen as disrespectful and as a sign of non recognition of the person or people participating in the celebration. This was the practice in the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council. In short, the people were not involved, hence “Uka fada” and “Cheche yafata.”

Later in the seventies, however, this way of looking at Christianity started gradually to change. People began to regard the Church as their own, no longer exclusively that of the white missionary priest. At this time, the problem of language was being minimised. The people could now pray meaningfully in their own language with their own local native priests, with whom they were familiar and whom they could easily understand. Notwithstanding this, the Christian faith has not yet firmly established itself in the lives of the people. Waliggo explains this situation in these words:

Finally, other African societies have heard the Christian message, but have kept it as superficial as possible, so that it does not penetrate their real lives, culture, and world view. At best, they are mere sympathisers of the Church (1986: 18).

The Christian faith has not fully penetrated the real lives of the people because it has not reasonably addressed the totality of the peoples’ cultures. The Church was aware of this fact, hence one of the major issues at the African Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1994 was inculturation.



When the African synod was at its preparatory stage, the people of God were fully involved. During the discussion sessions, many of the lay people here in Zimbabwe, and perhaps in other parts of Africa, had different ideas about inculturation. Many of these ideas were contrary to the teachings of the Church. In the first place, there was great enthusiasm on the part of the people to talk about inculturation. The people with whom the writer worked at that early stage, for example, were enthusiastic to talk about inculturation because they thought it would grant them the permission to consult the *n'anga* (diviner-healer) whenever they had problems. This idea was primary in their minds. During his research, Ndiokwere cited two such ideas from the people he consulted. He stated: "Inculturation means the introduction of the already discredited elements of African Traditional Religion into Christianity".

Continuing in a much elaborate fashion, Ndiokwere writes:

Inculturation is nothing but an imitation of these new Churches which Africans have established themselves— the beating of drums, clapping of hands, noise making, dancing and the performance of other frivolous antics in the name of Christian worship (1994: 34).

Ndiokwere referred to these approaches to inculturation as "wrong concepts...". He then went on to comment on them as follows:

The above two samples of wrong concepts of inculturation expressed by some simple Christians summarise that same old and poor idea that any tinkering with the traditional Christian practices in Africa will definitely produce an unpalatable blend of the old and the new, a mixture of fetish ingredients and orthodox Christian elements. That will be an unfortunate situation, and is never what inculturation is set out to produce (1994: 34).

It suffices, therefore, to say that many of our lay Catholics, especially at the preparatory stage of the African Synod, had a misconception of what inculturation is all about. This could be because it was the first time for most of them to hear about inculturation and also to be engaged in the discussion of such a theological concept. Besides the fact that these African Christians wanted a re-introduction of African traditional practices which were discarded by the white missionaries and their desire to be like the Church members of the African Independent Churches, there was also a likely misunderstanding arising from a lack of proper explanation. This means that the church leaders had not given a proper and detailed explanation of the idea of inculturation before the people were asked to have a discussion on it. The two dimensions of inculturation cited by Pope John Paul II could easily be misunderstood by the people, most of whom had no theological training.

According to Pope John Paul II (1995: 44, 45),

Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and, on the other hand, the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.

The insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures could be easily misunderstood by the people to mean freedom to consult *n'anga* (diviner-healer) since this is one aspect of African traditional culture. Thus, there were two problems at stake, namely: the influence of traditional religion is still very much felt among the people and Christianity has not addressed this issue adequately. There was also a lack of adequate training for the people.

The Church's teaching on inculturation is based on the belief in the incarnation of Jesus. According to this teaching, Christ took up human nature and dwelt among people in a given culture. The Church sees it as proper to imitate her master by inculturating the gospel message in different peoples' cultures. In *Instrumentum Laboris*, the fathers of the Church, that is the Bishops of the Catholic Church illustrate this idea in these words:

The Church must set out to follow the path traced by her master, who came not to abolish but to complete (Mt. 5: 17). The word being God himself took on a real human nature in his own person and lived every aspect of human existence - except sin - in a definite place and time. So, through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but also healed, ennobled, and perfected into the glory of God (1993: 45).

Once again, the people misunderstood this duty of the Church to inculturate the gospel message in whatever that is good in the culture of the people. The problem here arose from the fact that what the people themselves considered good in their own traditional practices, might not be all accepted by the Church to be good. We shall see later how the Church has tried to use some good aspects of peoples' cultures to promote the gospel message through liturgy. The use of language and music is good for worship. However, the question is whether this is enough to make the people truly Christian, and in this particular case, truly African. It is the aim of the writer, therefore, to help African Christians to understand those aspects of African culture which the Church considers good so as to avoid misunderstandings and, as much as possible, avoid conflicts between the church's teaching on inculturation and what the people think about it.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study.**

This study will try to investigate why Christianity was at one time regarded as a foreign religion associated with Europeans and later came to be called “our church” in Africa. It is also the aim of the writer to know why many Africans are good church goers when things are smooth sailing for them, but tend to take the “traditional way” when they have crises in their lives. Finally, this study intends to find out the extent to which inculturation has been implemented in African churches and the effect it has had on the people of God.

In order to find out why Christianity was once regarded as a foreign religion among African Christians and later came to be appreciated, the writer will make an effort to research on the past history of Christianity in Africa, through reading available materials. This will be accompanied by personal interviews with some elderly Christians whose past experiences will be of great help. There will be a close look at the catechesis that was given to the people as well as the liturgy that was used at that time. Through interviews, the researcher will find out the attitudes of the white missionaries to the African converts and their culture. All these facts will help to arrive at the conclusion whether the people were right or wrong to regard Christianity as a foreign religion and the Catholic Church as “Uka fada” or “Cheche yafata.” Based on the findings, the writer will make suggestions to future missionaries on what to do in order to avoid the same mistake of disregarding any culture of the people.

The second purpose of this study will be to find out why African Christians are good church goers when things are good but resort to traditional practices when they are in crises. An effort will be made to study some aspects of African culture. This is necessary because African cultural values are indispensable in the inculturation of Christianity in Africa. The writer will try to find out the type of evangelisation that took place in Africa, especially the way missionaries during their evangelisation treated African culture and tradition. This will help to determine whether the core of people’s lives has been touched by the gospel message or not. It is a fact that there are crises moments in the life of African Christians which involve marriage (lack of children) healing (sickness) and ancestor veneration (relationship with dead relatives).

Through this study, an effort will be made to find out those good aspects in the traditional practices and in the Independent Churches and recommend them for implementation in the Catholic Church in order to minimise these religious crises.

Finally, the study will try to find out the extent to which inculturation has been implemented and the effect it has on African Christians. An in-depth study of the Zairean mass will be made to see how it has helped the people of Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) to appreciate their faith and way of worship. The researcher will also try to see if the recommendations at the African synod are being implemented. He will also try to find out why the African Independent Churches are much more at home with the practical implementation of inculturation than the mission Churches. Some of the good aspects in these Independent Churches will be recommended for future implementation.

### **1.3 Importance of the Study.**

Many books I have read on inculturation were based on the needs of the Catholic Church. In order to read something about inculturation in the African Independent Churches or any of the Protestant churches, one has to go through different texts which deal with the concerns of these churches. This study will include some of the areas where inculturation has taken place in the Anglican, the Methodist and the Independent Churches in Zimbabwe. It will also try to clarify some previous misconceptions about inculturation. We will look at various definitions of inculturation and recommend one. This will help us to understand inculturation more and appreciate it.

The study will try to reveal the research discoveries of various inculturation practices for the benefit of the Christian Churches. A survey of how inculturation is practised in various churches will be carried out and the findings will be documented for future references. When these findings are documented, people will be able to consult them and make reference to them. In this way, the study will provide resource materials here in Zimbabwe where not much has been written on this topic. Based on the findings, we will make some recommendations for future implementation.

This research will be unique in the sense that it will attempt to represent the views on inculturation practices in both mission and some African Independent Churches. This means that the study will provide the reader with information about mission and independent churches in Zimbabwe. It is hoped that major Seminaries, mission and independent African churches will also benefit from the findings of the research. The writer hopes to share his experiences with seminarians through lectures and seminars. He will also give feed back to those church members who will be interviewed. Churches will also learn from this study how other churches are implementing inculturation in their own particular churches. The research will be ecumenically oriented, hence, it will encourage the real practice of ecumenism.

#### **1.4 Method.**

The method the researcher intends to adopt in collecting information/materials will consist of:

- i) Literature review.
- ii) Oral interviews.
- iii) Observation during liturgical/para liturgical celebrations
- iv) Personal experiences.

When the information has been gathered, the method of approach in writing will be mainly historical. The researcher will try to trace the various moments inculturation has been directly or indirectly referred to, encouraged and implemented in the history of the Church beginning from the Old and New Testament periods. An Effort will also be made to trace the various Church pronouncements and Popes' writings from the Second Vatican Council to the last African synod in 1994. Bate has this view in mind when he says, "We have already noted earlier, that the value of inculturation is that it deals with the question of history and lived community as local Church ..." (1993: 7). This historical dimension will help us to know where the Church placed emphasis and how it has implemented inculturation. This will help us in making our evaluation.

Our approach will be also evaluative in that we will try to evaluate how Christianity from North Africa till the present time has implemented inculturation, and whether it has been successful or not.

We will try to examine how those who profess Christianity behave in terms of their faith. That is, whether their actions match what they believe and profess. This will enlighten us on whether Christianity has an impact on them or not. This evaluative process is important to inculturation because it will enable us to make recommendations which, in turn, will help to promote inculturation in Africa, specifically in Zimbabwe. Finally, our method of approach will be critical. Based on the outcome of our historical and evaluative findings, we will be able to make a critical analysis of inculturation in Africa, past and present. We will try to have a close look at how inculturation is carried out in various mission churches and also in the African Independent churches. There will be no detailed comparative analysis, but we will try to find out positive areas that may be of great help to other churches and recommend them for future consideration and implementation.

### **1.5 Scope And Limitation.**

This study will be limited to African Churches, both mission and Independent Churches. Within the limited time and resources available, general references will be made to some African countries, but more examples will be drawn from Nigeria where the writer came from, and much more frequently from Zimbabwe, where he has been working as a missionary for twelve years. The study will look at Christianity in general, with an emphasis on some mission Churches and a few African Independent Churches.

The criteria for choosing these churches will be based on: i) the denomination to which the researcher belongs, ii) those other mission and independent Churches which have made outstanding landmarks socially, culturally and religiously in the society. However, this study has other limitations. It is often difficult to obtain the required materials for this study at the moment they are needed because they are not available in Zimbabwe. In a situation like this, much effort is required to obtain the materials and also a lot of patience.

Finally, very little has been written in Zimbabwe on inculturation. Consequently, the researcher cannot expect to obtain the in-depth information required here. Hence, much of the information relating to Zimbabwe will come through oral interviews, which in themselves are subject to human error. This is because human memory is prone to forgetfulness and sometimes lacks accuracy. All these points put together contribute to the limitations of the study.

## **1.6 Procedure**

The study will be made up of seven chapters. The first chapter will be a general introduction to the dissertation, looking at the problems in question, the aim and importance of the study, method and procedure to be followed. This general introduction will lead us to chapter two, where we will examine the meaning and various definitions of inculturation. In this chapter also, we will look at the process of inculturation. Chapter three will trace the origins and development of the concept of inculturation. Here, we will try to see the place of inculturation in both the Old and New Testaments. We will also examine the various ways the Church has, through her teachings and pronouncements, especially through the popes' writings, promoted inculturation. These expositions will help us to consider the importance of culture, which is the subject matter of chapter four. Chapter four will also try to explain the concept of culture in general and how it relates to Christianity and its mission Churches.

The implementation of inculturation by the various Churches will be studied in detail in chapters five and six. These chapters will help us to examine more closely how inculturation has been put into real practice in various Churches. This practical aspect of inculturation is rightly envisaged by Ndiokwere, who comments on it in these words: "The African love for music and rhythm, the endowment with very rich cultural heritage, with indigenous lyrics, idioms and proverbs are areas from which the Church can always draw to build up an enviable African Church of the Third Millennium" (1994: 11). The chapters will examine how African Churches are applying these African cultural values in their teaching and preaching of the gospel message.

In the same way, the chapters will try to find out how these African cultural values are reflected in the application and administration of Baptism, the Eucharist, Marriage, anointing of the sick/healing and burial. The way these African cultural values are applied by various Churches will be assessed, analysed and criticised in chapter seven, which is our last chapter.

These findings, analyses, and criticisms will enable us to make suggestions and recommendations for the growth of the Church and its evangelisation. The suggestions and recommendations will try to take into consideration the present situation in which Africa finds itself at the moment, so as to see how the Church could offer hope of renewal and a sense of belonging to these suffering children of God, whom he loves.

Finally there will be an over-all conclusion on the discussions in all the chapters as well as the conclusions that will be arrived at in the process of deliberation. We now proceed to chapter two, where we will discuss the key word “inculturation” and also examine some of the definitions on this subject matter.



## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **WHAT IS INCULTURATION?**

#### **2.1 Introduction.**

Different people have different ideas about inculturation. Consequently, there are as many definitions of inculturation as its different conceptions. There are a number of reasons why there are many definitions of inculturation. In the first place, inculturation is directly linked with culture, which has many definitions. For example, Shorter (1999:34) tells us that, "Kroeber and Kluckhohn list 164 definitions of culture." For this reason, it seems obvious that inculturation is also likely to have many definitions. Even though its "process in the course of history is not new" (IMBISA 1993:1), inculturation as a concept is relatively new. Here again, inculturation is bound to be flooded with many definitions.

In this chapter, we consider a few of these definitions from some individuals and organisations. We will try as much as possible to formulate a definition of inculturation as it relates to the African Church. We will also consider some concepts which are closely related to inculturation. It is equally important to have a brief look at the process of inculturation because there is need for every Christian to take part in it in order to have the gospel deeply rooted in African culture. Inculturation is of great concern to Africa as a whole as well as to any local church in the continent. In his article "Inculturation: newness and ongoing process", published in *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*, Crollius (1986:38) states that: "Since inculturation takes place not only in the formative period of a local Church but throughout its existence, it becomes evident that inculturation is the concern of every local church." Our discussion on the concept of inculturation will be much more meaningful if we try to examine how the word inculturation came to be used in theological works, seminars and other Church related documents.

#### **2.2 Origin and Meaning of "Inculturation".**

Before we go to the definitions, let us look at how the word inculturation has come to feature prominently in theological books, seminars and discussions in the recent past.

In his report on what happened at the African Synod of Bishops in 1994, McGarry (1995:52) points out that “the term inculturation seems to have been created by the anthropologist Melville Herskovits in the 1930s.” Here, McGarry does not elaborate much on the origin of this word, nor does he state categorically that it was Herskovits who created the word. However, the use of the word “inculturation” at this early time did not have a theological meaning. Rather it was used to designate “the cultural education of a person” (McGarry 1995:53). Dhavamony hints that by 1959, the word “inculturation” was already present in the discussions of the “29<sup>th</sup> semaine de Missiologie of Louvain” (1997:89).

The word came to be used when one of the participants at the discussion reflected on the “actualite du probleme de l’inculturation” and on the “lacunes et problemes de l’inculturation dans le context traditionnel et moderne” (Dhavamony 1997:89). The date given here is a bit earlier than the date given by authors like Shorter, Mbachu and Pinto, all of whom make reference to Joseph Masson, a Jesuit priest and professor at the Gregorian University. These three authors agree that Masson wrote in 1962. Shorter quotes the following words representing part of Masson’s view: “Today there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms” (1997:10).

In 1973 a protestant missionary, G. L. Barney used the term “inculturation as his proposal on how to intermarry faith and culture” (Mbachu 1995:36). 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. The statement which contains other important terms closely connected to inculturation reads in part: “The local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated” (Pinto 1985:12). Between December 1974 and April 1975, the Society of Jesus spent much of their 32<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in Rome on the theme of inculturation. Illustrating how the word inculturation was considered important and how it was used more frequently by the Jesuits at this time, Mbachu has this to say: “One sees the frequent use of the term in the fourth, fifth and sixth decrees of the congregation. The fifth decree itself was devoted to the theme of promoting the work of inculturation of faith and Christian Life” (1995:3).

Tracing still the development of the appearance of this word, Mbachu (1995:36) also points out that in 1975 a Dominican priest, Yves Congar, “wrote that inculturation was coined in Japan as a modification for acculturation.” According to the synod on catechesis in October 1997, Arrupe, the former Superior General of the Jesuits, stressed the importance of inculturation in these words: “Inculturation is a solution to the problem of the real influence of faith on culture. The absence of inculturation is one of the main obstacles to evangelisation” (Dhavamony 1997:91). Hence the word “inculturation” started to be talked about at various levels to show its importance. It was therefore deemed necessary to have seminars based specifically on this word so that ideas about it would not be lost. According to Shorter (1997:10), “As a consequence of these developments, seminars on inculturation were held at the Gregorian University (1977-78), Jerusalem (1981) and Yogyakarta (1983).” Finally, the word “inculturation” made its first appearance in a papal document on April 26, 1979 in the address of Pope John Paul II to “the members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission gathered in Rome to study the subject of cultural integration and revelation” (Mbachu 1995:37). From 1980 onwards, inculturation was frequently used by Pope John Paul II in his pastoral visits especially in Africa.

### **2.3 Inculturation and Related concepts.**

What we have traced so far is the historical appearances of the word “inculturation” in theological documents and seminars as related to the Church. We will now try to consider inculturation in relation to other terms which have been used or suggested to convey a similar meaning. We will also examine the importance of inculturation in the life of the Church. Many attempts have been made to define inculturation, and these attempts have brought about many more definitions and associations. At present, no one definition has been generally adopted as the exact and most embracing. The reason for this is that inculturation, in the context it is used now, is relatively new. It is regarded as new because there is a change in the concept of culture. In his article “on Inculturation”, Crollius explains this change in the concept of culture as follows:

First of all, there is a change in the concept of culture, as is evident when we compare present-day discussions on the relation between Church and culture with studies made in the first half of this century. Instead of a more deductive, philosophical concept of culture, we now often encounter a more descriptive notion of it, which takes into account the investigation of cultural anthropology, sociology and ethnology (1986:43).

This implies that prior to the Vatican II Council, there was only one notion of culture in the Catholic Church, that is, universal culture. This universal culture was identified with western culture. When culture was viewed as having a historical and social aspect which often takes on a sociological and ethnological sense, then the whole concept of culture changed. Hence, a Vatican II document (*Gaudium Et Spes* 1966:259) states: "It is in this sense that we speak of a plurality of cultures." Thus we can now say that it is only recently that a greater awareness of the pluriformity of cultures and genuine respect for these various cultures has emerged in the Church. It is on this understanding that we can now talk of "African Culture." In an effort to define inculturation, some other terms emerged which were used to express as closely as possible the relationship between the Gospel and culture.

These terms include: adaptation, accommodation, indigenisation, contextualisation, enculturation, acculturation and incarnation. Both Crollius and Pinto agree that adaptation was most widely used in the past. Crollius considers adaptation and accommodation as identical. Hence he writes: "Both terms, however, were felt as more expressive of an extrinsic contact between the Christian message and a given culture" (1986:32-33). Even though adaptation in particular has been the basic principle of missionary activities and is also highlighted in the Vatican II document, it has been seen as an imposition from outside. This is because, in the words of IMBISA (Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa), "It is a method which does not take local culture seriously and a subtle way of keeping Western values and attitudes and trying to perpetuate them" (1993:46).

Indigenisation 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. Indigenisation was not considered appropriate because "its cognates have an all restricted meaning" (Crollius 1986:33). Contextualisation, on the other hand, is understood as a weaving together of the gospel with every particular situation. Here, this term does not speak precisely about culture but about contexts and situations into which the gospel could be inculturated. Pinto is of the opinion that contextualisation is a term "more often used by the Protestants" (1985:10). According to Pinto (1985:10), "contextualisation is basically to live and act in a particular situation in which a Christian community exists."

The terms that are much more closely connected to inculturation are: **enculturation, acculturation and incarnation.**

**a) Enculturation:**

Enculturation is a sociological concept which has been used “analogously” by theologians for the theological notion of inculturation. For a better distinction, Shorter suggests that “enculturation should be for the sociological context” while “inculturation be kept for theological context.” According to Shorter (1997:5), “Enculturation refers to the cultural learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his or her culture.” In the literal sense of it, it means that the individual teaches himself or herself through the process of adaptive learning of the rules given by the society. For example, through the process of enculturation, the grammar of a language is acquired unconsciously by the individual member of the society. Its analogy with inculturation is explained by Shorter in these words: “It consists in the parallel between the insertion of an individual into his or her own culture and the insertion of the Christian faith into a culture where Christians were not previously present” (1997:6). It is important to point out here that inculturation does not limit itself to the first insertion of faith into a culture.

**b) Acculturation.**

By acculturation we mean “the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures” (Shorter 1997:7). In other words, the word denotes the contact between cultures which brings about changes. This encounter between cultures is a collective process which is largely beyond the scope of individual human choice. Since culture is dynamic, not static, acculturation can be helpful because, when one culture encounters another culture in a mutual relationship and not on the basis of domination, both cultures are enriched. Hence, I consider as relevant Shorter’s recommendation when he says: “Acculturation, the communication between cultures on a footing of mutual respect and tolerance, is a necessary condition of Catholicism, of a Church that claims to be universal” (1997:8).

On the other hand, Pinto's fear has to be considered in order to avoid one culture dominating another. Pinto's fear is in that "acculturation implies an element of aggressiveness and does not convey the aspects of dialogue and mutual fusion" (1985:10). This is a situation which must be avoided because no culture is more superior to another.

c) Incarnation.

"The most directly theological word to express the meaning of inculturation is incarnation" (Schineller 1990:20). Dhavamony calls incarnation the "archetype of the inculturation of the gospel" (1997:95). This means that incarnation is the original and ideal model of inculturation. The origin of the word "incarnation" is John 1:14, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." This, therefore, refers to the entire Christ-event. That is, the coming, birth, growth, daily life and struggle, teaching, healing, celebrating, suffering, dying and rising of Jesus Christ. In other words, we can say that Jesus was born, lived and died in a particular culture. Jesus was not only born into this culture, but he also learnt the language and customs of his people through which he expressed the truth and love of God to his followers. Schineller describes this process: "He did not consciously indigenise or inculturate, but instinctively took part fully in the culture he was born into, and then critically affirmed and challenged that culture in the light of the Spirit" (1990:20).

The basic principle, therefore, is that as Jesus incarnated himself firmly in the Jewish culture, in the same way the Church, which is the body of Christ, must incarnate the gospel of Christ in the cultures of the peoples. One document of Vatican II emphasised this point in these words:

If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived (*Ad Gentes*, No. 1).

In order to make sure that the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the good news for humanity is deeply rooted in the cultures of the people, Schineller sees inculturation as "an obligation not an option" (1990:21). Even at this, Pinto cautions that the use of incarnation to signify inculturation could be questioned because, "there was only one incarnation of God the son, which took place in a given culture of Palestine Judaism in the person of Jesus" (1985:10).

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. 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. We can now go to the proper definition of inculturation.

#### **2. 4 Definitions and Further Elaboration on the Concept of Inculturation.**

We do not intend to consider all the definitions put forward so far on inculturation. The few definitions chosen here are the ones which will be referred to more often in our discussions in the course of this dissertation. I would like to begin these definitions with Waliggo, who says:

Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples 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 (1986:12).

This definition tries to emphasise the importance of an honest effort which will bring about a mutual interaction between the message of Christ, that is the Good News of salvation, and the culture of the people. Here, the stress is on the honest effort by the carriers of the Good News, who must convincingly bring Christ’s message to the people so that the people will understand this message as it relates to them in their own culture, not in the culture of the missionary who brings the Good News. It also highlights the importance of a well grounded catechesis which will be integrated into the thought-patterns of the people.

The reason for this is to bring about real change when the people have come in contact with the Good News of Christ. The effort to make the people understand the message will involve the people through their culture. This, therefore, will not leave room for the imposition of another culture on the people. This process calls for a situation whereby the missionary tries to understand the people and their culture and then helps them to understand the message of the gospel in their own culture.

This understanding will result in Christianity taking deep root in the culture of the people. Both the people who have understood the message and the missionary who brought the gospel message will feel at home, sharing the message of Christ as equal partners in the Lord's vineyard. This, in a way, involves a long process, patience, trust and commitment on both those bringing the Good News and those receiving the message. Waliggo tries to situate this idea in the context of Africa by saying: "Inculturation, therefore, is that movement which aims at making Christianity permanent in Africa by making it a people's religion and a way of life which no enemy or hostility can ever succeed in supplanting or weakening" (1986:13). These ideas are relevant to this dissertation because they will help to find out whether the missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa considered African culture as important in their missionary activities. They will also help us to examine how we can use inculturation to make Christianity permanent in Africa. We will consider these points in our subsequent chapters.

Let us now consider the definitions of Roest Crollius and Pedro Arrupe. According to Crollius (1986:43),

Inculturation of the church is the 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 force 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 Church universal.

In this definition, I would like to put my stress first on the "integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of the people." In the first place, Crollius does not specify what this Christian experience involves. However, we may assume that it involves the whole life experience of the people. That is, the way they worship, marry, interact with one another, their general habitation, the way they rejoice when they have good fortunes like births and how they mourn when they have misfortunes like deaths. All these are involved in this Christian experience of the local Church. The local Church here is important because the localisation makes a great difference. For example, how our Christians here in Zimbabwe mourn their dead will not be the exact way those in Ireland mourn theirs.



The message of Christ, therefore, must address the people as they are in their own place and culture. This experience is important because it is the force that will not only motivate the people, but also will bring them to conviction and commitment.

The second stress on Crollius' definition is on the sentence which says, "to create a new unity and communion not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal." This is good foresight because some have opposed inculturation on the ground that it will bring divisions in the Church and then create an unhealthy imbalance between the local church and the universal Church. This foresight, therefore, forestalls the fear of these people by assuring them that inculturation will bring about the expected unity between the local Church and the universal Church. Thus, there is unity and also dynamism in inculturation. This dynamism is also present in Arrupe's definition:

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and 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 (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation ( See Pinto 1985:13).

In his footnote, Pinto explains the origin of this definition by stating that it was contained in "Father General's letter on inculturation to the whole Society of Jesus, dated 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1978" (1985:13). Arrupe's definition has a good link with the incarnation of Jesus himself, who became one of his own people in all things except sin, in order to redeem them. In the same way, the Christian message has to be incarnated, that is, it has to be rooted in a particular culture of the people. The Christian message here means the total revelation of God to the people which culminates in the person of Jesus Christ. Pinto (1985:13), tells us that revelation is "the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man, which is made clear to us in Christ..." As Christ became one with his people so as to redeem them, this Christian message will also take root in the culture of the people and their life so as to bring about a complete transformation and change resulting in new creation. This transforming power in Christ is visible in 2 Cor.5:17 which says, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away." The analogy between inculturation and incarnation is summed up here:

“Thus, in the imitation of the plan of incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the apostles, take to themselves in wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance” (IMBISA 1993:46). Inculturation therefore is a dynamic and an ongoing process.

These definitions will remain beautiful theories on paper if we Africans do not make use of the information we receive from them: They will be useful to us when we apply them in our everyday life as African Christians, thereby making Christianity in all aspects our own, and truly African. Ndiokwere (1994b:33) has a vision of such a Christian Church when he says: “It must be attractive, lively, lasting and authentic.” When it becomes attractive, other cultures and peoples will be attracted to it and copy from Africans. By so doing, it will no longer be an exclusive practice in Africa. Instead, it becomes universal, thereby enriching the universal Church.

The African Synod Fathers, that is, the Bishops who attended the 1994 African Synod, did not define inculturation. Instead, they described it as: “A marriage of professed faith and concrete life, harmony between faith and culture” (McGarry 1995:33). This short description tried to emphasise the importance of professed faith and concrete life. This means that this faith must be active and alive, not just a nominal thing which may not be active. It is this active, professed faith and concrete life that will be harmonised with culture. Here, the process of this harmonisation was not given, nor was the result mentioned. However, it is presumed that faith comes through hearing the word of God. Faith here, according to Pinto, is, “the response of man to the revelation of God. It is response to a gift from God: answer to a word” (1985:14). It is this word of God deeply rooted in the culture of the people that brought about this professed faith. When this professed faith harmonises with African culture, for example, the result will be an authentic African Christian in a truly African church. Here again, inculturation is an on going process.

From all these definitions and explanations, we can now give our own definition of inculturation as it relates to Africa, to which we will be referring in our subsequent chapters.

Inculturation refers to the honest effort made by Africans to deepen their faith—already received and rooted in African culture—in Christ, their master and leader, in order to become well convinced and committed African Christians in a truly authentic African Church which will contribute to the experience of the universal Church. I tend, therefore, to agree with the Synod Fathers, who described inculturation as “a marriage of professed faith and concrete life, harmony between faith and culture” (McGarry 1995:53-4). In this definition, we are not talking of the first insertion of the Christian message into a non-Christian culture. The Christian message has been preached and also received. We are talking of a situation whereby the interaction between the Christian message and the African culture will be well integrated and interwoven, which Pope John Paul II described as, “the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures” (*The Church in Africa* 1995:45).

## **2. 5 Process of Inculturation.**

Before we look at the process of inculturation, we need to convince ourselves that inculturation is important and necessary to the African Church. In the first place, the Bishops of IMBISA are convinced that inculturation is important to Africa because “African people desire the Gospel to immerse itself in the whole cultural world of Africa to the extent that one could speak of an African Christianity. We want Christ to become a full-time son of Africa...” (1993:17). 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 not as a foreign religion.

Inculturation will also help the people of Africa to avoid what McGarry calls two worlds, For McGarry, “Many African Christians find themselves living between two worlds, namely the world of Christian beliefs and values and the world of African traditions, where they live and express their inner life more deeply” (1995:55). Since the Christian message has not fully been integrated into the African culture and values, inculturation is therefore a necessity. *Instrumentum Laboris* (1993:44), summarised this view in these words: “Inculturation is looked upon by the great majority of the particular Churches in Africa as a task that is urgent, necessary and even a priority.”

Thus, inculturation is both important and necessary because we Africans want to be truly African Christians in a truly African Church. In order for inculturation to achieve this important and necessary function, it has to involve every aspect of African life. It is not to be limited to the area of liturgy only.

On the religious aspect, Schineller (1990:24) states:

The way theology is studied and written about, the way children are taught rudiments of the faith, the way the parish council is structured, the way the diocese is organised, the architecture of Churches, the shape and form of prayers—all of these areas fall under the scope of inculturation.

However, we must admit that life is not all about religious activities. Therefore, inculturation has to go beyond these religious activities. On this basis, Pinto's views are very important for consideration. According to Pinto (1985:17),

Every culture and the total culture, comes within the scope of inculturation. It includes the socio-religious traditions of the people, the linguistic and socio-cultural structures, the concrete life situations, every sphere of personal and family life, social and civic activities, economic and political systems... It refers to the domain of art, architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration, music, dance, drama etc.

Here, two things emerge. In the first place, we cannot talk about inculturation without culture. Hence Mbachu says, "culture is the root word for inculturation" (1995:33).

The second thing is that a good understanding of the culture of a place is necessary for effective inculturation. Briefly stated: "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society" (see Mbachu 1995:34). With the views from Schineller and Pinto, we can say that the scope of inculturation is embracing. Since we have established the point that inculturation is important and necessary and also that it is embracing, it follows then that every Christian in Africa is expected to take part in the implementation of inculturation. This idea is well expressed in *Instrumentum Laboris* (1993:49) in these words:

The work of inculturation involves the entire Church community because it is the whole Church that must be missionary. Therefore it must never be thought that inculturation falls under the responsibility of foreign missionaries or a handful of experts. It is the responsibility of a whole believing community.

It is obvious that when inculturation is left only to the foreign missionaries, it may be a superficial attempt which may not go deep down to the root of people's culture. This is because it is the people themselves who know their culture in and out. This is not exactly the same knowledge which a foreigner has and which he or she may have acquired through an interpretation. Again, foreign missionaries may go back to their countries of origin, leaving inculturation to die a natural death. On the other hand, if inculturation is left in the hands of a few experts, the whole programme may end up in lecture rooms or in the publication of voluminous theses and expensive books which the ordinary people will never read throughout their life.

Therefore, the joint efforts of foreign missionaries, a few experts and the whole people of God in their rural areas are needed for the implementation of inculturation. This could be carried out through small Christian communities. It is important to state here that our discussion so far has been centred on the second stage of inculturation, whereby the Christian message has been introduced to Africa but the Christian faith is yet to be deeply rooted. Pinto describes this stage in these words: "But at the second stage, as the local community grows in number with a sufficient number of clergy, and since the principal agent of inculturation is the local Church itself, inculturation at a deeper level would follow" (1985:19). The first stage, on the other hand, would refer to the early period of attempts by the Western missionaries to come in contact with African culture for the first time. In most cases at this stage, the Christian message is brought into a particular culture by a missionary who belongs to another culture.

In the case of Zimbabwe for example, the early missionaries who arrived here in 1897, were of different nationalities. Rea stated this in his account on "The Pioneer Missionaries" in Zimbabwe, where he wrote:

To man the mission the Jesuit General, Fr. Peter Beckx, relied on the society of Jesus as a whole, rather than on any particular province, and so these missionary pioneers were an international group. Among the eleven were four Belgians, including Depelchin, two Germans, two Englishmen, two Italians and little Brother Theodora Nigg from Liechtenstein (1979:2).

In the ensuing process of culture-contact or acculturation as we have stated earlier, the local people and the missionaries assimilate values from each other's culture. It is important to point out here that some people have a misconception of inculturation, and so they tend to oppose the programme. Waliggo mentions some of the reasons for this opposition:

They feel inculturation aims at creating a different type of Christianity, a faulty Christianity. They fear the movement would dismantle the central doctrine of our faith and lower the Christian standards established at such a high cost of life 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... (1986:13).

These oppositions are necessary because they will help to challenge inculturation so that it will genuinely remain a programme which will help us to be truly African Christians in a truly African Church without losing sight of the universal Church.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Our discussion in this chapter started with an important question. "What is Inculturation?" This question is important because it has helped us to look at inculturation in different ways, they include: the meaning of inculturation, the concepts that are related to inculturation, the process of inculturation and so on. In our attempt to answer the question, we have seen that it is necessary to integrate the gospel into the culture. That is, to incarnate the gospel in African culture. In other words, we are saying that there is need to have an authentic African Christianity. This does not mean that an authentic African Christianity has nothing in common with the universal church. The definitions we considered and the one we formulated, testify that an inculturated African Church has a wealth of experience to contribute to the universal church, whereby inculturation becomes, in the words of Crollius, "an enrichment of the Church universal" (1986:43).

The basic book of life for Christians is the Bible. As Christians, therefore, it is important for us to go to the bible for direction, instruction and correction in every aspect of human life. This is because "the Bible ..., remains the first and powerful source and principle of any inculturation" (Waliggo 1986:20). Our discussion in the next chapter will help us to see the various ways inculturation directly or indirectly appeared in the Bible and in the official Church pronouncements, especially since the Second Vatican Council.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF INCULTURATION.**

#### **3. 1 Introduction**

The Christian church, as we have it today in Africa, did not just come to us from the air. It has witnessed a long history through which it passed from one culture to another till it came to us. This long history can be traced back to the Old Testament period, which has a history of a long faith experience of the people of God at different times and in different cultural milieus. In the New Testament also, we are presented with Jesus of Nazareth, who as a man lived in the context of Jewish tradition and culture. Furthermore, the early Christian community developed in the Jewish as well as the Greek cultures. The chronology of how this Christian faith came to be lived and practised in different cultures and circumstances is well highlighted by Joseph Prasad Pinto (1985:20-21) in these words:

Christian faith originated in the East, moved to the West and found success in the early imperial times in Europe. Wherever the Christian faith was lived, it took particular cultural forms during the early centuries with natural spontaneity... The Christian faith having found great success in the Western Latin culture with an admirable sum total of expressions, became too narrowly, too tightly bound up with it. The problem of inculturation today is not with regard to faith and its contents as such, but with regard to the imposition of the cultural form it has acquired during the course of history, upon people who have different cultures.

The Christian faith as we have it today falls well in the above description of Pinto. Christianity as it were, has been an aspect of European culture imposed on the Africans by white European missionaries. The question, therefore, is: will Christianity continue to be a foreign religion in Africa? Simply put, what must Africa do in order to have a truly African Christianity? This is our point of departure in this dissertation. However, before we go into this essential point, we will try to concentrate in this chapter on the various ways in which inculturation has occurred in both the Old and the New Testaments, as well as on its origin and meanings in the course of the history of the Church. It is important at this early stage, to point out that the Church here, as the people of God and a community of believers in the Christian message, refers to the universal Church which the Western missionaries brought to us. Thus, the Church in Africa is one of the particular manifestations of the universal Church. It is this Church in Africa which everyone hopes will become a truly African Christian Church through inculturation. Waliggo supports this view in these words:

The permanence of Christianity will stand or fall on the question whether it has become truly African: whether Africans have made Christian ideas part of their own thinking, whether Africans feel that the Christian vision of life fulfills their own needs, whether the Christian world view has become part of truly African aspirations (1986:12).

These ideas are a real challenge which inculturation must address adequately. We intend to proceed first by examining the various ways inculturation occurred in the Bible.

### **3. 2 Inculturation In The Old Testament.**

The term “inculturation” may be said to be new but its practice is not new. The practice of inculturation can be traced through the formation of the people of Israel from a pagan background to its identity as the “chosen people” in the Old Testament. According to Pinto (1985:34), “Inculturation is as old as the scriptures themselves.” Pinto’s explanation for this assumption that inculturation is as old as the scriptures themselves, is that: “ A careful study of the Old Testament themes such as creation, covenant, decalogue, sacrifices, etc, were also themes of the contemporary cultures ” (1985:34). A closer examination of these themes may reveal some aspects of inculturation. All the same, we do not intend to discuss them in detail. We are much more concerned with events that have concrete signs of inculturation in the Old testament.

More visible traces of inculturation could be found in what Shorter calls “The Canaanite Inculturation” (1997:109). Between 1200-921 BC, the Israelites were settled in Canaan. Thus, Israel had to contend with the various forms of Canaanite culture which they encountered in the “promised land”. When Israel came in contact with these various forms of Canaanite culture, it re-interpreted this culture in the light of its own experience. Shorter describes one such case as follows:

Israel’s understanding of life after death differs little from the opinions reflected in the archives of Ugarit. However, unlike the people of Ugarit who practised a cult of the dead, Israel strongly opposed such rites. Nevertheless, Canaanite mourning ceremonies continued in Israel without attracting a prophetic condemnation (1997:109).

Ugarit, McKenzie (1966:907) tells us, is “an ancient city of the coast of Syria at the site of the modern Ras Shamra, 8 miles North of Latakia.” Its religion is a natural religion whose gods and goddesses are identified with natural forces, in particular the forces of fertility. There is a marked difference between Ugarit religion and the religion of Israel. Hence the rejection of Ugarit’s cult of the dead.



On another note, the Canaanites had practised what the Jews called “superstitions” and also performed fertility rites for better crops. The Hebrews did not reject the meanings and values underlying the alleged “superstitions,” but updated and re-interpreted the practice. Pinto (1985:37) explains this re-interpretation in this way: “Now stress was laid on the gift of the land by Yahweh and that fertility comes solely from him...” Furthermore, the Israelites re-interpreted three Canaanite agricultural feasts, namely: the feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast of the first fruits and the feast of Ingathering when the harvest is completed. The feast of Unleavened Bread was later “subordinated to the memorial of the Exodus and became the Passover” (Shorter 1997:110). The feast of first fruits became the feast of Weeks that recalled “the enjoyment of the land of promise” (Shorter 1997:110). The feast of Ingathering became the feast of Books or Tabernacles. The feast of Tabernacles was a commemoration of how the Israelites were living in tents during their journey from Egypt to the promised land.

Another area of inculturation among the Israelites was in the field of architecture. For example, the temple built by Solomon was designed to resemble the temples of Syro-Phoenicia, especially the temple of Tell Tainat in Syria. Solomon’s temple was highly decorated to the extent that “the wealth of the temple decorations and furnishings made it a target for enemy plunderers” (Fleming 1990:430). These decorations resembled those of Canaanite culture. According to Shorter (1997:110), “The decorations, palm tree and cherubim; the utensils, such as the bronze serpent attributed to Moses; the sacrificial animals and even the various types of sacrifice themselves; all these things have almost exact parallels in the religious culture of Canaan.” It is evident therefore that while the Israelites were settled in Canaan, they came in contact with both the culture and religion of the Canaanite. Pinto (1985:38) summarises this contact of the Israelites with the Canaanite religion and culture in this way:

Some aspects of Canaanite religious practices they accepted wholesale, some they rejected totally, and to some they gave new meaning, within the framework of the Yawistic religion. For example, when an unidentified murder took place among the Hebrews, the subsequent reconciliation rite was fully taken over from an existing reconciliation rite in Canaan. Some superstitious practices are accepted as social practices. Some other practices, such as the wearing of tassels, the leaving of ears of corn or bunches of the grapes at the harvest, the muzzling of the ox, the symbol of fertility and so on are prohibited. Other Canaanite practices such as human sacrifice were rejected as totally abominable.

There was, therefore, a close relationship between Israel and Canaan, resulting in mutual co-existence. This mutual co-existence is very important in the implementation of inculturation. Norbert and Norbert (1994:4) rightly describe this relationship:

The relationship between Israel and Canaan is a special instance of the relationship between Israel and its neighbouring cultures. From a historical perspective these two entities were very closely connected. The greater part of the Israelite population had always lived in the land and was therefore of Canaanite origin, speaking the language of that country (cf Ezek. 16:3, Gen. 10: 15f, Isa 19:18), though its way of life and culture must have been more markedly agricultural...

In areas of politics and government, we can also see some traces of inculturation among the Israelites. This idea is well expressed in the study document of the Inter-regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) which states that:

Basically, the problem was how the monarchy could fit in with a theocracy (1 Sam. 8:1-10:27). When Israel had adopted the monarchy, it proved to be an invaluable vehicle for expressing the greatness of God as we read especially in the Psalms. God is now conceived as a King that needs a palace...(1993:5).

The Bishops are trying to say that the system of monarchy was foreign to the Jews, who practised theocracy. When the Jews eventually adopted the system of monarchy, they liked it and continued practising it. Theocracy is a system of government by priests and prophets, whereby the laws of the state are accepted to be the laws of God. Hence, God is the Ruler.

Psalm 29, for example, is one of those psalms which celebrate the royalty of God. While Shorter (1997:109) attributes Psalm 29 to one of those psalms borrowed from "Canaanite hymns...", Fuller (1969:451) states that: "It would be unwise to insist that this Ps. 29 is a borrowing from a Canaanite source, even if verbal parallels are found with Ugarit and verse 11 is recognised as purely Israelite..." Whatever is the correct assumption in this particular case, the fact remains that there are traces of inculturation in the Old Testament narratives. We may not see inculturation in the Old testament as we know it now, but its applications are obvious.

Our discussion so far on the traces of inculturation can be summarised by the statement made by the Congregation For Divine Worship and the discipline of the Sacraments, which reads in full:

The people of Israel throughout its history preserved the certain knowledge that it was the chosen people of God, the witness of his action and love in the midst of the nations. It took from neighbouring peoples certain forms of worship, but its faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob subjected these borrowings to profound modifications, principally changes of significance, but also often changes in the form, as it incorporated these elements into its religious practice, in order to celebrate the memory of God's wonderful deeds in its history (1994:9).

In their contact with other nations, the Jews became aware of the various ways these people worshipped. When the Jews accepted some of these forms of worship and adopted them, they modified them to suit the way they worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the only God the Jews felt called to worship in spirit and in truth.

What we have done so far is to see whether there are any traces of inculturation in the Old Testament. The examples we have cited so far are evidence that the Israelites, while conscious of their state as the chosen people of God, grew and developed as a nation by integrating themselves into the culture of the Canaanites after purifying the culture borrowed from the Canaanites. This is what inculturation is meant to do in every circumstance especially here in Africa.

### **3.3 Inculturation In The New Testament.**

Our discussion on inculturation in the New Testament must always begin with Jesus, because he became man and lived among us. This is what we call the incarnation. For Schineller (1990:28), "inculturation must continually return to the incarnation of Jesus Christ for its paradigm...". Jesus' relationship with his own people and their culture was well described by both Shorter and the Congregation For Divine Worship. According to the latter (1994:10), "On coming to the earth, the son of God, 'born of a woman, born under the law' (Gal.4:4), associated himself with social and cultural conditions of the people of the Alliance with whom he lived and prayed." Describing the historical Jesus, Shorter (1997:119) states: "The earthly Jesus was enculturated in the culturally heterogeneous corner of Palestine known as Galilee. Galilee was particularly influenced by Graeco--Roman culture."

Jesus grew up in Nazareth. Thus, as a Jewish child, he was immersed in his culture, observing the law and customs of his time. On reaching adulthood, Jesus strongly challenged certain aspects of the culture which he inherited. He spoke out strongly against an overly narrow and legalistic interpretation of the law. On the question of the Sabbath, for example, Jesus permitted any good work done out of love on a Sabbath in order to help a fellow human being. Hence Jesus declared in Mark 2:27, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This means that the Sabbath was made to serve the interests of the people, not to be a burden to them. In another occasion, Jesus touched a leper, which was forbidden by Jewish law. He also opposed the severe punishment which was legally due to a woman taken in adultery.

However, the story of Jesus was not only about the opposition and defiance of the Jewish law and tradition. He also approved such laws and customs as circumcision, synagogue worship and the temple tax etc. By accepting some of the laws and traditions of his people and rejecting others, Jesus not only challenged these laws and traditions but also purified them. This is also what inculturation is expected to do. That is, through inculturation, some African cultural values, for example, are purified and integrated into Christianity. Jesus' work on earth did not just end with the transformation of the Jewish cultural law which brought him stiff opposition from the elders, the chief priests and the leaders of the Jews, but he also proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand. As Jesus was able to proclaim the kingdom of God in the midst of opposition from his contemporaries, the disciples of Jesus would also have the same experience. Such authentic witness brings success as we can see in the life of Paul.

Schineller is specific in his own description, saying: "Paul's mission brought great success, a large number of Gentile conversions" (1990:30). On the other hand, this missionary success which brought about the expansion and growth of the Christian community also led to the problem of the relationship between Gentiles and Jewish Christians. This fact is well explained by Crollius when he says: "The entry of the pagans into the Church posed a problem that divided the Church for years. To become a Christian must one, first of all, become a Jew by undergoing circumcision and accepting the Jewish law with all its juridical and ritual regulations?" (1987b:9).

The idea of circumcising non-Jewish converts was an inculturation problem that faced the early Church, and which brought about the council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 15. It was to solve this problem that a council assembled in Jerusalem in AD 49. In so far as some members of the early Christian community were Pharisees who were known for their strict observance of the law, then, it became obvious that they must insist on the observance of the Jewish law, especially the law of circumcision. According to Fleming (1990:68), “circumcision symbolised the permanence of God’s covenant with his people...” Thus, Abraham was the first person God commanded to be circumcised.

Circumcision was usually carried out when a male child was eight days old as specified in Genesis 17:12, Leviticus 12:13, and as was practised in Luke 1:59, 2:21 and Phillipians 3:5. From these passages, we can see that Abraham in the Old Testament, John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul in the New Testament were all circumcised. Thus, circumcision was important to the Jews because, on that day of circumcision, a name was given to the child. It was also a sign of identification with the membership of the people of Israel, without which a male child would not partake of the Passover. Though circumcision was important to the Jews, were they right to impose it on the Gentile Christians? (Putting the question simply we can say, is it right to make circumcision a necessary condition for Gentile Christians to be saved?) The emphasis should be on Jesus alone who saves and not on the law of circumcision. Peter demonstrated in many ways that “only in the name of Jesus can one be forgiven and saved” (Acts 4:12, 10:43). The issue of circumcision was indeed a serious problem for the early Christians. Schineller describes how this problem was resolved at the council of Jerusalem in these words:

The Judaizers held that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Paul and his followers maintained that faith in Jesus Christ and baptism in his name, was the way to salvation (see Act 15). Peter’s position which agreed with Paul’s, prevailed, and it was decided not to lay extra burdens on Gentile converts (1990:30).

The council, therefore, affirmed that the centre of the gospel is Jesus Christ and faith in his name, not the observance of the Jewish law of circumcision. This decision helped to solve the problem which could have divided the early Church.

The problem that faced the early Church at that time is similar to the problem that faces us here in Africa today. In our own case, the European missionaries, like their early Jewish Christian counterparts, imposed their own culture on the Africans. In other words, the European culture was made synonymous with Christianity. That is, to accept Christianity was to accept the European culture. The primary lesson from the decision reached at the council of Jerusalem is a clear reminder to the Church today that not all the customs and traditions of the European Church must be observed by Christians from non-European Churches. This does not mean that the gospel of Jesus Christ will be watered down, as some who oppose inculturation tend to think. The central message of faith in Christ must be upheld and maintained. This is what is expected of both circumcised and un-circumcised, Europeans and Africans alike. The Congregation for Divine worship states this point clearly in these words: "Faith in Christ offers to all nations the possibility of being beneficiaries of the promise and of sharing in the heritage of the people of the covenant (cf Eph. 3:6), without renouncing their culture" (1994:11). Convinced of this fact that faith in Christ and baptism in his name offer all believers salvation, the document for Divine worship concludes by saying: "thus from the beginning, the Church did not demand of converts who were un-circumcised anything beyond what was necessary according to the decision of the apostolic assembly of Jerusalem" (1994:11).

We are told that the Gentile Christians were happy when they heard that they were not to be first Jews before becoming Christians. In the same way, Africans will always be happy to be African Christians, not African-European Christians. This is an important message for us if inculturation is to be meaningful in Africa. Another place in the New Testament that deserves mentioning is Paul's speech at Areopagus in Acts 17: 22-31: "Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'to an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as an unknown, this I proclaim to you..." Referring to this very passage, Shorter has this to say: "Paul's speech before the council of Areopagus is sometimes cited as evidence of inculturation in the New Testament. It is, in fact the only recorded attempt by Paul to combat paganism through the use of secular wisdom" (1997:127).

However, Shorter does not indicate the evidence why Paul's speech in Areopagus was considered a process leading to inculturation. The approach Paul adopted was commendable because he did not begin by condemning the people and their religion, nor did he ask them to destroy their altars. Instead, he commended them for being religious people, even though they were worshipping an unknown God. Shorter continues:

The speech to the Athenians of Areopagus was far from being an essay in inculturation, and Paul showed no inclination to invite response to the Gospel from Greek culture. The most that can be said about the speech, and about Paul's missionary activity in general, is that it was an instance of acculturation, a preliminary missionary encounter leading to a later and more profound inter-cultural dialogue (1997:127).

Acculturation, as we have stated before, is the encounter between one culture and another or, simply put, an encounter between cultures. While Shorter calls this speech one of acculturation, which later will lead to a more profound inter-cultural dialogue, Crollius (1987b:17) says, "the Athenian discourse is a good example of transcultural evangelisation." Whether Shorter calls the speech in Areopagus one about acculturation or Crollius calls it one about transcultural evangelisation, the fact remains that Paul was tolerant to the culture of the people and also to their ignorance. He said, "while God was overlooked in times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). When Paul saw the inscription and the altar erected, he did not destroy them. He used them as his starting point in order to purify them later. This, in a way, encourages inculturation. Paul also recognised some of the Greek poets by adopting some patterns of their speech. For example, Crollius (1987b:17) points out Paul's reference to the Greek poet Epimenides in this statement. "In him we live and move and have our being, echoes the poet Epimenides of Knossos." In the same way, Crollius (1987b:17) attributes the words, "for we too are his offspring", to a quotation made by the "stoic poet Aratus." Here, Paul was able to adopt what he considered useful from the non-Christian Greeks.

Inculturation requires tolerance, patience and humility. I think Paul demonstrated these qualities in his encounter with the people of Areopagus and their culture. In Corinth, Paul said, "I have become all things to all people..." (1 Cor. 9:22). I consider this statement as a step towards inculturation.

This is because Paul was able to identify with the people and their culture during his missionary journeys. For example, while Paul opposed circumcision for the Gentiles, the same Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:5), born of a Greek father but a son of a Jewish mother, now considered a Jew by Jewish law. At any given time, Paul studied every situation and every culture, in order to avoid any cultural imposition. This approach is necessary for an effective inculturation. The final place in the New Testament where one can look for some traces of inculturation is in the area of translation. The New Testament was translated into Greek which was regarded as a popular language of the time. Pinto confirms this point by saying: "Though Jesus and his disciples certainly spoke and preached in Aramaic, the New Testament has come down to us in Greek. Some parts of it are translations of originals in Aramaic, but by and large, the New Testament is a Greek book" (1985:41). Aramaic was the language of the Arameans, the descendants of Aram, the son of Shem who was the son of Noah.

The translation of the New Testament into Greek made it possible for many people to know the word of God. This is important because as Paul said, "so faith comes through what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The advantage of this translation of the New Testament into Greek is well expressed by the Congregation for Divine worship: "The encounter between the Jewish world and Greek wisdom gave rise to a new form of inculturation: the translation of the Bible into Greek introduced the word of God into the world that had been closed to it and caused, under Divine inspiration, an enrichment of the scriptures" (1994:9). Since the word of God is important to all Christian believers, it becomes necessary that people must read this word in the language they can understand well. This is also a good lesson which we can learn from inculturation in the New Testament. We can say therefore that evidence of inculturation abounds in the New Testament.

### **3. 4 Inculturation in Missionary Activity and Some Official Church Pronouncements.**

This section will examine the various missionary activities that took place in the Church as well as the Church's pronouncements on inculturation. Describing this period of missionary activities, Schineller remarks:



“It is interesting to note that as the missionary activity of the Church intensified at the end of the sixth century, a question similar to that raised at the council of Jerusalem surfaced...” (1990:31). These missionary activities brought the missionaries face to face with cultures quite different from their own culture.

Some European missionaries carried along with them the notion of their cultural superiority which they considered necessary to impose on their converts, whose culture the missionaries regarded as inferior. Shorter (1997:141) describes the situation thus: “When St. Augustine of Canterbury and his companions were sent by Gregory in AD 597 to pagan Anglo-Saxon England, they rode out upon the wave of a superior culture and their Roman ethnocentrism precluded any serious dialogue with the culture of the Anglo-Saxons.” However, an earlier caution by some Popes helped to minimise the suppression of people’s cultures by the missionaries who were tempted to impose their own culture on their converts. The letter which Pope Gregory I sent to Abbot Mellitus on his departure to join St. Augustine in Britain in AD 601, specified how Augustine and his companions were expected to treat their converts and their culture. Shorter (1997:141-2) outlines these instructions in these words:

Therefore, when by God’s help you reach our most reverend brother, Bishop Augustine, we wish you inform him that we have been giving careful thought to the affairs of the English, and have come to the conclusion that the temples of the idols in that country should on no account be destroyed. He is to destroy the idols, but the temples themselves are to be aspersed with holy water, altars set up, and relics enclosed in them. For if these temples are well built, they are to be purified from devil-worship and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon idolatry and resort to these places before, and may come to know and adore the true God.

These earlier instructions from Pope Gregory I were aimed at preventing the missionaries from the arbitrary rush to condemn the culture of the English people. On the other hand, these instructions did not leave room for dialogue between the missionaries and the people and their culture. The instructions did not encourage any patience in the study of the peoples’ culture. The relics to be deposited on the altar could be easily misunderstood by the new converts because of lack of adequate instruction. Here, relics refer to “bodies or portions of the bodies of the saints after death, clothing or articles they used in life, or articles such as bits of cloth that have touched their remains or tombs” (*Our Sundays Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopaedia* 1991:819).

However, it was important that Pope Gregory I had a good foresight to recommend how to replace whatever was removed. Continuing his instructions, the Pope says:

And since they have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to the devils, let other solemnity be substituted in its place, such as a day of Dedication or the Festivals of Holy martyrs whose relics are enshrined there. On such occasions they might well construct shelters or boughs for themselves around the churches that were once temples and celebrate the solemnity with devout feasting. They are no longer to sacrifice beasts to the devil, but they may kill them for food to the praise of God, and give thanks to the giver of all gifts for his bounty (Shorter 1997:142).

This suggestion of substituting the pagan custom with Christian solemnity was in line with the current Christmas celebration, which replaced the pagan winter festival dedicated to the “unconquered Sun,” known in Latin as “Natalis Solis Invicti” (Catholic Encyclopaedia 1991:213). This replacement, therefore, would act as a transformation of the pagan custom as we have seen in our definition of inculturation.

At this early stage of the Church’s missionary expansion, the work of Cyril and Methodius could be cited as a good example of how to put inculturation into practice. Cyril and Methodius were two brothers born in Thessalonika, who were sent to evangelize Moravia, which is now part of the modern Czechoslovakia. The ingenuity of these two brothers in creating a Slavonic writing is well highlighted by Shorter (1997:144):

What Cyril and Methodius did was to create a unified, literate Slavonic culture. They translated the Greek and Roman liturgies into Slavonic. They created codes of civil and Church law in that language, and, after Cyril’s death in AD 869, Methodius went on to translate the Bible into Slavonic.

It is interesting to note the courage these two brothers had in promoting Slavonic culture at the peak of the Church’s mono-culturalism. In spite of some oppositions, Cyril and Methodius were supported by Pope Adrian II, who also ordained them bishops. In the present Catholic Calendar for the lives of the saints, where they are honoured as saints on February 14, they are described as “Patrons of unity of Eastern and Western Churches” (Hoever 1977:69). Thus, Cyril and Methodius did a remarkable job in promoting the Slavonic culture, which in turn was in line with inculturation. That is, their work had become that principle which now animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.

In 1622, Pope Urban VIII established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (SCPF), popularly known as Propaganda Fidei. The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (SCPF) was established so as to enable Rome to take over the direction of the whole Catholic missionary work, formerly under the patronage of the Catholic monarchs mainly from Spain and Portugal. The aim of this SCPF was to promote evangelisation by peaceful means rather than by violence. Hence, it tried to respect peoples' ways of life and culture. In an effort to correct the attitude of cultural domination prevalent at the time, the SCPF issued a blueprint statement in these words:

Do not make any effort or use any argument in favour of forcing the people to change their customs or traditions, as long as these are not clearly opposed to religion or morality. What could be more absurd than to carry France, Spain, or Italy or any part of Europe into China? It is not this sort of thing you are to bring in but rather the faith which does not reject or damage any people's rites and customs provided they are not depraved (in Karecki 1990:16).

This statement remains a blueprint in the sense that it tries to differentiate the Christian faith from European culture. The effort to make such a distinction by missionaries in mission lands was a good step in inculturating the gospel. Thus, the SCPF had a good intention to promote inculturation. In the same vein, some founders of religious congregations tried to encourage their members to implement this policy of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Waliggo (1986:15) emphasises this point in these words: "Missionaries were told over and over again by their founders to take time to study the languages and cultures of the people they were evangelizing and to avoid as much as possible turning their converts into Asian or African Europeans, but rather make them Asian and African Christians." The Jesuit missionaries, for example, were convinced of the need to penetrate peoples' cultures from within. That is, an effort to get in touch with the cultural values of a place, appreciate them and work towards transforming them for the service of the gospel. An example of how the culture of a place could be penetrated from within was the approach of Ricci and his companions in China. The result of what Ricci and his companions did in China is summarised by Shorter (1997:158) as follows:

It seems, nevertheless, that Ricci and his fellow Jesuit missionaries were embarked on a profound dialogue with the religious culture of the Chinese, and that they were aiming at nothing more or less than inculturation in the true sense of the word. The goal was to achieve the Christian reinterpretation of Chinese culture which would, in turn, provoke a Chinese interpretation of Christianity presented in this sympathetic Chinese form. It is, perhaps, a measure of the success of this policy that three thousand people had been baptised by the time of Ricci's death in 1610.

In other words, Ricci and his companions appreciated the Chinese way of life and their culture. As Ricci and his companions were interacting with the Chinese people and their culture, they found out that the cult of Confucius and the cult of the familial dead, as rituals, were not incompatible with Christianity and the liturgical practices in particular.

Ricci's view attracted criticisms from other religious missionaries. As a result, "Pope Clement IX condemned the Chinese rites in 1704" (Shorter 1997:159). Later, Pope Benedict XIX not only condemned the Chinese rites, but he also closed any discussion on the subject. This did not bring the work of Ricci and his companions to a total end. As Shorter (1997:159) says: "Two hundred years later these adverse decisions were rescinded, and the wisdom of Matteo Ricci was belatedly recognised. In 1935 Pope Pius XI approved the cult of Confucius as essentially non-religious, and therefore not opposed to Catholic doctrine". It was Pope Pius XII who, in 1939, approved the traditional Chinese funeral rites and the cult of the familial dead. The decisions of Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII, respectively, were in line with the policy of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. This is because these decisions not only encouraged inculturation and missionary expansion, but also helped to make Christianity feel at home and deeply rooted in another culture.

On the contrary, the condemnations by Pope Clement IX and Pope Benedict XIX not only discouraged the missionaries themselves and the Chinese, but also made Christianity foreign in China and it was later rejected. On this note therefore, the advice given by Pope Alexander III became ideal and also important. He said:

There is nothing that generates hatred and alienates people than the alteration of their national customs, more still, when you are in the place, on the discarded practice, you bring in the custom of your nation... Take care and acquaint yourselves with the people's customs. Admire and praise what is praise worthy and what is not worthy of praise, judgement on such should be cleverly omitted (in Ndiokwere 1994b:21).

This advice of Pope Alexander III is very concrete, candid and factual. This is because every created human being wants his or her culture respected. Many people have lost their lives because of disrespecting the cultures of their hosts. The principle of inculturation, therefore, demands respect for other peoples' cultures . This is what this advice has pointed out.

We can also see this effort to encourage missionaries to respect people's cultures in the life of the co-founder of the congregation of the Holy Ghost, Francis Mary Paul Libermann. Libermann knew from the start the importance of indigenisation and also the need to respect people's cultures. In support of the training of local clergy for the service of the local church, he wrote:

Only one way is practical to us—namely, to base ourselves from the very beginning on a stable organisation indigenous to the soil we want to cultivate. The formation of a native clergy... supplies the only means whereby the light of the gospel can be widely diffused and the Church solidly established in the countries where we are called to work (in Koren 1983:255).

This instruction by Libermann is still implemented today by the Spiritans (Congregation of the Holy Ghost). This explains why the Spiritans, wherever they are working, make an effort to train local clergy. Here in Zimbabwe, we the Spiritans started by encouraging local clergy, bearing in mind that self reliance does not only mean financial self-reliance but also personnel self-reliance which helps to promote inculturation. This idea of self-reliance was expressed by an Anglican as far back as 1854. In 1854 Henry Venn, secretary of the Evangelical Anglican Church Missionary Society, “spoke of a local Church as self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating...” (Shorter 1997:173). Furthermore, Libermann tried to divest his missionaries to Africa of any attitude of cultural domination or imposition of European culture on Africans. This idea is well illustrated as follows:

We do not go to Africa to establish there Italy, France or any other European country, but only the Holy Church of Christ, without regard to nationality. With God's grace we will rid ourselves of everything that is exclusively European and retain only the thoughts of the Church (in Koren 1983:262).

Libermann was a Jewish convert who founded his own congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary in 1841. In 1848 Libermann's congregation merged with the congregation of the Holy Ghost founded by Claude Francis Poullart des Places. With this merger, the two congregations became one with the name of Congregation of the Holy Ghost (Spiritans), with Libermann as its first Superior General. From Libermann's thoughts and writings, we have also seen some traces of inculturation which were meant to promote evangelisation. Another example of a religious missionary founder who encouraged inculturation was Cardinal Charles Lavigerie.

The founder of the Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), and Missionary Sisters of our lady of Africa (White Sisters) not only laid emphasis on the formation of indigenous clergy, but also stressed the importance of learning and speaking of the local language by all his missionaries. As far back as 1868, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie had expressed his mind on these issues in these words: “Missionaries must not only learn the local language in order to communicate with the people, they must speak it among themselves. The children they educate must be allowed to remain truly African and to keep their customs and way of life” (in Shorter 1997:169). This means that Cardinal Lavigerie had in mind the inculturation of the gospel in Africa when he gave this advice. Since language is important for communication, the agents of inculturation must know the language of the place where they want the gospel to be inculturated. In 1919, Pope Benedict XV expressed almost the same sentiment as Cardinal Lavigerie by exhorting a missionary to be fluent in the language of the people he or she was sent to evangelise:

He should not rest satisfied with a superficial knowledge of the vernacular, but it should be thorough enough for a fluent and elegant command. He should be accomplished in every department of culture. Moreover, he should be humble in front of the local people and neither despise nor scorn them, let alone treat them harshly (in Shorter 1997: 181).

All these were useful pieces of advice aimed at encouraging inculturation. On the other hand, many European missionaries did not pay heed to these instructions. Here is an example of a case where a missionary, as reported by Adrian Hastings, was not only insulting to an African but also very harsh to him.

On my way I found numbers of idols which I threw into the fire. The owner of these idols, a Nganga Ngombo or sorcerer, seemed very annoyed. To calm him down by humiliating him, I let him know that if he persisted in his anger, I should see that he himself was burnt with his idols (1967:58).

Such treatment, cannot win converts. Surely, Pope Benedict XV would have frowned at such a statement and behaviour of a missionary who did not respect the feelings of his fellow human being. However, an individual’s behaviour will not be allowed to discredit the intention of the Church in her effort to inculturate the faith in the culture of the people.

The Second Vatican Council made its contribution in encouraging inculturation. The Council began in 1962 and had its last session in 1965. The council was convoked by Pope John XXIII and was concluded by Pope Paul VI. Describing this very council, Schineller says: “The Council itself was an exercise in inculturation as the church tried to open its windows to the modern world, with its joys and sorrows, hopes and anxieties” (1990:40).

Almost the same sentiment is expressed by Waliggo (1986:18), who says: “it was to open a window into the edifice of the Church to let in fresh air.” In all, Vatican II Council produced sixteen documents. I would like to examine two of these documents in this discussion. The first document I would like to consider is the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosantum Concillium*). Three articles will be considered in this discussion. They are articles 38, 39, and 40.

#### Article 38:

Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is maintained, the revision of liturgical books should allow for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples especially in mission lands. Where opportune, the same rule applies to the structuring of rites and the devising of rubrics.

This document is a “departure from past liturgical practice within the Roman Catholic Church” (Karecki) 1990:23). This is because, in this article, a provision for an adaptation of the Roman rite has been made. However, the article encourages a substantial unity of Roman rite as opposed to the strict unity emphasised before Vatican II. Rubrics here refer to the liturgical directives found in the missal, including the Sacramentary and Lectionary, and in the ritual, to guide bishops, priests and deacons in the celebration of the Eucharist.

#### Article 39:

Within the limits set by the typical editions of the liturgical books, it shall be for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in article 22, to specify adaptations especially in the case of administration of the sacraments, the sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music and arts, but according to the fundamental norms laid down in this constitution.

This article encourages the use of the vernacular in place of the universal Latin language. It also makes provision for the introduction of local music and in the case of Africa, the use of local drums as well as arts. These are essential elements that make celebrations lively especially in Africa.

**Article 40:**

In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed and entails greater difficulties. Therefore: the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in article 22, must, in this matter, carefully and prudently consider which elements from the traditions and genius of individual peoples' culture might appropriately be admitted for divine worship.

This article advocates a more radical adaptation whereby the bishops conference of a particular country could agree on how to organise liturgical celebrations in that country. A good example here in Zimbabwe is the time of reading the gospel. In the Catholic Church, the congregation generally stands up when the gospel is read. In Zimbabwe, the congregation sits down and only the priest or the deacon who is reading the gospel stands up.

Archbishop Chakaipa explained the reason for sitting down at the time the gospel is being read. The archbishop said: "Great respect is basic. We do not show respect by standing up in front of the elders. It is a big sign of respect in the Shona culture to sit down so as to listen to the elders." This was an oral discussion between the researcher and the Archbishop. In view of this, I agree with Karecki who describes article 40 as "the article which deals with the issue of inculturation of the liturgy" (1990:24).

The second document is the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium Et Spes*). This Constitution highlights two important aspects about culture, namely: it admits that the individual achieves full humanity only through culture. It also affirms the plurality of cultures. Article 58, which agrees with our definition of inculturation, states:

Nevertheless, the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore, is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or any customary practices ancient or modern. The Church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission. It can then enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.



Here, the Church affirms that it is not tied exclusively to any one particular culture, and so, it can enter into communion with other cultures. This is a radical shift in the right direction. This is because the church previously admitted and approved one culture as universal. And this universal culture was Western culture.

da Silva made this observation: "In the past, the concept of culture was associated exclusively with European civilisation. Culture was understood as a set of unchangeable values coming down to us from the Greek-Roman world..."(da Silva 1995:198 Vol.37, no.4). In article 58 the Church admits that when the gospel interacts with the culture in question, both are enriched. In this process, therefore, the gospel continues to renew and purify the culture. The gospel does this by causing its spiritual qualities to blossom from within. Hence, Shorter says: "This seems to be more than a hint of what we really mean by inculturation" (1997:202). We can say, therefore, that these documents from Vatican II made valid contributions to encourage the practice of inculturation.

On his visit to Uganda in 1969, Pope Paul VI not only confirmed the pluralism of cultures, but he also went on to encourage Africans to have an African Christianity. These points are contained in the statement:

The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one faith, may be manifold. Hence, it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius, and the culture, of one who professes this one faith. From this point of view, a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable. An adaptation of Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may, and you must have an African Christianity (In Shorter 1997:209-210).

These are encouraging words which not only support inculturation, but also help to build up a local Church. In his words of exhortation recorded by Ndiokwere, Pope Paul VI said: "Indeed you possess values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection such as to find in Christianity and for Christianity, a true superior fulness, and prove to be capable of a richness of expression and of being genuinely African" (1994b:23).

In a way, the Pope was urging Africans to have confidence in themselves and in their cultural values. Such confidence, therefore, could lead Africans to a greater height in their quest for inculturation. In terms of language, Africa is very rich in proverbs which are useful in communication. Thus, the use of proverbs in preaching the word of God is important in inculturating the Gospel in Africa.

Finally, we come to Pope John Paul II, who has travelled widely and whose cultural experiences are diversified. These cultural experiences are described by Shorter (1997:222) in this way: “His concessions to local culture are largely a question of outward gesture, wearing a monkey-skin cape in Nairobi, drinking kava in Fiji, rubbing noses with Maoris in New Zealand or walking a dream-time trail with Australian aborigines.” All these genuine outward gestures go a long way to confirm that Pope John Paul II has real practical and positive attitudes to culture.

Pope John Paul II has made many speeches which are well rooted in inculturation, which we will not refer to here. However, I will have to single out the Pope’s address to the Kenyan Bishops. This address I consider to be the core of the Pope’s speech on inculturation. Schineller (1990:43), records the Pope’s speech in this way:

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.

He continues most significantly and beautifully to say that:

There is no question of adulterating the word of God or of emptying the cross of its power, (cf 1 Cor. 1:17) 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.

In this statement, Pope John Paul II has situated inculturation in the context of the incarnation, which is the bed-rock and foundation of inculturation. The Pope also reassured these African Bishops that they were not watering down the teachings of Jesus Christ, as some thought that inculturation aims at “making Christianity easier for the African people” (Waliggo 1986:13).

The power of the cross was realised when Christ accepted to be nailed on the cross, to die on the cross, and then through his death on the cross, was able to save humanity. It follows, therefore, that if African Bishops thought inculturation brings Christ to the centre of African life, they are not denying the cross its power. Instead, all African life is being lifted up to Christ. This statement fulfils what Christ said in John 12:32, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." As Jesus took the bold step to take up the cross which brought humanity salvation, in the same way, Africans are encouraged to take up inculturation courageously and confidently so as to make the Gospel of Christ well rooted in African culture. By so doing, Christ becomes an African because he has incarnated himself in his African members and their culture.

In order to put into concrete practice his teachings on culture, Pope John Paul II founded the Pontifical Council for Culture. According to Shorter (1997:230), "The council was charged with the defence of the cultural inheritance of humankind, threatened by materialistic and dehumanising values and also with the evangelisation of cultures." This council, founded in 1982, has an international membership which is made up of laymen and women, religious, priests and bishops. I think that it is on the basis of the Pope's powerful speeches on inculturation, his ardent love for culture and the formation of a council for culture, that Udoiem (1996:92) describes him thus: "Pope John Paul II is really, both in his person and his actions, a symbol of inculturation."

### **3. 5 Conclusion**

In our review on the traces of inculturation in both the Old and the New Testaments, we have found out that culture was an important key word for inculturation. For example, Israel came into contact with people of various cultures and some of these cultures influenced the people of Israel very much. Norbert and Norbert (1994:4) point out this fact in these words: "The relationship between Israel and Canaan is a special instance of relationship between Israel and its neighbouring cultures." The New Testament narrates how the early Christians grappled with the problem of integrating the Gentile Christians with a different culture into a Christianity dominated by Jewish culture. Above all, we saw how Jesus himself came to incarnate himself into the Jewish culture where he was born.

The wise decision at the Council in Jerusalem is a blue print of inculturation till today because, it is not good to impose one's culture on another. Inculturation encourages dialogue between the gospel and a given culture. Our discussion on the Church's pronouncements on inculturation centred on the instructions given to the missionaries and how they were to deal with the cultures of the peoples they were sent to evangelise. Waliggo stresses this point well by saying : "Missionaries were told over and over again to study the languages and cultures of the people they were evangelising..." (1986:15). We can say, therefore, that culture is a very central element in inculturation. Our next discussion will try to examine culture itself and how it is related to Christianity. We will also try to examine how some African cultural values could be used to build up Christianity in Africa.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **CULTURE, RELIGION, AND AFRICAN VALUES: THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR INCULTURATION**

#### **4. 1 Introduction:**

In our previous chapter we pointed out that culture is a key element in inculturation. Therefore, 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, 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 concerned. This is the goal of inculturation and this is also our aspiration here in Africa.

In this chapter an effort will be made to understand the concept of culture. We do so because, in the words of Pinto: "Failure to grasp the nature of culture is failure to grasp the nature of our mission itself" (1985:1). In our own situation here, it will be a failure to grasp the importance of inculturation in Africa. We will also try to consider some African cultural values in order to see how they will help in the promotion of inculturation in Africa.

#### **4. 2 Concept And Definition Of Culture.**

Our aim here is not to trace the etymology of the word culture. Instead, we are concerned with the concept of culture and how it has developed. According to Pinto,

The concept of "culture" is about a century old. It was first developed in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Socio-anthropological school of England and later by that of the United States and France. The study and research still continue and there is no unanimous definition of culture as such. Several scholars have attempted to define culture. Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn have put together a variety of definitions and notions of culture in their book, *Culture: A critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1985:1).

George also gives us the names of two philosophers whom he associates with the use of the word culture. According to George (1990:137), "It was first used in loosely scientific fashion by Voltaire and Hegel. These and other philosophers used "culture" to mean the spirit or the essence of human history read as a tale of progress..."

To illustrate how cultural anthropology came into being, George says:

In English-speaking countries, the word culture was usually avoided by the scientists because it did not point to something measurable. To move from philosophy of culture to a science of culture, social customs and other sorts of measurable behaviour patterns were gradually introduced as subject matter for the study of culture, the discipline of cultural anthropology was born.

It has not been easy to find some standard way of defining culture. Crollius (1986:47-48) explains why this is so in these words:

It is difficult to see how one single concept of culture could satisfy all those who speak about it. Any attempt to clarify the term "culture" on the level of this "interdisciplinary no-man's land" would almost certainly fail to gain the approval of most of the participants in the discussion, in so far as they choose to remain immured in their own particular conception of their own, particular discipline.

In other words, the difficulty of arriving at one single definition of culture arises from the fact that there are many disciplines that study human life and its ways. Thus, each discipline approaches culture in different ways, placing stresses that are important for its interests. Shorter (1999:34) states that "Kroeber and Kluckhohn list 164 definitions of culture." Geertz (1973:4) gives us a few of these definitions by Kluckhohn alone in this order:

Kluckhohn managed to define culture... as:

- (1) The total way of life of people;
- (2) the social legacy the individual acquires from his group;
- (3) a way of thinking, feeling, and believing;
- (4) an abstraction from behaviour;
- (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave;
- (6) a store house of a poled learning;
- (7) a set of standardized orientation to current problems ;
- (8) learned behaviour;
- (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour;
- (10) a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men;
- (11) a precipitate of history...

For the purpose of this chapter, we will consider a few of these definitions, highlighting some common characteristics in them and also pointing out how they relate to our main subject area of discussion, namely: Inculturation in African Churches. The definitions that will be considered in this chapter are from two individuals, namely E. B. Taylor and C. Geertz; and two organisations, namely Vatican II Council and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

In his introductory remark on the definitions of culture by Taylor, George (1990:138) notes:

The first technical anthropological definitions of culture was given by E. B. Taylor in 1871. Culture, or civilisation... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

This is a descriptive definition whereby Taylor stressed the state of the human being in society. In this case, culture is what a human being learns or acquires as a member of society. Here, human society has become the criterion of culture. This means that human society determines what culture should be. In the converse, Shorter explains that human society can be acquired in terms of culture.

Shorter (1997:4) has this to say: "According to this way of thinking, it is what human beings share culturally, their customs, values and distinctive way of living, that constitutes them as a recognisable distinct human group or society." Human societies could be said to be possessors of culture. The culture of each society distinguishes it from other societies. For example, the way Zimbabweans dress is different from the way Nigerians dress. In Nigeria again, the tribal marks of the Igbos are different from those of the Yorubas and the Hausas. These groups of people are known by the way they dress and the marks they carry. Thus, one could easily identify the society to which each group belongs by its observable cultural traits.

Another definition of culture is by Clifford Geertz, whom Pinto describes as "a current leading American anthropologist" (1985:2). Geertz maintains that: "In any case, the culture concept to which I adhere has neither multiple referents nor, so far as I can see, any unusual ambiguity" (1973:89). Defining this culture which has neither multiple referents nor unusual ambiguity, Geertz (1973:89) says:

It denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.

Here we see that culture is essentially a transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols. Geertz introduces symbols in his definition. The symbol is important because it serves as a vehicle of communication. Hence, Dhavamony (1997:25) tells us that "A symbol in the context of anthropology is defined as a thing, the value or meaning of which is bestowed upon it by those who use it." If culture is embodied in symbols, it means that culture in the context used by Geertz is dependent upon symbols. Thus, the idea that culture is dependent upon symbols helps to understand that culture is made up of rules evolved by human beings to help them in their conduct of life. Both Taylor and Geertz agree that culture is learned.

We now consider the definitions given by the organisations referred to. The Vatican II Council document on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium Et Spes*), No 53, gave a comprehensive description of culture as follows:

The word “culture” in its general sense indicates all those factors by which man refines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities. It means his effort to bring the world itself under his control by his knowledge and his labour: It includes the fact that by improving customs and institutions he renders social life more human both within the family and in the civic community. Finally, it is a feature of culture that throughout the course of time man expresses, communicates and conserves in his works great spiritual experiences and desires so that these may be of advantage to the progress of many even of the whole human family.

In this descriptive definition by the document of the Second Vatican Council, we can point out three areas of emphasis.

In the first place, human beings possess culture, which they develop for their own well-being. When human beings develop their skill through labour, they bring the world under their control. This is clearly expressed in Genesis 1:28 which says: “God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...” In the second place, there is a community which orders its life through procedures, rites and rituals which are enshrined in institutions and customs. The effort to improve these customs and institutions enables the community to pursue justice and harmony both in the family and the civic community. Finally, the third important aspect of this definition is that human beings express and communicate ideas through their culture. In order to communicate well, human beings make use of language, concepts and symbols. This communication is not only for one particular human society but for all human societies. This is how culture develops.

Keteyi summarises these three points in these words: “These three aspects of culture mean that culture is the presence of the community to itself. By presence we mean the way in which the community knows, affirms and assesses itself in the interaction of its members and with the environment reality” (1998:21). Thus, culture is not static. This is because human beings constantly evaluate their culture in order to be able to adapt it to new circumstances. The Vatican II document (No.53) emphasises the importance of culture in human life in this way: “It is a fact bearing on the very person of the man that he can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture...” Geertz echoes almost the same sentiment in these words:



“We are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture... (1973:49). Our effort to inculturate the gospel in Africa becomes more meaningful when we take these statements seriously because Christianity can only be authentic in Africa when it is deeply rooted in African culture.

Our next definition comes from an “International Conference On Cultural Policies, sponsored by UNESCO in Mexico city in 1982” (George 1990:153). George carefully recorded this definition in these words:

In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex or distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, value systems, traditions and beliefs... It is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specially human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that a man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognises his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations (1990:153).

This definition highlights the four dimensions of human beings, namely: spiritual, physical intellectual and emotional. These in turn, are characteristics of a human society.

Culture enhances these four dimensions through arts, value systems, traditions, beliefs and the fundamental rights of human beings. In other words, everyone has a right to his or her culture, which can never be denied him or her. When a human being has fully developed in these four dimensions he or she is able to make critical judgements, make right choices, discern values and question his or her own capabilities. This means that there is need for 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. This assessment is in agreement with Geertz in the sense that human beings are only complete through culture. As Geertz (1973:49) says: “Most bluntly,... there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture.” All the above definitions can be summarised in the words of George (1990:154) as follows:

Culture has been described, in the several definitions offered above, as a sort of second nature, as a social system of meanings and values, historically transmitted, embodied in symbols, and installed into the members of a...group so that they are spontaneously inclined to feel, think, judge and behave in certain characteristic ways.

This then brings us to some general characteristics of culture:

- a) Culture is the social heritage of a group of human beings.
- b) Culture is a set of meanings and values expressed and transmitted through symbols.
- c) Culture is learned.
- d) Culture is dynamic.

Looking at these characteristics, we can say that culture and society go hand in hand. Pinto (1985:5) describes society as: “a permanent organised aggregate of persons sharing a common way of life and group consciousness.”

Thus, a common culture and group consciousness are important elements of a human society. The human society possesses culture and transmits it to individuals. In this way, culture becomes what Pinto (1985:5) calls “a society’s standardised way of coping with different environments.” It is important to note that culture is learned by individuals as members of society. Since culture is learned, it means in effect that it cannot be genetically inherited. On the other hand, culture is dynamic or changing because the individuals following a particular design of life in a society are alive and active. Though the individuals in the society follow a set of meanings, rules and values, they also constantly modify, adjust and improve their ways of behaviour in line with the newly gained knowledge and experience. We can say, therefore, that all cultures change. All these characteristics of culture are also reflected in religion. In the words of George: “Within these systems, religion is the most basic integrator” (1990:154). We shall now try to examine how these characteristics are reflected in religion, since religion is the main subject of this study.

### **4.3 Religion And Culture.**

Our aim here is mainly to show how religion and culture are closely related. As Arinze says: “It is a common place to say that religion and culture are closely related and that they influence each other” (1990:245). We will also examine the role religion plays in society, with particular reference to Africa. However, we will start by defining religion.

### 4.3.1 Meaning Of Religion.

One of the often quoted definitions of religion was given by Edward Taylor, who said “Religion means belief in spiritual beings” (Shorter 1998:40). In this definition, the emphasis is on belief, which could be expressed in various ways. Thus, Bourdillon (1990:6) maintains that “religion involves beliefs”. This means that these beliefs can involve gods, or a High God and Spirits. These are powers which normally influence people in the world. The influence these powers exert on human beings can be noticed in the way human beings communicate with them by way of worshipping them. Another definition of religion was given by Geertz, who says:

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1973:90).

Here, another term, “symbol,” has been introduced. Supporting the place of symbol in religion, Bourdillon (1990:6) says, “religion involves symbols and particularly symbolic actions”. A symbol can be defined as “an emblem: that which by custom or convention represents something else” (Bourdillon 1990:9). The word closely related to symbol is sign, but we can say that a symbol is a particularly powerful kind of a sign. We can explain this point with two examples: A flag and a street sign post. A flag is a symbol of a nation. Any attempt to burn a flag is a big insult to the nation that owns the flag. On the other hand, any attempt to distort a street sign post, though punishable by law, will not be considered as an insult to the nation or to the road where it was put. Thus a symbol cannot be easily separated from what it symbolises. According to Dhavamony (1997:50), “religious symbols induce and define dispositions in man.” These dispositions can be in the form of awe or bafflement. The awe helps to create deep reverence at worship. This brings us to the other aspect of Geertz’ definition. In this definition, Geertz highlights two dispositions, namely mood and motivations. Motivation, according to Geertz is “a persisting tendency, a chronic inclination to perform certain sorts of acts and experience certain sorts of feeling in certain sorts of situations...” (1973:96).

We can say that when a person is properly stimulated, the person falls into certain moods which we sometimes refer to as “reverential, solemn or worshipful” (Geertz 1973:97). Moods are important in worship and they vary from exultation to melancholy or from self-confidence to self pity. Here also we can say that religious practice involves worship. According to Fleming, “worship indicates a type of humble submission, for example, the submission of a servant to a master” (1990:466). In religion, people humble themselves before their creator and then adore him. Worship can be done individually or collectively. In *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopaedia*, “religion” is seen as: “A term referring to any social, cultural and institutional forms of engagement with the transcendent reality that is believed to embrace the world and human existence” (1991:819). This definition highlights the cultural aspect of religion which is our main area of concern in this discussion.

#### **4.3.2 Relationship Between Religion And Culture.**

Having looked at the definitions of religion, we now examine the relationship between religion and culture. People belong to a particular religion either because they were born into it and grew in that religious community, or because they were born into a culture of their ancestors in which a particular religion is lived and practised. On this Shorter has this to say:

Before the arrival of the so called immigrant religions of Islam and Christianity, an individual who was born into a particular ethnic group was obliged to adopt the religion of that group. Religious beliefs and practices were taught as part of the general enculturation of its members (1997:42).

Hence we can say that “religion is a social and cultural bond, one can speak of Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultures” (George 1990:154). In the words of Dhavamony (1997:33), “there is no doubt that religion and culture are closely interrelated; religion manifests itself in a peoples’ cultural forms.” Illustrating how a given religion can be expressed through many different cultures, Shorter has this to say:

This is the case of the so- called world religions and even of some religions which are not usually so described. Buddhism for example, originated in India but it takes different cultural forms in Tibet, Sri Lanka and China. The same can be said of Islam in Pakistan, Arabia and West Africa. Even African traditional religions have spread with the trans-Atlantic slave trade from West Africa to Brazil and the Caribbeans, where they have effected a new marriage with Christianity and with the cultures of Europe and the New World (1997:42).

On the other hand, Christianity does not identify itself with one particular culture. "It is at home in every culture which underlies the concept of inculturation" (Shorter 1997:42). As we have said, religion and culture are closely interrelated. The influence which religion exerts on culture embraces the whole domain of culture which is noticeably marked by religious outlook. On the other hand, culture influences religion in a remarkable way. This mutual relationship is observed by Dhavamony (1997:44) who says: "Religious rituals, feasts, ceremonious activities, myths and symbols are marked by the traits of particular cultures in which they are embodied."

At the same time, some differences between religion and culture are evident. This is because the essence of religion cannot be reduced to culture. The main difference between religion and culture, which affects socio-cultural life, is brought out by Dhavamony in these words: "Moreover, religion differs from other aspects of socio-cultural life for it is concerned with systems of belief and action which are directed towards invisible divine realities" (1997:45). We can therefore say that "religion is not culture, but it can not exist apart from culture. It needs culture to be given expression" (Shorter 1987:18). It is important to point out here that in Africa, religion and social life, as parts of culture, are intertwined. Commenting on this point, Cardinal Arinze (1990:251) has this to say:

African religion intimately penetrates all the manifestations of social life. There is no dichotomy between spiritual order and the material order, between the religious and the temporal, between sacred and profane. The visible world is not separated from the invisible world. The universe forms a unitarian and dynamic whole, where some parties are visible and others, who are not important, are invisible.

A typical example to illustrate the Cardinal's point can be drawn from a family situation. In an African traditional family at meal time, for example, we can see religion and social life intertwined. At family meal time, one can easily observe the father of the family, whose social duty is to be the intermediary between the world of the living and that of the ancestors, exercising his function. In Igbo traditional society the father of the family always puts aside some quantity of the food for the ancestors. The father makes the food into smaller pieces and then throws them outside, signifying that they are for the ancestors. In the same way, before drinking, he first pours out a few drops on the ground as a libation in honour of the ancestors.

In effect the cardinal is trying to say that when there is a social celebration, it is also combined with a religious celebration. Our next discussion centres on Christianity and culture. This discussion will be used to exemplify the role a particular religion, Christianity, played in African culture in particular.

#### **4. 4 Christianity And Culture.**

This section looks at Christianity and culture in general but with more emphasis on Christianity and African culture. The discussion will focus on Christianity and African culture seen from the perspective of African Christians. However, areas where both Western settlers and Christian missionaries joined hands either to oppress or to uplift African culture will be mentioned. We begin by adopting a working definition of Christianity.

The definition of Christianity given by *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopaedia* states: "Broadly understood, Christianity is the religion derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ as professed historically by Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants" (1991:213). This definition is broad enough to include the three main groups that make up Christianity. The term "Roman Catholic" first appeared in the sixteenth century. Prior to that century, we had only "Catholic Church". The term "Roman Catholic", therefore, is used to designate Christians who have allegiance to the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, who is believed to derive his supreme authority from the Apostle Peter as vicar of Christ. According to *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopaedia*,

The Orthodox Church refers to that body of Eastern Christian believers identified as possessing and maintaining a valid sacramental and hierarchical system, but separated from full communication with the Catholic Church by remaining independent of the Pope (1991:707).

The Orthodox Church separated from the Western Catholic Church on July 16, 1054. Protestants are that group of Christians which separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, led mainly by Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, King Henry VIII, and others. *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopaedia* places the groups that make up Protestantism in this order: "Today the major groups in Protestantism are: Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Born-Again Christians, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ and Quakers" (1991:793).

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, the Jewish culture, where he was also brought up. Again, Jesus experienced the influence of Greek culture, even though he was a Jew by birth. We can observe from the names of some of his friends which were Greek in form, for example, "Lazarus for Eleazar" (Shorter 1987:19). It is evident that the followers of Jesus wrote the New Testament in Greek. This was because Greek was the common language of the Jews after they were dispersed. Since Greek was the common language, Jews everywhere were able to speak and understand it. It became necessary, therefore, that important terms in the New Testament were translated into Greek. For example, "Christos" was a Greek word for Christ which means the anointed one. Language is a good vehicle through which the culture of a place is communicated. We can say, therefore, that though Jesus had his own culture, he was also open to other cultures.

It was not a surprise that the early Church experienced many different cultural forms of Christianity. According to Shorter (1987:19), "these different cultural forms of Christianity which came into existence: Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Chaldean etc, were the origins of Eastern Rite Churches." When the Church in the West identified itself with the Roman Empire, Rome had already imposed its culture on Europe. Thus, when Emperor Constantine became a Christian in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity adopted Western culture as an ideal culture which was taught to everybody. Shorter (1987:20) describes the impact this Roman culture had on Christianity in these words: "Since Christianity in the West was expressing itself through Roman culture, it came to see itself as the one and only Christianized culture, the ideal culture to be preached along with the gospel." The consequence of adopting one single culture by the Church was that all other indigenous cultures were despised and also ignored when Christianity started spreading outside Europe and the gospel preached outside Western Europe. On the other hand, some missionaries were aware and also convinced that the message of Christ was not linked only to Western culture. It was not easy, however, for these missionaries to implement their convictions. This was because when they ventured to express the gospel in non-western cultural forms they were condemned by the authorities at that time. We have already referred to some instances of these efforts and their consequences.

One lesson to be learned from the experiences of the early Church, as explained by Shorter, is that there is no one single universal culture. Instead, there is a plurality of cultures. Prior to the understanding of cultural pluralism, however, the Roman view of culture was one of a universal idea of civilisation. According to Shorter (1997:18), "Its opposite was barbarism, the modern equivalents of which are terms like savagery or primitiveness." This was exactly the type of mentality that some Western missionaries had when they came to Africa. Generally, people are proud of their cultures. However, it becomes a bad thing when some people think that their own culture is superior to the cultures of other people or when they try to impose their culture on others. This was the situation Africans found themselves in when the missionaries came to evangelise Africa.

The problem started because these missionaries failed to separate the Gospel of Christ from the European culture and despised the African culture. Those aspects of African culture which the missionaries did not like, they tried to do away with, sometimes with the help of colonial masters. Benezet Bujo reports a case where missionaries solicited the help and co-operation of the state in order to do away with certain customs of a particular country. Bujo (1992:44) writes:

In Zaire, Church and state were severe on ancestor-cults. A document issued in September 1923, in Stanleyville, now Kisangani, by the superiors of the Belgian Congo Mission lists customs considered harmful to public order, and requests the colonial government to take action against them. The customs included: offerings to spirits and ancestors; co-operation in ancestor rituals; dancing and hunting ceremonies; magical or religious rites on the occasion of a birth, or the appearance of the child's teeth, or circumcision, or a girl's puberty, or marriage, or illness...

In fact, one can say that almost the whole African culture that existed in that part of Africa was earmarked for destruction. When African practices were destroyed, they were replaced by what the missionaries thought were good for the Africans. In his assessment of missionary activities in Uganda by the Anglican Church, Tovey describes how Sunday worship resembled Anglican worship in Europe. Tovey describes this situation in these words:

The missionary societies, in preaching the gospel to the Africans, tended to export the worship of the parent body, either exactly the same form, or in the form that was seen to be ideal. Thus, in Uganda the first missionaries began by translating parts of the Bible and the book of common prayer. Together these two books formed the gospel as received. Hymns were from Ancient and Modern, and canticles were chanted in the Anglican way (1988:5).



It is not surprising therefore, to come across some of the words of a hymn which Africans were taught to sing. According to Tovey (1988:5), "Although there were examples to the contrary, the prevailing attitude to African culture is expressed in the first line of the hymn. Far, far away in heathen darkness dwelling--Africans lived in heathen darkness." This hymn, recorded by Tovey, clearly said everything the European missionaries had in mind about Africans and their culture in this very first line. In this spiteful attitude which the missionaries showed to African culture, it became obvious that many of them did not respect it. Tovey's supposition is correct here when he says: "If Africans were in heathen darkness, then there is no reason to be sensitive to their culture. Missionaries had come to preach, not to listen" (1988:5). In order to do away with African culture, they brought in their own culture in order to replace what was to be destroyed.

Shorter tells a story of his own experience as a student:

In 1959 an old missionary who had worked for more than fifty years in Malawi visited the seminary in Canada where I was studying theology. He showed us slides of the new Church he had built in his parish. He pointed out various statues of Saints, all connected with devotions popular in Canada: Notre Dame du Cap, St. Anne of Beaupre and St. John the Baptist, Patron of French Canadians. With just the slightest hint of a naughty twinkle in his eye, he remarked: "As you can see, we have tried to create here a little Canada" (1987:17).

This missionary was happy and also proud that he had created another Canada for the Africans, which for him would mean civilisation brought in to dispel darkness. It therefore means that, for this missionary, there was no difference between the gospel he was preaching and the Canadian culture which he had transported to Africa. Another possible way of destroying African culture was by building what the missionaries called Christian culture. The school helped to facilitate this Christian culture. Tovey (1988:5) describes this method well in these words:

As their religion penetrated all parts of their society, what was needed was to build a new Christian culture in Africa. Therefore the school became one of the major means of evangelism for it to remove children from their culture and put them in a new environment in which they could be civilised and Christianized.

In some places in Africa, the missionaries built what they called Christian villages, where only Christians were allowed to live so as to avoid any contamination by those they regarded as heathens under the power of the devil. This method was successful to these missionaries, especially when the children were separated from the rest of their family members. Keteyi (1998:23) records the type of education Africans received from the missionaries as follows:

Africans were given a basic Western education, taught Christian doctrine in combination with British cultural values, and encouraged to denounce “uncivilised” local customs, such as initiation, polygamy and lobola (the transfer of cattle on marriage), that were fundamental to African social solidarity.

It was in the process of educating these children, that they were taught not only to denounce their culture, but also to hate what was central to them. Missionaries went as far as rejecting all African names when they were baptizing their converts. Many African names are very meaningful to the Africans, yet none of them was considered appropriate for the Christian. This rejection of African names is well depicted in these two stanzas of a poem recorded by Bujo:

He says  
 He has left behind  
 All sinful things  
 And all superstitions and fears.  
 He says  
 He has no wish  
 To be associated anymore  
 With the devil.

Pagan names he says  
 Belong to sinners  
 Who will burn  
 In everlasting fires:  
 Ocol insists  
 He must be called  
 By his Christian name (1992:46).

It was difficult to convince an African who had fully adopted a European name that African names were equally good and meaningful, names such as: “Nne Amaka” Mother is good, “Ugo Chi” the radiance of God, “Ebere Chi” the mercy of God in Nigerian Igbo; or “Chipo” Gift, “Nyasha” Mercy and “Ngoni” Pity or compassion in Zimbabwean Shona.

Thanks to God that Vatican II Council came to restore things to order. Africans can now use their beautiful and meaningful names at baptism. It is better if a person chooses to answer to a name he or she likes than if he or she is forced to adopt certain names. Our aim here is not to expose all the things the missionaries did to destroy African culture. There were good aspects of missionary work which helped Africans.

Bujo acknowledges that not all missionary practices were negative. He writes, "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 between the positive and negative elements in the culture" (1998:48). Thus, the missionaries also played an important role to safeguard Africans from some dangerous cultural elements which the society accepted. Nobody would, for example, commend a tradition whereby a woman was subjected to an inhuman treatment for four weeks without bathing after the burial of her husband. The missionaries helped also to bring to an end such obnoxious practices in African societies. Shorter makes a good list of these achievements of missionaries, which may be summarised thus:

Whatever their shortcomings, Christian missionaries...place great importance on speaking and recording the vernacular language, which is the principal mechanism of culture. The decision to translate the Bible into the vernacular, to conduct religious education and to compose liturgical texts and hymns in the vernacular, not only created a mother-tongue literacy, but also prompted an indigenous cultural revival (1999:69).

A good example of what Shorter says here can be seen in Zimbabwe, where the translation of the Bible made by the Dutch Reformed and Lutheran Churches played a significant role in the development of the Karanga language, which later became the modern Shona language. The contributions of these missionaries also helped to bring about some cultural awareness among Africans which led to the idea of African Theology. Bujo also affirms these contributions by saying:

I am not underestimating the pioneer work of some missionaries in the area of culture. Who could forget the Franciscan, Placide Temples, whose careful research provided modern African theology with its first inspiration? Then there was Siegfried Hertlein, who produced important studies on missionary activity of German Benedictines in Southern Tanzania, who were open very early to the idea of an African theology (1992:48).

A critical analysis of the past mistakes of the missionaries, especially in the area of culture, may lead to anger and hurt. On the other hand, it can also lead to a positive direction which, according to Tovey, “opens up the question of inculturation” (1988:5). That is, inculturation is now a challenge to us Africans. Instead of the feeling of hurt, anger and hatred, Africans ought to be considerate in their judgement. This is because some of the missionaries must have acted in ignorance of the situation they found themselves in and also as a result of lack of adequate preparation of where they were going. Hastings brings this out in this statement:

But the tendency to condemn African things in toto came not only from actual observation but even more from ignorance on the part of foreigners. African societies are so different from anything he has hitherto acquainted with, that without some special training in interpretation, the missionary found himself clueless and revolted. A special training in anthropology in the study of such societies, was what the missionary needed and still does desperately need, but what he did not, and still, for the most part, does not receive (1967:61).

This is not a way of excusing the missionaries. Instead, I think it is a way of encouraging other-would be missionaries to be well prepared for the mission work. Thus, we Africans who are now missionaries to ourselves have learnt a great lesson from these western missionaries. The question of inculturation is not only a challenge to all Africans, but also a “necessity” (*Instrumentum Laboris* 1993:44). Vatican II Council has always encouraged all Christians to renounce every negative and aggressive attitude to culture, and to participate in the building up of human culture. When we are dealing with culture, therefore, we have to be sensitive to other peoples’ feelings, bearing in mind what Vatican II Council said: “Although the Church has contributed much to the development of culture, experience shows that, because of circumstances, it is sometimes difficult to harmonise culture with Christian teaching” (*Gaudium Et Spes* 62).

We can say, therefore, that Christianity, especially since Vatican II Council, has a good intention to promote culture every time and everywhere. However, some individuals or groups sometimes overlook this intention, which often results in the destabilisation of other peoples’ cultures. Our aim as Africans is not to point accusing fingers at Western missionaries. Instead, it is to see how we can use African cultural values to build up an authentic African Church. Thus, our next discussion is on the evangelisation of cultures.

#### 4. 5 Evangelisation of Cultures.

In the previous chapter and sections of this chapter we have looked at the concepts of inculturation and culture as they affect religion, specifically Christianity. We have referred briefly to the place of culture in the proclamation of the gospel. Our concern in this section is to examine how cultures could be evangelised. Let us look at the way the Fathers of the 1994 African Synod viewed Evangelisation.

Evangelisation is a complex process made up of complementary and mutually enriching elements, such as proclamation of Christ to non-believers, in adherence to Christ, entry into the community witness and apostolic initiative. It also includes human promotion, and the transformation of cultures and unjust structures of society (*Instrumentum Laboris* 1993:12).

We do not intend to talk about all these elements that make up evangelisation. However, it suffices to say that they are, in one way or another, connected. This is because before we come to the last element, which is our main concern here, that is, “transformation of culture and unjust structures of society”, there must be those people sent to proclaim the gospel to those who have not previously believed in the message of Christ. The important question, therefore, is how cultures are evangelised.

I think we can look for a clue from Pope Paul VI’s statement, where he says:

With the human person as the starting point and always coming back to the relationship of people among themselves and with God, every effort must be made to ensure the full evangelisation of culture, or more correctly, of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the gospel is not proclaimed (1975:20).

Two issues are involved here, namely, the gospel which must be preached or proclaimed, and the individual who must be the starting point. The first thing, therefore, is the need for men and women to be evangelised. This means continual renewal and conversion. According to *Instrumentum Laboris* (1993:11-12), “the purpose of evangelisation is precisely this interior change.” The second aspect of Pope Paul VI’s statement is the gospel. Here the Vatican II Council said about the goodness of Christ:

The goodness of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man. It combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from sinful allurements which are a perpetual threat. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples... It strengthens, perfects, and restores them in Christ (*Gaudium Et Spes* No.58).

In other words, the Council Fathers are aware of the fact that there are imperfections in human beings which also affect the culture, since culture is the product of human beings. When the gospel is preached it brings real change in human beings, it purifies and elevates the morality of peoples. The resultant effect of this is what we call conversion. Therefore there is need for constant interior renewal and conversion. I would like to conclude this discussion by referring to the synthesis made by Dhavamony on inculturation and evangelisation of culture. In this synthesis, Dhavamony has this to say:

The process of inculturation concerns the gospel in as far as it has to be inserted into the culture, this is formally called the inculturation of the gospel. If it concerns the culture in as much as it is assumed and purified by the gospel, then it is called the evangelisation of culture (1997:43).

What we are saying, in effect, is that in the process of evangelisation of cultures, those aspects of culture that are not good are transformed and those that are good are elevated, then both are made use of for the service of the gospel. Surely, there are many good cultural values in Africa which are useful for the spread of the gospel. Our next task is to examine how these cultural values will be used to build an authentic African Church.

#### **4. 6 Values In African Culture.**

Our aim in this section is to examine those aspects of culture that are peculiar and also very important to Africans. In the first place, we are happy that in our time we can talk of African culture because the time of a monolithic culture is gone, when some people were regarded as uncivilised and without culture. Shorter (1997:18) observes on this in these words:

For nearly sixteen centuries, from late Roman times until our own, a mono-cultural view of the world held sway among bishops, theologians and thinkers of the Catholic Church... Culture during these centuries, was a single, universal, normative concept.

We can say thanks to the anthropologists, who came up with the idea of cultural pluralism. In our discussion of African cultural values we will give examples of these in some countries and then make a general conclusion. Our starting point is well presented in a statement made by Pope John Paul II, who has this to say:

Although Africa is very rich in natural resources, it remains economically poor. At the same time, it is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole (1995:33).

If Africans at this time cannot offer financial help to the world, they can at least offer other things which the Pope mentions. Some of the cultural values in Africa, if well channelled, could be useful in building up the African Church which other continents could also copy. There are many African cultural values which one can mention. However, for the purpose of this discussion, we have selected only seven of them, namely:

extended Family System/Familial solidarity,

sense of community life,

sense of sacredness of life,

sense of hospitality,

sense of the respect of the elders,

sense of the sacred and of religion,

sense of the use of proverbs.

#### **4.6.1 Extended Family System/ Familial Solidarity.**

It is generally said in Africa that “the isolated self is an abstraction, it is unreal” (Schineller 1990:76). This statement is true because a real African family is based on the extended family system, where there are many people ranging from grand-parents, parents, children, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces etc. Thus, it is unusual to see someone isolated. In this system, a nuclear family is not talked about. From the time a child is born into a family, the child becomes the gift and concern of everybody. It is because of the extended family system that we have the proverb which says, “a child is not owned by one person alone.” In spite of their age, grand-parents are useful when it comes to looking after little children. When the parents go out, it falls on the grand-parents to take care of the children. These children in turn keep the grand-parents busy and company, thereby minimising the loneliness or isolation syndrome. In the extended family system, everyone is cared for. No one looks for his or her own fortune alone.

The thought of many dependents will always go with the person no matter where he or she may be. The idea that one has to take care of so many people makes one to be hardworking, responsible, wise and generous. Children have the responsibility to look after their old parents and even grand-parents till death. Thus, there are no such institutions as “old people’s homes” or other such places to take care of old people. Children take care of their parents and grand-parents out of love and in order to show them gratitude for all their sacrifices on the children’s behalf.

They also take care of the parents so as to avoid the powerful curse parents may place on them towards their time of death. That is, the curse is for those who neglected their parents during the parents’ life-time. While Westerners place more value on their bank accounts, Africans count on the praises, appreciations and blessings they receive from the extended family members they have taken care of. Schineller describes the extended family responsibility thus:

Loyalty to and support for one’s family are primary. One is one’s brother’s and sister’s keeper. The key image of sin is separation, isolation from the family and breaking family solidarity. One always remembers and returns to one’s roots in so far as possible, even if one has moved to a different location (1990:76).

In the African extended family system, moments of joy, misfortunes and sorrows are shared together. The extended family system also offers security in the sense that someone in the family is always there to help. The extended family does not encourage laziness or over-dependence, as its detractors often claim.

When we talk of the Church as a family of God, the extended family becomes an ideal. This is so because everyone is a member. No one is an outsider or an alien. The support each member receives helps to make one grow and feel a sense of belonging. The African Church, therefore, must be modelled on the form of the extended family, where, like the Acts of the Apostles, “there was not a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34). That is, a situation where no one lacks the basic needs for physical and spiritual growth. Again, the extended family system helps to promote respect and reverence shown to the ancestors who are the children’s dead parents.



Speaking about the ancestors, Pope John Paul II said, “they [that is Africans] believe intuitively that the dead continue to love and remain in communion with them. Is this not in some way a preparation for belief in the communion of saints”? (1995:33-34). The love members of the family have for their dead ones is also a rich treasure which Africans can bequeath to the world since this respect for the dead relative prepares people’s minds for the belief of the Church’s teaching in the communion of saints. That is, the people on earth can ask for the intercession of the saints, and the saints in turn, can also intercede for those who have asked for their help.

#### **4.6.2 Sense of Community:**

The extended family prepares one to easily identify with the wider community. This is because the sense of communalism is already acquired in the extended family system. Onwubiko is right here when he says, “therefore, the authentic African is known and identified in, by and through his community” (1991:14). An African proverb says “community is strength.” Since the community is the custodian of the individual, he or she must go wherever the community is. In African community life, people who have sudden misfortunes are readily helped through communal cooperation. When someone’s house is burnt, it is repaired or rebuilt immediately, no matter the time of the day. The joyful part of it is that it is done happily and freely. Onwubiko records a very appealing description of this fact in these words:

When a job had to be done, the whole community turned out with supplies and music and proceeded to sing and dance its way through to the successful conclusion of each particular chore. In this way work was converted into a pleasurable productive pastime (1991:16).

Orphaned children of poor parents have been sponsored through communal efforts. In Nigeria, for example, when such a situation arose, a whole village would agree that the proceeds of the palm nuts would be used to solve the problem. By so doing, many people were sent overseas for studies.

Former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, had a philosophy of “Ujamaa”, which means “togetherness.” This philosophy really supports this idea of African community life. Commenting on this philosophy, Onwubiko says: Applied to team work and agriculture, Ujamaa means “block farm system.” In the philosophy of Ujamaa, Nyerere’s idea is that African traditions should serve as the basis for all future African development (1991:17). African families always encourage their children to identify with the community and share what ever they have with the community. When people work together, there is progress and development. The Church which Africans need now is a self reliant Church. This self reliant Church can only come about when people join hands together to build up the Church. The African Church can learn something from the traditional communal life in Africa so as to build up a self reliant Church. This is necessary to minimise the over dependence of the African Church on American and European Churches.

#### **4.6.3 Sense of Sacredness of Life:**

In the words of Pope John Paul II, “The sons and daughters of Africa love life” (1995:33). Schineller expresses almost the same idea in this way: “Perhaps the most central value that one observes in Nigeria is a wonderful respect for and love of life” (1990:79). Since Africans value life, they regard it as sacred. Life is respected and valued. Thus, an effort is made to protect it. It was unusual, therefore, for one to deliberately kill a fellow kinsman or woman. The following statement illustrates this point well:

In many (African) tribes the killing of a kinsman, the antithesis of caring for him, was not only a crime but also an abomination. After the murderer has been executed, his family would have to perform sacrifices and rites to remove the stain of evil and ward off the anger of the gods (Onwubiko 1991:22).

In our modern world, where life does not count as much as honour and progress, the respect Africans traditionally have for life can be a good lesson. Africans valued the life of an individual not because of what he or she had or what the person could achieve. This is a good lesson for the world in general. Loving people as they are gives a sense of belonging to all and especially to handicapped people. This is because most of the handicapped people depend on others for their livelihood. When they are loved as they are, the agony of being handicapped is minimised.

Since the traditional Africans value life and hold it as sacred, they also respect and protect both the unborn and the infants. This is another place where traditional Africans have something to contribute to the church and to modern society where there are many frequent cases of abortion and baby dumping. However, it is equally regrettable to point out here that those children whose births were regarded as an abomination in some African traditional cultures were “allowed” to die. For example: twin children and those who produced upper teeth first.

#### **4.6.4 Sense of Hospitality.**

Traditional Africans have a good and welcoming spirit to their visitors. Recognising this practice among the present generation, Onwubiko has this to say: “The African sense of hospitality is one of the African values that is still quite alive” (1991:23). Thus, Africans in general have a tremendous spirit of welcoming others in their culture. The main reason for this great respect for visitors and their acceptance is illustrated in the belief which Africans have, namely: “Let the guest come so that the host or hostess may benefit (get well)”. (Healey 1996: 168). Describing how a visitor is received in Kenya and Tanzania, Healey has this to say:

When a person approaches a house in Kenya or Tanzania, the first thing the householder will say is *Karibu* ( the Swahili word for “come close” or “welcome”). The host or hostess will drop everything to welcome the visitor, make the guest feel at home, enjoy a friendly conversation, and serve food and drink ( 1996:168).

In Zimbabwe, the visitor is gladly received with *titambire*, a Shona word expressing welcome. When the visitor enters the house, a very hearty greeting is expressed by the clapping of hands which is followed by a conversation and entertainment. Africans have a symbolic way of expressing welcome. While the Igbos and Ibibios in Nigeria use Kola nut, the Haya in Tanzania and the Baganda in Uganda use a coffee bean. Explaining the symbolic meaning of the coffee bean, Healey records this statement: “Rita Ishengoma explains that as a symbol of charity and unity, coffee beans are passed out among visitors and friends for chewing to impart love, warm-hearted welcome and the wish for long life” (1996:169). In this traditional gesture, we can see that love, unity and long life are symbolically expressed.

The visitor as well as the host or hostess cherish love, unity and long life. In this ritual, therefore, one notices friendship and good relationship. In Nigeria, the Igbos use kola nut to show love, peace and unity which are very important to life. This explains why it is said the person who brings kola, brings life. Emphasising the importance of this life, Uzukwu has this to say: "The Igbos of Nigeria present kola-nut in and through life and values of one's universe are shared (as the prayer for the breaking of the kola-nuts shows)" (1998:159). Kola nut is a round nut which normally contains two or four pieces. These pieces are broken into smaller pieces so that everybody present there, has a share.

In Africa, there are many stories and proverbs which are told in order to illustrate the importance of hospitality. Healey records one such story in these words:

Once upon a time there was a poor man who did not have a job or a place to stay. Finally he went with his dog to the palace of the Sukuma chief. The chief warmly received the man with his dog. The poor man was accepted as part of the royal family and both he and his dog were fed by the chief. Later on, enemies came to kill the chief. The dog barked, the alarm was sounded, the chief escaped and his life was saved (1996:170).

This story confirms what was said earlier that a visitor comes with a blessing. Here, the life of the king has been saved by the presence of the visitor and his dog. This is a practical blessing brought by the visitor. This (poor) man was regarded as a visitor because he was not a member of that family. Therefore, he deserved African hospitality, his social status or his aim for going to the chief's palace notwithstanding. Another blessing brought by a visitor can also be found in a statement which says that the presence of a visitor heals. For example, in a family where there is a quarrel, as soon as a visitor arrives, the quarrel is buried so that the whole family members will join hands together to welcome and entertain the visitor. In this case, the presence of the visitor helps to restore peace in that family. Sometimes even when a person is sick, he or she cheers up and gets out of bed in order to welcome the visitor. Thus we can say that "visitors are social healers--they are family doctors in a sense" (Healey 1996:174).

Visitors are always received with open arms even when what they will be served with is in short supply. Africans believe that it is not what the visitor eats that will finish the food. Thus they maintain that, “if there is food enough for three, there is enough for five or for six” (Schineller 1990:79). A visitor usually goes back to where he or she came from. The Sukuma proverb illustrates this by saying: “The bed that a guest uses will eventually be empty” (Healey 1996:171). This idea is supported by Onwubiko when he says: “for the African, one cannot opt out of his original community completely. So they did not imagine that others could” (1991:23). When a visitor comes, he or she is well incorporated into the community where land is offered to him or her for settlement. Obviously, the owner of the land takes back the land when the visitor leaves the place.

Africans believe that by treating a visitor well, one will also be treated well when one becomes a visitor in another place. Here in Zimbabwe, it is said in Shona: *Usatuke verwendo rutsoka ndimarase*. This means : Do not scold people on a journey, foot has no nose. This act of hospitality is similar to the Christian Bible teaching referred to as the golden rule: “In everything do to others what you would have them do to you: for this is by the law and the prophet” (Matthew 7:12). Again, the principle of “let the guest come so that the host or hostess may benefit” (Healey 1996:168) is similar to the Biblical instruction which says: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained Angels without knowing it” (Hebrew 13:2). Finally, as Jesus was a guest to the shepherds of Bethlehem and brought them good news, so was he to Zacchaeus at his house and to the two going to Emmaus. These he also brought good news. In the same way, African hospitality will help Africans to welcome Christ well so that he will not only settle among them, but he will become part of them and be deeply rooted in their culture. Real African hospitality challenges the trend in our modern time where strangers are viewed with suspicion.

In urban areas, strangers are barred from entering a family residence with a written warning: *Chenjera! Imbwa*. Beware of Dogs in Shona, and “Mbwa Kali (Swahili for Angry Dog)” (Healey 1996:197). In recent times, many people have been tricked by those who claimed to be visitors. Often they were not true and trustworthy visitors. Our present strangers must learn from our ancestors how to be trustworthy in order to avoid suspicion.

The message of Christ must reach every soul and every family. Thus, we must be open to welcome and share with each other the word of God. Hospitality can help us in our inculturation when we trust one another and show it by the way we welcome, greet and share at the Eucharistic Celebration.

#### **4.6.5 Sense of Respect for Elders.**

Africans have respect for their elders. Generally, African culture encourages the young to respect those who are their seniors. The elders we are talking about here are the aged, normally described as all those with grey hairs. This respect is genuine because one may not be expecting any material benefits from these elders. A statement by William Conton as, recorded by Onwubiko, makes reference to this point :

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 to courtesy and politeness (in Onwubiko 1991:28).

There are certain reasons why Africans have deep and genuine respect for their elders. Among these reasons are that elders are believed to be people with great wisdom, they are truthful, are regarded as teachers and directors of the young, and are said to be closer to the ancestors. There are more reasons than these why Africans respect their elders. In African traditional society, where there was no written document, the elders were taken to be “the repository of communal wisdom” (Onwubiko 1991:28). This means that they were consulted for information. Thus, a person who wanted to know about the real history of a particular village or society had to consult the elders of that village or society. This role played by the elders was very important because it was one of the ways the tradition and culture of a place was passed on to the younger generations. Elders are teachers and directors of the young. Since they are people who have experienced a lot of whatever life could afford, they have a lot to share with the young ones. They do this first of all by their exemplary lives. The young look at them as their models. They share their life experience through story telling. This has a lot of impact on the young.

A Shona proverb says: "*Chembere ndiye shumba yemombe inodyiwa nyama.*" This means: A person of old age should not be treated with disrespect in society because he is the source of the generation now growing up. The proverb is quoted against young people who are inclined to despise old age.

Africans also honour their ancestors and regard them highly. Africans not only respect their ancestors, they also expect them to help their families with good fortune. Ancestors are very close to their family members. Hence Nyamiti (1984:16) calls them "the living dead." Since the elders are very close to the ancestors, they are honoured and respected so that when they also become ancestors, they will take good care of their families. People fear to offend the elders because their curses are believed to be very effective. The role elders play as teachers in which they teach the young through story telling could be helpful in promoting inculturation in Africa. Story telling may be integrated into our catechesis, where the office of elders could be created to do this work. This story telling would make use of African traditions, culture and those values that are important to Africans. This method of story telling would help the recipients to be deeply rooted in their culture and tradition.

#### **4.6.6 Sense of the Sacred and Religion.**

Traditional Africans have a deep sense of religion and they are committed to their religion. According to Arinze (1990:251), "African religion intimately penetrates all the manifestations of social life. There is no dichotomy between the spiritual order and the material order, between the religious and the temporal, between the sacred and the profane." Since religion and social life are intertwined, the divine influence is felt continually at all times and at all places. However, there is awe when one approaches sacred shrines. It was Sarpong who described well the relationship between an African and his religion. This is what Sarpong said: "To the African, religion is like the skin that you carry along with you wherever you go, not like the cloth that you wear now and discard the next moment" (In Healey 1996:191). It is on this basis that religion is a way of life for the Africans. An African traditional person has deep respect for his religious shrine, which he regards as sacred. The presence of a religious shrine evokes awe. This is because it is a "zone within which the object of faith or divine reality is encountered, as intimately present" (Shorter 1998:42).

A traditional African is always conscious of the presence of the divine. The consciousness guides him in all his activities and more in religious matters. Hence Onwubiko says: “The sense of awe and the idea of the sacred filled the African as he approached religious elements and matters” (1991:24). This sense of the sacred enables a traditional African to live always in the presence of the divine.

A religious outlook in Africa extends to activities which are regarded as social matters. On the other hand, the type of life Christians live on Sunday when they are in their Churches is different from the life they live on ordinary days and when they are involved in other activities. Thus, it is common to hear Christians saying “we are now in business, when we are in Church, we know that we are in Church.” There is a dichotomy between life within the context of the Church on Sunday, and life lived outside this context. The African sense of the sacred and religion will help inculturation in Africa through a complete integration of religious and social activities. This will help people to live good lives always whether they are in Church, in the market, in the office, at the playing grounds and at merry making places.

#### **4.6.7 Sense of the Use of Proverbs.**

Africans, especially old people, like to blend their speeches with proverbs. This is because, according to the Yoruba and Igbo people in Nigeria, proverbs are very important in communicating ideas. Onwubiko refers to two sayings in these words: “The Yoruba say that proverbs are horses we ride to search for truth. In another way, the Igbos say that proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (1991:31). This means that proverbs are used to teach important values which reflect the ways of society. This idea is well expressed in a statement recorded by Healey:

Proverbs are a mirror in which a community can look at itself and stage on which it exposes itself to others. They describe its values, aspirations, preoccupation and the particular angles from which it seeks and appreciates realities and behaviour. What we call mentality or way of life is best pictured in them (1996:35).



Every society in Africa expects its members to know its own proverbs. This is because proverbs are a way of life. Thus, it is unusual for an adult member of an African society to expect an explanation of a proverb used. It is presumed that as a member of that society, he/she should know the meaning and message of the proverb. It is said that only a fool or a visitor expects the explanation of a proverb. Onwubiko (1991:31) stresses the importance of knowing proverbs by saying, "In short, the use and understanding of proverbs mark the adult usage and maturity in a language." It is the duty of the elders to teach the young ones the proverbs. Even though elders are generally respected, those of them who are well gifted and well versed in proverbs attract more respect. Young adults go to such elders in order to tap the wealth of their wisdom. In this process, every aspect of the community's life is imparted to the young.

Proverbs touch every aspect of the life of the people who create them. There are proverbs on political, social, educational, religious and economic issues. There are those which have been passed down from one person to the other, for generations. Then there are new ones which have been created about modern and current life styles and experiences of our time (Healey 1996:35).

When an elder is teaching a youngster who refuses to listen, the elder uses a proverb which can bring the young person to an understanding. For example: When a warning is given and the ear refuses to listen, when the head is cut off, the ear goes with it. Again, the lesson about the importance of behaving well in a society is illustrated by a proverb which says: One finger gets the oil, which is used to rub all the other fingers.

Again, truth is revealed in proverbs, which only those who know the importance of proverbs can understand. The following Tanzanian proverb brings out this idea clearly: "I pointed out to you the stars (the moon) and all you saw was the tip of my finger" (Healey 1996:17). Since proverbs touch every aspect of life, they fit in properly at every situation and celebration. Proverbs are important for inculturation because they can also be used in catechetical instructions. When they are well adapted to the situation, they can play a similar role to the one played by the parables used by Jesus in the Gospels. Thinking along this line, Shorter has this to say:

Proverbs and riddles offer possibilities in the field of religious education and catechetical instruction. However, once again attention has to be paid to the essential meaning of the African text, rather than to any superficial similarity (1999:107).

Proverbs also would be very helpful in sermons. They help to capture the interest of the people and communicate messages easily to those who understand them.

#### **4.7 Conclusion.**

Every society on earth has its own philosophy of life, its own language, religious traditions and practices, art, in short, its own culture. Thus, culture is very important to every society. In this sense, culture is pluralistic and dynamic. The understanding of this pluralistic view of culture, however, is “relatively recent” (Shorter 1997:18), the view in which culture is no longer viewed from one perspective only, that is, from the Western perspective.

This chapter has tried to look at culture in different ways, such as the relationships between religion and culture, Christianity and culture, evangelisation and culture. We also examined the values in African culture. We found out that Africa has a rich cultural heritage which can be used to promote inculturation in Africa. Though Christ incarnated himself into the Jewish culture, the message of good-news is for everybody in the world. Therefore, the gospel is for all peoples and cultures. Thus, the gospel must also take root in African culture so that it will be meaningful to Africans. For their part, Africans must make use of their cultural values in order to build up an authentic African Church. It is important to have a gradual but systematic implementation of inculturation in our churches in order to build an authentic African Church. In the next chapter we intend to examine how this inculturation has been implemented so far.

## **CHAPTER 5: INCULTURATION IN AFRICAN CHURCHES: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In our previous chapters, we have discussed the theme of inculturation in terms of its origin, definition and meaning, importance and its process. In this chapter, we consider the practical aspect of inculturation. In order to demonstrate this practical aspect, we consider here how inculturation is practised in the Catholic liturgy. If theory is not backed up by practice, the effort cannot be much fruitful. In his foreword to Francois Lumbala's book, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa* (1998: xi), David Power comments: "However many the theoretical discussions of liturgy and culture, it is in the practice of worship that one sees what is involved and from it that insight is gained into the process... ." It is in the celebration of liturgy that one can say whether inculturation is going on or not. Vatican II is clear on this point when it says: "The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (1966: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 2).

Our concern here will be mainly with the continent of Africa. We will limit ourselves again to the Eastern, Southern and Western Regions of the continent. In these regions, we will examine some of the approaches the Bishops' conferences have adopted in order to promote inculturation. We will generalise with examples from some countries, while our main references will be Zimbabwe and sometimes Nigeria. We will examine some sacraments, like baptism, the Eucharist and marriage, to see how they have been inculturated in the African context. We will also look at the role inculturation plays in healing and in Christian burial. The discussion on healing will focus more on mission churches to see if there is a healing ministry in these churches. Our discussions and examples in this chapter will be based mainly on the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. In chapter 6 we examine the place of inculturation in other mission Churches, like the Anglican and the Methodist Churches in Zimbabwe, as well as in some African independent churches, like Vapostori and Aladura.

These churches have been selected here because of the significant roles they are playing in the development of Christianity in Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular. It is important to study the place of inculturation also in non-Catholic Churches, in order to know what the Catholic Church can learn from them and also as a way of promoting ecumenism and dialogue. Furthermore, it is hoped that our findings in this chapter will encourage our non-Catholic fellow Christians in Zimbabwe to engage in research on inculturation as it relates to their churches, an area where not much has yet been done.

## **5.2 Inculturation In The Catholic church.**

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) brought many innovations into the Catholic Church. One such innovation is to involve the people of God in participating actively during church celebrations. In this effort to encourage the faithful, Vatican II declares:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people” (1 Pet. 2:9 cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism (1966: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14).

In Africa, the recorded areas of inculturation are aimed at encouraging active participation among the people of God, as well as to get Christianity deeply rooted in African culture. The Inter-Regional Members of Bishops Conferences of Southern Africa (IMBISA) gives a list of efforts to promote inculturation in this order:

- African Dances during offertory: dances done mainly by women and the youth.
- Dramatising the readings to make the Holy Mass more lively and ensure wider participation.
- Use of Small Christian Communities to enhance brotherhood/sisterhood and togetherness.
- Zairean mass which has incorporated many elements which are truly African.
- In architecture, churches and chapels are sometimes built in “round hut” African design, and in art the images of Jesus and Mary are portrayed in black colour.
- African food crops offered at Mass.
- Rotation days adapted and changed into the days of planting, with the blessing of seeds, cultivating tools and seeds whereby each blessing is followed by the appropriate action.
- Holy week given some “local” culture element e. g., in Tanzania during good Friday, some parishes have a mourning celebration (IMBISA 1993: 55-56).

Here, IMBISA mentions only the Zairean Mass, but Karecki (1990), Francois Lumbala (1998) and Uzuoku (1982) include the Ndzon-Melen Mass of Cameroon in their lists as one of the African inculturated Masses.

The list we have given here indicates some areas of inculturation in Africa. We shall examine these points in detail in the next sections, entitled “sacraments”, where they fit in properly. There are some institutions which act as power-sources in the promotion of inculturation. These institutions are found in different countries of Africa. Some of these institutions include: the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Port Harcourt, Nigeria; Commission for Catechesis and Liturgy in Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta; Lumko in South Africa; Pastoral Institute in Eldoret, Kenya; Pastoral centre in Harare, Zimbabwe; and so on. These institutions have helped and are still helping to promote inculturation in Africa through lectures, seminars, workshops and publications. In the field of theological research, *Instrumentum Laboris* adds: “There is intense activity, for example, doctoral theses are being written and periodicals and books are being published” (1993:48). Thus in 1996, the pastoral centre in Harare published a booklet on *Liturgical inculturation*. While we commend the efforts mentioned above, there is still need for improvement on them. The improvement will come when every Christian is involved in this process of inculturation and when more effort is made to explain the process to the people through an organised Catechesis. If efforts are made to explain well what is happening in the area of inculturation, this will enable every Christian to take part, which will bring about the success of inculturation in Zimbabwe and in Africa. Inculturation will be a success in Africa when it is not imposed on the people. That is why it is important to explain its every aspect to people at the grass-roots. Thus, more publications, workshops and seminars are needed. This is a challenge to these institutions.

In the following sections we explain how inculturation is carried out in the Catholic Church. In these sections we also look at the importance of the sacraments. We have selected a few of these sacraments for illustration because of the place they occupy in the church. The first three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist are regarded as sacraments of Christian initiation. They lay the foundations of Christian life. Marriage and burial are also important because they follow the stages of human development. Commenting on all the seven sacraments of the church, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes: “The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of the Christian life: they give birth and increase healing and mission to the Christian’s life of faith” (1994:276).

The seven Sacraments are baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony. Through baptism the people of God are born anew and are strengthened by the sacrament of confirmation. In the Eucharist they receive the food of eternal life. This is possible in the Catholic faith because it is Christ himself that is received in the Holy Eucharist, Christ who is life. Since the sacraments give life, especially in the Holy Eucharist, sacraments in general are equally important to Africans because life is important to them. Any celebration that is communal is well received by Africans. Hence, communal sharing, as in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, is important to them because life is shared. Healey echoes this sentiment when he writes: "Food and drink taken in common are obvious signs that life is shared" (1996:254). Our concern about these sacraments is to examine how they relate to inculturation. However, we will first try to explain briefly their meaning and their importance to the church in general and to Africa in particular.

### 5. 2. 1 Sacraments.

We would like to begin by examining how sacraments are administered and understood in the context of inculturation in Africa. The Catholic Church in Africa accepts the seven sacraments ordained by the Church. This is because the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that: "That whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments" (1994:255). In his treatment of sacraments in general in the book *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Duffy has a good definition of a sacrament. According to him,

A sacrament, ... is a presence-filled event in which God gratuitously enables us to welcome the message of salvation, to enter more deeply into the paschal mystery, and to receive gratefully that transforming and healing power that gathers us as a community of God's children so as to announce the reign of God in the power of the Spirit (1991:185).

This definition is all-encompassing in the sense that it tries to bring out the gratuitous and enabling character of God's offer of salvation as proclaimed in the gospel. It highlights not only the ecclesial context within which a sacrament is celebrated, but it also emphasises the sacramental healing and strengthening which the church and its members need.

Ndiokwere maintains that: “The sacrament remains the life-wire of the Church as long as it is celebrated and as many times as it is celebrated, the salvific action of Christ Himself is manifested in the Church” (1994b:98). Thus, the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify the people of God, to build up the body of Christ and to give worship to God. This idea is well enshrined in Vatican II in these words: “Sacraments do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful more effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly and to practise Charity” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1966:59). The sacraments not only sanctify, nourish and strengthen the life of Christians, they also instruct. “Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it; that is why they are called sacraments of faith” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1966:59). That is, the church celebrates the sacraments in faith and its members receive them in faith.

That is why St. Augustine defines a sacrament as “the visible form of invisible grace and a sign of a sacred thing” (*Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopaedia* 1991:849). We can say, therefore, that the sacraments are at the disposal of the church, which uses them to sanctify the people of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sums the idea of sacraments in these words: “Sacraments are powers that come from the body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his body, the church. They are the masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant” (1994:256). In Catholic faith Christ works through the members of his church especially through the ordained ministers to administer the sacraments to the people of God at whatever stage one finds oneself from birth to death.

It is obvious that the celebration and administration of the sacraments can only be meaningful to the recipients when enough time is given both to their preparation and to their celebration. That is, the ministers who administer these sacraments or those they delegate must take time to explain what a recipient is receiving and its importance to the life of the recipient. All the activity regarding the sacraments must be done in the language the people will understand. It is not helpful either to hurry over the administration of the sacraments without the people understanding what they are receiving.

Thus, in order to realise the impact of the sacraments as well as to achieve a full integration of church and culture, it becomes necessary to explore ways of making these sacramental celebrations more meaningful to those receiving them. This is where the recommendation recorded by Ndiokwere becomes meaningful:

Such contextualisation of the sacraments would enable the people to see their lives as one integrated whole, as was traditionally the case, instead of living in the two compartmentalised worlds of church and culture. This approach would also bring the purification and transformation of these traditional customs where necessary. Through it, Christ in his members will observe and give worth to our rites and customs even as he did once to Jewish customs and practices (1994b:99-100).

Furthermore, the celebration of these sacraments will be meaningful when they are celebrated in the context of communal celebration, as it is the case in African traditional celebrations. Healey sees the community celebration of these seven sacraments as possible when he says: "There is also a distinct communal or community dimension of the seven sacraments from an African point of view, the stress on inclusiveness and sharing rather than on individualism" (1996:152). Here, the small Christian community becomes a useful instrument for the service of the church.

In the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, for an example, the family members of the sick person, the community and the priest must be present to pray and anoint the sick person. Where the laying of hands is allowed, all present lay hands on the sick and pray over him or her. The idea of involving the people in the celebration of the sacraments is what Francois Lumbala describes in the context of liturgy as real witnessing. Describing this context, Lumbala writes:

The liturgy is a place where the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste determine the objects, arrange the space, organise the relationship and the contact among persons. If some one puts water on our head for baptism, it is because we are a body that, being covered with soot, gets dirty and needs to be washed away. If we eat and drink at the Eucharist, it is because our survival depends on the meal. The liturgy involves seeing, hearing, and tasting because it concerns people" (1998:2).

The sacraments are, indeed, occasions and moments when inculturation can be implemented in Africa. We shall now examine some of these sacraments to see how they are inculturated in the Catholic Church in Africa.



### 5.2.1.1 Baptism

Our first consideration among the chosen sacraments is baptism, viewed in the Catholic perspective. *Our Sunday Visitors Catholic Encyclopaedia* has this to say on baptism:

Baptism is a sacrament in which, by pouring water upon a person or immersing him in water, and using the words, "I baptise you in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit," the one baptised is cleansed of the original sin (and in the case of one who has reached the age of reason) of particular sin; one is incorporated into Christ and made a member of his Body the Church..." (1991:114).

Generally, Roman Catholics baptise by pouring water on the head of the person to be baptised while Pentecostal Churches and some indigenous Churches, like "VaPostori", baptise by immersion. Korse states: "In the early Church, people were baptised in a river or a brook" (2000:127). Acts. 8:36-38, Rom. 6:3, Col. 2:12 and Eph. 5:26 illustrate this point. In his own account on how baptism was practised in the post-apostolic times, Oosthuizen (1987:12) gives a similar account saying: "During the end of the first and the beginning of the third century, the baptismal ritual itself became established; namely, (a) laying on of hands and (b) baptism had to take place in the running water as was already the case with John the Baptist" (Acts. 8:36, Heb. 10:22). On the other hand, explaining how the practice of pouring water became a norm, Piet Korse (2000:127) has this to say: "Certainly in Europe, and especially in winter, it makes little sense to immerse people in icy waters. Other regions may not have rivers or brooks. And so it was that immersion became transformed into a simple pouring of water on the catechumen's head".

In Acts. 10:48, Cornelius and his household were baptised in their house where there was no river, suggesting the pouring of water on the heads of Cornelius and his people. However, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is clear on the need for the triple immersion in water but it leaves room for the pouring of water on the head of the person to be baptised. This Catholic document states: "Baptism is performed in the most expressive way by triple immersion in the baptismal water. However, from ancient times it has also been able to be conferred by pouring the water three times over the candidate's head" (1994:282). In the Catholic teaching, two important things which must be used at baptism are water and the words pronounced.

A candidate is always baptised with baptismal words pronounced by the minister and at the same time water poured on the head of the person, thus: I baptise you in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of baptism is also called the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. It is the belief of the Catholic Church that “baptism signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no created person can enter the kingdom of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1974:277).

Some authors have suggested certain ways in which baptism can be inculturated in Africa. However, these are tentative ideas which are not officially approved in Africa. Lumbala gives us a tentative synthesis developed in Mossi around the year 1971 by Camille Ranzinni and Robert Ouedraogo. The Mossi is an ethnic group of people found in some parts of Africa, like the Sudan and Burkina Faso. Describing this group of people, Baur (1994:181) remarks: “The Mossi were the people who accepted Christianity more readily than any other group in western Sudan. Their kingdom covered the greater part of Upper Volta, present-day Burkina Faso”. The 4 stages through which baptism could be inculturated in Mossi as described by Lumbala include Initiation, Learning the customs of Christians, Gestures and Mourning. We would like to discuss only the initiation stage because it is more relevant to our topic.

### **A. The Mossi Experiment**

In the initiation stage in Mossi, a delegation of the Christian community accompanies those to be baptised to the door of the Church, where those coming for baptism will ask to be allowed to enter into the Church. The conversation that takes place between the catechumens and the Church representatives helps to enlighten the new entrants about what their rights and obligations will be. For example, the catechumens are told: “Those who come here receive the goodness of Christ who is proclaimed... Christ will prepare for them a place in his native country. That is why the heart is no longer troubled for there is nothing left to fear” (Lumbala 1998:12).

The Church representatives ask those to be baptised whether they are ready to follow the pathway that will lead to where Jesus waits to take them, and never to go back to their old life style. It is important to note here that both those to be baptised and the Christian community have vital duties to perform. Korse (2000:130) insists on this by saying: "By baptism a person becomes part of God's people and incurs certain responsibilities; but the community in turn has a responsibility towards the baptised". When they have shown their willingness to lead a new life, the real celebration for this stage begins. Lumbala describes the celebration this way:

After a brief exchange, the head of the family [in this case the priest] responds, pointing out to the sponsors their responsibilities. An exorcism accompanied by a sign of the cross takes place. The godparent called "the father of baptism," gives the new name chosen from among African or Christian names. Finally, the community is questioned as to whether it gives its approval to welcome these invited guests into the family. The community says yes, and the catechumens are accompanied across the threshold of the Church. They advance saying Psalm 23. The celebration continues with the liturgy of the word and the offerings (1998:13).

The example we have cited above has an African communal characteristic, where the community, working as a family, plays an important role in both religious and social activities. When the catechumens have been welcomed into the Church, the second stage begins. This stage also helps to make the candidates feel at home with the Christian community that welcomes them. The good aspect of this inculturated baptism in Mossi is that the traditions are real and not anti-Christianity. The proposers of this programme adapted it very well to the Church. It was to take place at proper times meaningful to Catholics, using in full all the symbols applicable to the Catholic Church. Explaining the significance of these symbols, Lumbala has this to say:

The significance of the actions is emphasised. The exorcisms make it known that God alone saves. It is God who delivers us from slavery... The oil used prior to the bath prepares the neophyte for battle, for the neophyte will now slip through the hands of the enemy. Water symbolises purification and life. The pits of water and the acts of plunging signify death and the tomb. The exit from the water symbolises the resurrection, while the perfumed oil and the imposition of hands are signs of the commitment to the mission of the Church (1998:11).

Here the names "catechumens" and "neophytes" are used interchangeably, meaning those to be initiated or baptised, in this case, into the Catholic Church. There are other proposals on how to inculturate baptism in Africa. The one examined above satisfies our exploration here because it has much to teach other African countries where nothing similar has taken place or even been thought of.

## **B. The Zimbabwean Context.**

We now take a closer look at Zimbabwe to see if there is any attempt to inculturate baptism here. A tentative process of inculturating baptism as described above is non-existent in Zimbabwe. In the first place, The Common Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA), which has provision for adaptation, is hardly mentioned here; and the few times it was mentioned, it did not receive approval from many people. The Common Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) is a rite approved by the Second Vatican Council, which specifies the different steps or stages an adult catechumen must go through before actual baptism. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains how this rite came about in these words: “The Second Vatican Council restored for the Latin Church the catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps. The rites for these stages are to be found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)” (1994:280). In his report on the Rite of Christian Initiation, Fr. Mhembere talks about people’s reaction to the RCIA and at the same time expresses his own opinion. According to Mhembere (1996:27), “Many people tend to disregard the RCIA saying that it does not fit their situation, that it is impractical.” Expressing his own mind he says: “But if you actually read the text, you can see that almost all parts can be adapted to any situation, and this freedom to adapt is already in the text” (1996:27). One aspect of this RCIA that could have been well adapted is the first stage where the family and the Christian community are to be fully involved at this early initiation process.

Baptism is one of the sacraments regarded as the sacrament of Christian initiation. In an oral interview in Mutare (25/08/2000), Mr Muvodzi regrets the absence of the initiation rite, saying: “Here in Zimbabwe, the initiation rite is not very much in use. We are not yet far from the European style of baptism.” The only area people accept as a way of inculturating baptism is the use of African names at baptism. In another oral interview in Gweru (10/08/2000), Mr Mawire admits that: “The only inculturation I know of with regard to Baptism is the adoption of African names.” Commenting on this same point, Ndiokwere has this to say: “Some success has been recorded precisely in the indigenisation of baptismal names” (1994b:100). During the present research, an effort was made to see how the use of African names at Baptism has been implemented. Four parishes were chosen for this study, two from rural areas and two from the city.

In one of the parishes in the city, the number of baptisms from 1986-2000 was 813. Out of this figure, 286 had Shona names at baptism. This gives us an approximate percentage of 35%. The other city parish recorded 793 baptisms from 1993-2000. Out of this figure, 324 were baptised with Shona names, bringing our percentage to 41%. On the other hand, the rural parishes had different results. In one of the rural parishes, 2085 baptisms were recorded between 1986 to 2000. Out of these baptisms, only 235 accepted Shona names and this gives 11.3%. The second rural parish recorded 1435 baptisms from 1986-2000. Only 265 agreed to be baptised with Shona names. This figure gives a percentage of 19%. In summary: two city parishes had 35% and 41% Shona names respectively while the rural parishes had 11.3% and 19% respectively. It becomes obviously clear that city parishes have more people with Shona names at baptism than those in the rural areas. Commenting on why the differences are like this, Muvodzi (interview 25/08/2000) explains that: "The urban dwellers who can now reason properly for themselves are much more convinced to adopt Shona names at baptism than the rural inhabitants who still need more time for explanation why they should take Shona names at baptism." In all these parishes, Certain Shona names re-occurred frequently. They are:

**Kudakwashe:** God's will

**Tinashe:** We are with God

**Chipo:** Gift

**Rumbidzai:** Praise

**Ruvimbo:** Hope

**Tatenda:** Thank you

**Tapiwa:** We have been given

**Tendai:** Give thanks

**Ngoni:** Mercy

**Chiedza:** Light

**Simba:** Power

These Shona names are more meaningful to Zimbabweans than some of the English names found in the baptism register. Such names include: Definite, Lee, Lizabeth, Monalisa, Takesure, Wendy etc.

It seems more advisable, therefore, for people to be given Shona names, which they understand well. In order to promote inculturation in Zimbabwe, the Catholic Bishops are encouraged to be emphatic on this. They can now reverse what they said in the introduction of *Adult Baptism Rite in Shona*. In the above booklet, the Bishops said: "It is recommended that the practice of taking a Christian name be continued, but if the candidate wants to be baptised with another suitable name it should be done" (1973:4). In order to encourage those in the rural areas, the statement can now read: Shona or Ndebele names at baptism be encouraged but if the candidate wants to be baptised with "Christian" names of saints, that can be allowed. Our African names are good and meaningful and so we must try to use them at baptism. Supporting this idea, Ndiokwere has this to say: "These [names] are meaningful and their theological significance points out to the root of the African (or in our case), Igbo concept of God" (1994b:100). Thus the Igbos prefer to adopt such names as: Chinedu: God leads, Chidiebere: God is merciful, Ogechi: God's time is the best. In the pictures below illustrating baptism, a child is baptised with the name Chinyere Akudo. That is, God gives peaceful wealth.

Taking inculturation as a principle that animates, directs and unifies culture, transforming it and making it so as to bring about a new creation, the adoption of African names also in a way represents inculturation. This is because the Christian baptism is incarnated in the cultural name, thereby transforming it. For example, names like "Kudakwashe" (God's will) and "Chinedu" (God leads) Shona and Igbo respectively become not only African names, but also Christian names which are accepted and revered in any Christian country the world over. Here these inculturated Christian names are not only accepted among Christians all over the world, they also animate a unified Christian community. In the past, before the Second Vatican Council, African names were despised; but now, thanks to the Council, these names are accepted as "Christian names" adopted at baptism. This promotes inculturation.

In concluding this topic, I would like to point out that not much was said about inculturating baptism at the African synod of the Catholic bishops. Perhaps the Bishops thought that the use of African names at baptism is enough to show that inculturation is taking place. We have now seen that the percentage of those using African names at baptism is very small.

The adoption of African names at baptism is not the only way to inculturate baptism in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. There is need for the African Church to reconsider the rite of initiation which is common to Africans and also similar to RCIA. The photos on baptism below illustrate some of the points discussed. The Eucharist is also one of the sacraments of Christian initiation. We now examine how inculturation is implemented in this sacrament.

**Photos on Baptism**



**A child baptised with an African name, Chinyere Akudo.**



**An adult welcomed for Baptism**



### 5.2.1.2 The Eucharist

Our aim here is to examine the efforts made so far to inculturate the Eucharist in Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular. It is not our aim, therefore, to give all the historical developments that have taken place from the last supper when the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus Christ till the present time. It suffices to say that in the New Testament, there are four versions relating to the first celebration of the Eucharist. These versions are found in Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:14-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. On a closer look at these versions, one will observe that they reflect two traditions, namely: Matthew and Mark and that of Luke and Paul.

In Matthew and Mark, we notice that the bread is broken and the cup is taken at the same time, that is, during the meal or at the end of it. On the other hand, the Luke and Paul tradition shows that the breaking of the bread is done before the meal, and the glass of wine is taken after the meal. The slight variation in the presentation of these accounts is explained by LaVerdiere (1996:30): "The Eucharistic tradition of Christ's Last Supper has come to us through the New Testament in 4 different forms, each with its own traditional formula, showing discreet but significant adaptations to the life setting of a particular community..." It is also important to point out here that the number of cups of wine differs in these traditions. Luke records two cups while the others mention one cup. Again, while "do this in memory of me" is present in Luke and Paul, it is absent in Matthew and Mark.

Lumbala tries to give us the possible reason for the origin of these traditions. He says: "Luke and Paul reflect the traditions of Greek communities or Christians living within a Hellenistic milieu. Their vocabulary is typical of these environments... In Mark and Matthew, although an ancient vocabulary is used, it reflects a new structure" (1998:21). Lumbala does not tell us what this new structure means. Perhaps, this new structure suggests how the Eucharist is to be celebrated where the bread is broken and the cup taken at the same time, as done in our present day set up. In all the four versions, there is mention of "giving thanks" which is important in our understanding of the Eucharist. *Our Sunday Visitors Encyclopaedia* describes the Eucharist as follows:

“The Eucharist (from the Greek *eucharistia* ‘thanksgiving’) 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 sacrifices of the Mass and giving Himself as a spiritual food to the faithful” (1991:368). This means, therefore, that the Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving to God who has given us Jesus as our saviour, who also nourishes us spiritually through the bread we break and the wine we take.

Some other terms used interchangeably to refer to the Eucharist include: the Lord’s Supper, the memorial of the Lord’s Passion, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass etc. The Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. Explaining why the Eucharist is a sacrifice, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that: “Because it is a memorial of Christ’s Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice... The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it represents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies to its fruits” (1994:307). The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is made manifest in the words of Jesus Christ himself, who said: “This is my body which is given for you” and “this cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:19-20).

We can say therefore that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains why they are one single sacrifice by saying:

The victim [Christ] is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is differed. In this divine Sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once and in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner (1994:307).

In this explanation, we also see the direct connection between the Eucharist and the Holy Mass. In his article, “A Relevant African Eucharistic Celebration”, published in *African Ecclesial Review*, Okoye holds the same idea when he writes: “In the course of history, the Church has gone from Breaking of Bread and Lord’s Supper to Eucharist/Thanksgiving and Missa. Each term signifies the same reality...” (2000:232).

Thus, the Eucharist is at the centre of Christian life and worship. The Eucharist can be understood as a place of communion between God and human beings, a place of communion among human beings themselves and also a place where worshippers offer intercessions for the whole world. Stressing the importance of the celebration of the Eucharist, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that: "By the Eucharistic celebration, we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all" (1994:298). This is noticed not only in the Catholic Church but it is also stressed among members of other denominations. Commenting on the centrality of the Eucharist, Karel, a Lutheran, has this to say:

Consensus on the Lord's Supper is beginning to appear among Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist and Roman Catholic theologians. Participants in recent dialogues have come to understand the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian worship (1979:298).

In view of the above explanations, we can say that the African Christians have every reason to celebrate the Eucharist because Christ wanted it to be celebrated in Africa in memory of him. The Africans must also celebrate it because as Christians on their pilgrim journey, they need such spiritual food for their spiritual nourishment. The Eucharist must be celebrated in the African context or inculturated because Christ first incarnated himself into a particular culture. Karecki is clear on this point when she reports: "Besides the fact that the Papal and Conciliar documents call for inculturation to take place among the various peoples who have become followers of Christ, the more profound reason for engaging in the work of inculturation is the mystery of incarnation of the eternal word of God as a human being" (1990:41). In other words, the incarnation makes inculturation in Africa an imperative.

As already pointed out in 5.2 above, some efforts have been made to develop real African Eucharistic celebrations. These include: the Ndzon-Melen Mass in Cameroon and the Zairean Mass in Zaire. These two rites are chosen and discussed here because they express some authentic African values and attitudes within the unity of the one Eucharist.

### A. The Ndzon-Melen Mass

The Ndzon-Melen Mass is so called because it was initiated by Abbe Claude Ngumu at Ndzon-Melen parish. Abbe Ngumu was the parish priest of Ndzon-Melen, a parish in Cameroon. This mass has two principal parts: The acclamation of the Holy Bible and readings, and the Eucharistic meal. The main preoccupation of the Ndzon-Melen Mass is to ensure real participation by all. The structure of the Mass makes this participation possible. In the first part, the following activities are helpful. They include: the reading of the word of God, the hymns and dances, incensing the book of readings, solemn announcement of the theme of the gathering, readings from the Old and New Testaments, homily, creed, collection, penitential rite and prayer of the faithful. Stressing the importance of choir singing and dancing in this Mass, Uzukwu Comments:

The choir acts as a liaison between the altar and the people: it accompanies the priest with hymns and dances to enthrone the Gospel; it joins the priest to acclaim the Lord after the consecration; generally, it directs the congregation during the celebration and presents their gifts. (1982:57).

With the choir leading and the whole congregation joining, therefore everybody participates. This is the characteristic of African celebration, where everyone actively participates.

The second part, the meal, is also meant to involve the whole congregation. This part begins with the presentation of the offering within a dance, followed by the Preface and the *Sanctus*. The *Gloria* comes in after the consecration of the gifts, followed by the "Our Father" and recitation of "lamb of God". After the giving of the sign of peace and the communion, people burst into song and dance in thanksgiving which reminds us of the essence of the Eucharist. The Mass comes to an end with a final prayer and blessing. I like the title of the second part of the Mass, the meal. This is an important aspect of human existence which is very special to Africans, where sharing and hospitality are prioritized. In Zimbabwe we say: *Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nokudya*. (Relationship is strengthened through eating). According to Healey,

A meal is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love and unity. Food and drink taken in common are obvious signs that life is shared. In our African context, it is unusual for people to eat alone... A meal is always a communal affair. The family normally eats together. Eating together is a sign of being accepted to share life... (1996:254).

Considering that the Ndzon-Melen Mass is structured to suit the Cameroon people, thereby encouraging them to be more active and more involved in their faith, we can say that it has tried to incarnate itself on Cameroonian soil. It is the wish of Karecki that more work and effort be done “in the area of inculturation in the Cameroon so that the whole Church will benefit from their efforts” (1990:57). This is a step forward which other African countries could emulate. Let us now see the Zairean Mass, which has been officially approved by Rome.

### **B. Zairean Mass/Rite**

What we know today as the Zairean Mass began with many years of reflection, research and perseverance. In this case, the episcopal conference, theologians and people of Zaire were involved in one way or another. There was an urgent need to establish an important infrastructure; thus a faculty of theology was set up in Kinshasa in 1957. The aim was to train professors of seminaries as well as institutes of higher learning. These trained personnel were committed to research and reflection on the African Church. In the course of this research, Uzukwu (1982:59) notes, “the commission realised that it has to abandon the prefabricated Roman Missal as the starting point; rather, the constitutive elements of a Eucharistic celebration should be confronted with the local culture”. Commenting on the dissatisfaction with what had been in place before, Ndiokwere remarks: “The Congolese Bishops had been demanding for the inculturation of the Roman Liturgy in that Central African Church as they saw that the Roman Church rite looked foreign to the people” (1994b:154).

In order to come up with the type of African Church the people wanted, there was need for much work based on research, courage and education of the people. Karecki explains this as follows: “The Bishops of the Episcopal Conference in Zaire used the result of the years of research to instruct the people so that they might participate with full understanding” (1990:58). The liturgical adaptation in Zaire began around 1969 under the direction of Father Laurent Mpongo, who was a trained theologian and liturgist from the liturgical Institute of Saint Anselm in Rome.

This long research and waiting was rewarded on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1988, when the Zairean Mass Rite and the Roman Missal for the Diocese of Zaire received final approval from Rome. The structure of the Zairean Mass can be outlined under these headings: Entrance Procession, Veneration of the altar by the celebrant, Announcement of the theme of celebration, Invocation of the saints and ancestors, Song of praise and dancing around the altar, Opening prayer by the priest, Readings of the Old and New Testaments, Procession with the gospel book, Proclamation of the Gospel, Homily, Profession of Christian faith, Penitential rite, Universal prayer, Collection and Procession of gifts, Prayer over the gifts/offerings, Preface and Canon (in dialogue form), Our Father, Lamb of God, Communion, Songs of thanksgiving, Prayer, Blessing, dismissal.

We will not discuss all these headings in detail. Rather, we will try to explain some, pointing out the various activities that make them African. We will also try to point out those areas where the Zairean rite differs from the usual Roman rite and, if possible, highlight some of the new things introduced into the rite. In the first place, the atmosphere is that of friendliness and hospitality whereby worshippers try to greet everyone present. There is an entrance procession in which the chief celebrant and the other ministers dance to the rhythm of the entrance hymn. Significantly, each minister carries along with him a symbol of his office. The leader who is going to preside over the ceremony is known by the hat which he puts on. The announcer or master of ceremony plays an important role of saluting the assembly, introducing the chief celebrant and explains what happens in the liturgy. The announcer carries a talking instrument, sometimes decorated with some feathers, as his own symbol of office. In African tradition, before an important ceremony takes place, an announcer goes round the meeting place to inform the people what is going to take place and also to introduce the important dignitaries.

The veneration of the altar is normally done as in the Roman rite. In a different manner, the celebrant raises his hands in a "v" shape reverently bending his forehead to touch the altar and doing the same thing at all the sides of the altar. The invocation of the ancestors is an important aspect of this celebration. Situating its importance in the African traditional celebration, Uzukwu explains:

Since traditional cult is always conducted in solidarity with the ancestors, the Zairean Mass has two invocations of the ancestors in the faith as one of its preliminary ritual. One remarkable feature is that the traditional African ancestors, who are “pure of heart,” who “aided by God, have faithfully served him,” are specially mentioned (1982:61).

This part of the Mass is important because Africans have deep respect for their ancestors. This practice also lays a good basis for the Catholic belief in the communion of saints. The proclamation of the word of God is very important, and so the Zairean rite gives it the place which it deserves by the ceremonial enthronement of the Bible. The members of the congregation sit down when the gospel is read just as we do here in Zimbabwe. Sitting down offers one an opportunity to listen attentively and to assimilate well the word heard. It is also a mark of respect to the elders in some parts of Africa. The other important parts with inculturation in the Zairean Mass include:

The Penitential Rite: This is the part of the Mass where worshippers show signs of penitence and sorrow for their sins and ask God for forgiveness as well as forgiveness from each other. Here, we can see a slight difference between the Roman and the Zairean rite in terms of the position of this part of the mass. The Roman rite places the penitential rite at the beginning of the mass as a sign of purification to prepare people to celebrate well. In the Zairean Rite it comes after the word of God, homily and profession of faith, that is, the creed. Uzukwu explains why this part is properly placed. He says: “It allows the word to challenge the assembly in this ceremony of ritual reintegration, leading to real conversion” (1982:62). The words used at this penitential rite are so strong and well chosen that they touch the heart and arouse repentance. Here is a prayer of those who admit their faults and who ask for God’s mercy. The chief celebrant begins by saying:

Lord our God  
 as the leach sticks to the skin  
 and sucks human blood,  
 evil has invaded us.  
 Our life is diminished.  
 Who will save us, if not you,  
 Our lord? Lord have mercy!

All respond: Lord have mercy!

As a sign of repentance, all bend low with arms crossed over the chest. At the end, Holy water is sprinkled as a sign of purification.

The Presentation of gifts. This is a time when the members of the congregation bring their gifts of offering to the altar with singing and dancing. People deposit their gifts in an offertory collection box before Mass. Those who have been chosen to present the gifts, bring the gifts forward singing and dancing. Before these gifts are handed over to the chief celebrant, a member of the assembly announces in these words: "O priest of God, here are our gifts, receive them; they manifest that we love one another as the Lord loves us" (Karecki 1990:61). The priest celebrant receives these gifts with a gesture of thanks. It is important to note that many African countries accompany gifts with words. This is well enshrined in the Zairean rite. Uzukwu emphasises this point in these words: "The Zairean rite is insistent that those who present the gifts should pronounce the address because the presentation of gifts is rarely unaccompanied by words in the traditional African setting"(1982:63). In the traditional Roman Catholic practice, offertory gifts are collected during mass and presented immediately after collection without spoken words. The "*Gloria*" (Glory to God in the highest) is then sung after consecration of the gifts. The place of Gloria in the Zairean Rite is meaningful because people praise God for his abundant gifts which they have received and part of which they in turn bring in thanksgiving.

During the Eucharistic prayer, many traditional images of God are used. Some examples are: "You the sun that is not gazed at directly, You the master of human beings"( Uzukwu 1982:64). Furthermore, other concrete images like rivers, fish, forests etc. are used. Uzukwu explains the use of these images by saying: "This preponderance of traditional imagery solidly planting the community in its world, a world presented to the creator in the community's praise..." (1982:64). The people praise God with those images which explain the people's understanding of God and his creation. They always associate these images with life, which means that God is the origin and source of life. It is important to note that both the penitential rite and the Gloria do not take the usual places they occupy in the Roman rite. Their places in the Zairean rite are unique and meaningful to the people of Zaire. Lumbala summarises the activities of the Zairean Mass in these words:



Liturgical practices, the decoration of places, the dance steps that accompany different actions, gestures expressing worship, supplication, emotional movements towards God and other different possibilities offered through the languages of different religions give concreteness and particularity to different expressions of the same rite throughout the country(1998:29).

Here, we can see a great deal of genuine effort made to translate the local Church's faith experience into practical ritual celebration.

### **C. The Zimbabwean Context**

In Zimbabwe, some efforts have been made to inculturate the Eucharistic celebration in the way that will be meaningful to the people of Zimbabwe. In the first place, efforts have been made to produce all the liturgical books in the two main languages in Zimbabwe. In Shona, for example, there are two volumes of the Shona Missal : (a) Proper of Season and (b) Proper of Saints, Ritual and Funeral Masses. There is a book for Sunday readings, *Mharidzo dzomuBhaibheri dzaMasvondo ose nedzaMazuva Makuru eGore*. There is also another book for daily readings at Mass, *Mharido dzaMazuva eVhiki*.

Of course, the Bible is also in the vernacular language. The instruments used by the choir are local instruments like: *Ngoma* and *hosho*. The Mass is a Roman rite but some aspects of Shona culture are used during Mass. The hymns are composed in Shona with Shona background and people sing them with gestures and body movements. When a bishop visits a parish and becomes the chief celebrant at that Mass, certain cultural proceedings are followed. During procession, women spread their loin cloths on the ground for the Bishop to walk on them, a sign of respect and cordial welcome. At the altar, he does not start Mass immediately. There is a special greeting, beginning with men and followed by women.

After this, the chairperson of the parish council asks the parish priest to request the bishop on their behalf to celebrate Mass for them. Explaining why this part is important, Mr Muvozdi (Interviewed 25/08/2000) has this to say: "In Shona culture, you do not presume that you must celebrate the Mass. The people must respect the Bishop and request him to celebrate the Mass for them".

In the same oral interview of 25/08/2000 at St. Dominic's Catholic Secondary School, Mr Muvodzi, the headmaster of the school, remarks, "I hope this gesture will be extended to every Mass which the priests celebrate for the people of God." The request by the people to the priest or the bishop shows that the mass is not for the priest alone but for all the people of God gathered to worship.

During the Gospel, everybody except the person reading the Gospel sits down. In an oral interview held on 03/08/2000 in Harare, Archbishop Chakaipa, explains why this is so by saying: "Great respect is basic. We do not show respect by standing up in front of an elder. It is a big sign of respect for Shona people to sit down during the gospel [reading] because it is the word of Christ, an elder, that is proclaimed." In some places, not everywhere, the Bible is enthroned with music and dance mainly by young girls who accompany the deacon to the altar. When receiving Holy Communion, people clap their hands first, then receive it with two hands. Again, this is a sign of respect. The use of drama in illustrating the main points of the day's message is very fruitful and meaningful. The drama helps to inculcate the peoples' life-style as implied in the day's readings. In some places and during certain celebrations, some people take part in sharing the word of God. Here one notices a variety of gifts as exemplified by many who illustrate their points with rich and meaningful stories. People teach and learn a lot of African values through story telling. In a general remark, those who attend workshop on *Liturgical Inculturation* maintain that: "The Mass is not just for the priest. Get people involved" (*Liturgical Inculturation* 1996:53).

During the offertory procession the flower girls or the dancing girls dance to the rhythm of the offertory hymns leading people to bring the gifts to the altar. When the people bring these gifts, the priest or the bishop receives the gifts and blesses the people before they return to their seats. In the Shona missal, there is provision on Sundays for praying for rain. This is because rain is important for farming. Before farming, people bring their crops for planting to be blessed. Again, there are prayers for the blessing of crops in Shona ritual.

From the foregoing discussion one can agree with Bishop Mutume when he says: “Something is being done to inculturate the Eucharist in Zimbabwe” (Oral interview in Mutare, (16/08/2000). Qualifying this statement, however, the Rector of the Regional Major Seminary, Fr. Chiromba, adds: “A lot has been done to inculturate the external acts and expressions, but the theology is lacking.” (Oral interview in Harare 29/08/2000). The presentation on the Eucharist (Winter School Report in Harare 1996), by representatives from Gweru Diocese clearly brought out an aspect of traditional celebration called *bira*. Sr. Mbiri explains: “A traditional *bira* had many meanings-- jubilation, thanksgiving, feasting and festivity. There is a kind of ritual attached to every *bira*...” (*Liturgical Inculturation* 1996:50). In an oral interview in Mutare 04/08/2000, Mr Rugayo explains *bira*, “as the way the Shona people celebrate happy events in their lives, for example, the birth of a new child”. During the same winter school discussion, a question was then asked “if we could see any similarities between this traditional *bira* and our own Eucharist” (*Liturgical Inculturation* 1996:51). For many of the participants, this would be a starting point for any solid and meaningful inculturation of the Eucharist.

One thing that will strike a visitor or a new missionary attending the Eucharistic celebration for the first time in Zimbabwe is the body movement during singing. This is very well demonstrated during “*Gloria*” (the song of praise) or *Mwari Ngaarumbidzwe*, meaning “Glory to God in the highest.” The other area that attracts attention is the joy which radiates when the people chosen to bring the offertory gifts come in procession with their gifts dancing. The pictures below illustrate some of these points. However, there is much work still to be done to have a well inculturated Eucharist. There is need for intensified research and general education of the people in order to help them understand properly the essence of the Eucharist and not to be carried away by just external acts and expressions. It is important that the celebration of the Eucharist, the centre and summit of our faith, be meaningful to the worshippers. The Eucharist is important because many of the sacraments, like marriage, are celebrated within the Eucharist.

**Photos on the Eucharist.**



Procession to the Church led by the dancing girls.



Dancers leading at the offertory procession



People bringing their gifts produced locally.



The celebration of the Holy Eucharist at Elevation.



Children at First Holy Communion- A sign of unity in Christ.



Local instruments used at Mass: Ngoma and Hosho.



### 5.2.1.3 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 a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, [which] is by its nature ordered toward 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 (1994:358).

The institution of marriage was officially approved as one of the sacraments in the Catholic Church at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Explaining why it is called a covenant, *Our Sunday Visitors Catholic Encyclopaedia* maintains that it is because it is “a reflection of the relationship of Christ to the Church, which is itself covenantal” (1991:626). A covenant means an agreement between two persons. In this case, it demands a gift of the whole person, one to the other. As a sacrament, the purpose of marriage is twofold: marriage by its nature is ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. This means that marriage helps the spouses to support and enrich themselves spiritually and physically. The law of the Catholic Church states in canon 1136 that: “Each spouse has an equal obligation and right to whatever pertains to the partnership of conjugal life” (Code of Canon Law 1983:201). They also accept to take care of the children God will give them as married couples.

Our main concern here is to examine how marriage is celebrated in some parts of Africa. The emphasis is on Christian marriage. However, since we are looking at the inculturation of marriage, we will examine briefly the celebration of African traditional marriage. It is necessary to examine how African traditional marriage is performed because in some countries in Africa, like Mozambique, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, there is tension between African traditional marriage and Christian marriage.

The tension between African traditional marriage and Christian marriage is well brought out in a question asked by Ngundu. In his article “African Approach to Christian Marriage” published in the *Sunday Mail*, Ngundu asks: When is a Christian African couple declared married? Is it on the day of *lobola* transactions, [or] when the couple eventually walks down the Church aisle to be pronounced “married” by a pastor or priest in Church? (1999:8).

This is where inculturation is expected to come into play to resolve the tension. This tension can only be resolved when the two marriages are integrated together. It is important to state here that marriage in Africa is not meant only for the man and his wife. According to Lumbala, "Marriage in Black Africa is first of all a bond that, through the union of two persons, a man and a woman seals an alliance between the two families to which the two partners belong. This communal character of marriage responds to the communal way of life in all Black Africa" (1998:71). In other words, marriage in Africa is a communal affair whereby the whole community takes part fully and attends the marriage of each member in a very big way. Emphasising the importance of the two families in marriage at an African Synod, Mr Antonio Cardos of Mozambique has this to say:

In [the] African world, the marriage of two young people is essentially that of two families; it is an alliance between the two families. The realisation of the alliance is the fruit of a long and sometimes painful process. It is therefore important to have the guarantee that the families are in fact going to unite, going to become a family, and it is important to verify that the two young people are in fact capable of maintaining this alliance (1994:67).

Speaking in a metaphorical way to highlight the role the community plays and the importance of the two families, Igboanyika (1999:73) writes: "The process of marriage involves the community in a profound way. This is because in an African society, the man is not marrying only the woman. He is marrying so to speak, her mother, her father, her family and extended family. The same goes for the woman. She gets married not just to a single man, but in a way, to the members of the man's family and extended family." This practice stresses the importance of extended family in Africa. In a way, these two families now regard themselves as one extended family through this bond of marriage, where they share their joys and sorrows together.

In African traditional marriage, a go-between (*munyai* or *onye aka ebe* Shona and Igbo respectively), plays a very important role to see that the bride price *roora/lobola* or *akunwanyị* is well settled. When the bride price is settled, there is always an African traditional wedding where the man and his wife are pronounced husband and wife. Two instances where the traditional wedding ceremony is performed are described below. Describing how this traditional wedding is done in Igboland, Ndiokwere says:

It is generally presumed that all matters before contracting, for example, the dowry, had been paid. The highlight of the traditional wedding is the final consent made public by the girl by way of handing over a cup of palm wine to the prospective husband. The girl collects the cup of the wine from her father or eldest uncle or another representative of the family and searches for the prospective husband in the midst of other young men at the scene. Having identified the husband, she hands the cup of wine to him and the man drinks (1994b:132).

This is a very big ceremony in Igboland and it is called *Igba nkwu mwayi*. A man cannot be considered married until he has performed this rite. This ceremony proclaims the man and his wife legitimately married in Igbo tradition and custom. A similar ceremony is also performed in Shona traditional wedding. Here, Andifas (1970:31) gives a clue of how this is done by saying: "When this is done, both families brew beer and prepare feasts. They invite members of the other family to come and see the home from which the partner of their child comes." On the other hand, Gelfand describes in detail how this traditional wedding feast is celebrated in these words:

The bridal party then went to the hut of the bridegroom's father where they found the pots of beer he had prepared. The beer was exchanged, the father-in-law's beer was given to the groom's family and their beer to that of the in-laws... By now people had gathered outside the hut and music was played. The beer was drunk by everyone present, and when it was finished, the in-laws returned to their village leaving the bride behind (1959:174).

After this traditional ceremony, the young couple are officially declared husband and wife. While the traditional Africans accept this traditional wedding as what constitutes a marriage, the Church has not recognised this as a valid Christian marriage for two baptised Catholics, because it is not considered a sacramental marriage. The Catholic Church insists on the sacramental wedding in the Church. It is a sacramental wedding when it is celebrated in the context of the Eucharist in the presence of an ordained Catholic minister and two other witnesses. The position of the Catholic Church on any valid Christian marriage is enshrined in canon 1108 which states:

Only those marriages [are valid] which are contracted in the presence of the local ordinary or parish priest or of the priest or a deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists in accordance with the rules... Only that person who, being present, asks the contracting parties to manifest their consent and in the name of the Church receives it, is understood to assist at a marriage (*Code of Canon Law* 1983:196).



The local ordinary here is the bishop of a particular diocese. In effect, this canon of the Church's law stipulates that a couple must exchange their consent to be husband and wife in the presence of at least two witnesses and before an ordained minister who accepts this consent in the name of the Church. The problem at stake is how to combine the two types of marriage celebration. The difficulty here is that after spending a lot of money at the traditional wedding, the bridegroom finds it difficult to raise money again for a Church wedding. Lamenting this at the African Synod, Antonio Cardoso (1998:66-67) remarks: "We Africans are obliged to marry three times, I mean there are three types of marriage: the traditional, the Christian, and the civil. Each of these implies enormous expenses. Many of our youths today prefer to simply live together and probably to marry much later." There is an urgent need to get the two celebrations combined so that after the celebration, the new couple will be fully and officially recognised by the community and by Church law.

The possible way of integrating the two weddings is to arrange the traditional wedding with the priest so that the day will begin with the celebration of Mass whereby the man and his wife will exchange their matrimonial consent before the priest and two witnesses in the presence of the people of God. After the nuptial blessing by the priest, the traditional wedding celebration could begin later in the day. The emphasis here is to instruct the youths to plan their weddings to take place on the same day. These youths have to be convinced that this practice is possible. As soon as the people themselves start to request the integration of the two weddings, the Church will hopefully produce another marriage rite for the celebration. Those preparing for marriage will be well informed that the Christian marriage, especially in the Catholic Church, does not allow divorce, which the traditional marriage permits. At the moment, the integration of these two weddings has not started happening in the Catholic Church here in Zimbabwe. However, a few of the Shona cultural practices are included during the Christian marriage celebration in a Church wedding.

During the actual celebration in the Church, just before the exchange of consent, the father of the bride or the other member of the bride's family presents her to her would-be husband. This action is symbolic because it shows approval of the marriage. That is, the man has not eloped with the girl. Secondly, it shows that the father is imparting his blessings on the son-in-law and his wife.

Acknowledging the importance of this blessing, Lumbala (1998:75) has this to say: “This blessing by the parents is extremely important in Africa and it situates the marriage in the great movement of life itself which has come down through the ancestors.” The words spoken by the father of the bride before handing her over to the husband are effective in the sense that they are both an advice and a blessing. Both the man and his wife treasure this handing over ceremony because they receive the blessing and support of the whole family through the father of the bride.

Fr. Rumuma of Hwange Diocese in Matebeleland describes how some aspects of Ndebele culture have been brought into the Christian marriage celebration. This report is published in the *Liturgical Inculturation in Zimbabwe*. Fr. Rumuma has this to say:

After the homily from the priest, an elder then addresses the couple stressing more the noble traditional value of marriage. The wife to be sits on a mat and the bridegroom on a stool for the advisor to address them. The couple then as a sign of responding to the word and to show their willingness to live by it, exchange appropriate symbols. The bride presents to the man a dish of water symbolising love and service, while the man might present his bank book, again symbolising his love and service. Such symbols will differ from place to place. Others might light a candle and hold it together (1996:41).

The recognition of an elder is very important because elders are very highly respected in African tradition. The advice of an elder here has more impact when those getting wedded are still young, intending to start their family life newly. The impact may not be as much on those who have lived for many years before coming to wed in Church. Again, the Church must try to see that young couples are attracted into the Church and encouraged to wed in Church as bachelors and spinsters. Catholic marriage is indissoluble. That means that a validly contracted Catholic marriage cannot be dissolved. The two must live together until death separates them. But traditional marriage has room for divorce, especially on the ground of childlessness. This can be an obstacle in the integration of the two marriages. It is through faith and love that the man and his wife can commit themselves for life.

We have examined some of the celebrations which bring joy and offer moments of feasting and merry making. We now proceed to examine what happens when this earthly life ceases and the creature returns to his/her creator. In the popular term we say, “dust onto dust.”

**Photos on marriage**



**Traditional Wedding.**



**Signing in court at Civil Wedding.**



**Welcoming a couple at the door for a Church wedding.**



The bridegroom gives a wedding ring to the bride.



Final blessing of a couple at a Church wedding.



Signing after a Church wedding.

#### 5.2.1.4 Burial

Generally, traditional Africans believe that dead people must be buried with great honour and respect. In Igboland for example, the way a person is buried is determined by his or her title or status. Since the African people started burying their dead before Christianity came, they have been influenced by those burial rites. Consequently, they want these burial rites to be fulfilled in addition to the Christian burial rite they will receive. This is a very big problem facing Christianity in Africa. With the advent of Christianity, we talk of the Christian burial. This Christian burial is summarised by *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopaedia* in this way: "The internment of a body after appropriate liturgical funeral rites have been conducted is known as ecclesiastical burial" (1991:151). A practising Catholic is normally buried with a funeral Mass celebrated in a parish Church attended by the people of God and officiated by a priest or a bishop. Before the end of the Mass, the final commendation is done while the corpse is in the Church, and at the grave side the priest or the bishop will be present to perform the last part of the funeral rites. Catholics like to be buried in this way. In the absence of a deacon, a priest or a Bishop, the Catechist of the parish or the out station buries the dead person.

In some places in Africa, there is always a quarrel between the African traditionalists and Christians on how an adult convert will be buried. Commenting on this situation, Bishop Alberto Setele of Inhambane remarks:

The clan celebrates the family feast and buries its dead according to the rite which we call pagan..., and it does not accept peacefully that the Catholic couple restricts itself to calling the priest or the Christian community for a religious funeral and to celebrate the Mass for the dead. In most cases, they superimpose the two rites (1994:31).

In towns and big cities, some of these problems may not be overtly noticed but not in the rural areas. Here in Zimbabwe there has never been a concluded agreement on *Kurova guva*. This is a Shona ritual ceremony for the dead where the spirit of a dead adult person is purified to prevent that spirit from wandering and to be able to be brought home to watch over the family. This idea can be illustrated by referring to both groups' and individuals' opinions on the issue of *Kurova guva* during the winter school report as recorded in the *Liturgical Inculturation in Zimbabwe*.

In their discussion on death and burial, the people of the Bulawayo Archdiocese had a divided opinion on *kurova guva*. This was because “Some felt it could be a basis on which to build, while others disagreed strongly” (*Liturgical Inculturation* 1996:7). Expressing his own opinion on the same topic, Makumbe(1996:19) a deacon from Chinhoyi diocese, had this to say: “With regard to the ceremony of *Kurova guva*..., there is still a big difference between the Church ritual that is used for this ceremony and the people’s cultural understanding and practices...”. Fr. Mavudzi, in his article on “The Shona People’s Custom of *Kurova guva* or *Kuchenura* ”, summarises this disagreement as a “controversy.” He explains what he means by saying: “This controversy surrounding the custom of *kurova guva* has gone through a long history ranging from about 1892 through the twenties up to the seventies, with opposing groups waging war against each other” (1998:1). The idea of *kurova guva* is based on Shona belief that when an adult dies, his or her spirit wanders in the forest unable to communicate with either the relatives who have died before him/her or with those who are still living.

Hence, during a period of time between three months and one year after death, a ceremony is prepared by his or her living relatives at which some rituals are performed in order to purify the spirit of the deceased. This belief holds that when the spirit is purified, it is brought back home to watch over the living ones. Mr Mawire (Interviewed 15/08/2000) describes the ceremony as follows:

The core of the ritual comprises the carrying of a pot of beer in a procession to the grave of the deceased. There, his eldest brother or sister fetches some of the beer from the pot with a cup, drinks a little and then addresses the deceased: “Son of my mother here is your beer. Share this cup with me, son of my mother just as we used to share it when you were with us. Today we want you to be with us again so that you can look after your children and us all”.

After these words, some beer is poured on the grave by the celebrant who later addresses those present, saying that the time has come for them to take their relative to go back home with them. They begin their procession home, marching, singing and dancing. Opinions are very much divided whether this should be a basis for the inculturation of funeral rites. While some argue that *kurova guva* has been Christianised by the Church, in which case it is now called *musande* (Saintly or Holy), whereby Christians can now accompany the ritual with Church hymns rather than traditional hymns, Fr. Mavudzi objects to this idea. He observes:

I think it is misleading to state categorically at this point in time, that the Shona people's custom of *Kurova guva* (Mazezuru), *Kugadzira* (Makaranga), *Kuchenura* (Manyika), has been adopted as an official liturgical rite by the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe...

Condemning *kurova guva* and any rite associated with it, he concludes by saying:

In effect this means that both "Kuviga Munhu Rite" and "Kuchenura Munhu Rite" (Mambo Press Gweru), must be replaced by entirely new rites basically Christian in form, content and purpose (1998:1,3).

The situation seems confused in the sense that the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe have not pronounced any official statement on this issue. Some consultations have started on diocesan level. Hopefully they are waiting for more research to be done before they can take a stand. One thing is certain. People are still using *Kuviga Munhu* (Shona burial rite) to bury the dead. There is no replacement for the moment. The one that has been commonly adopted by all the Christian denominations is called *Nyaradzo* (Comforting Memorial). In his publication in the *Sunday Mail* of October 25, 1998, Rev. Kadenge made a positive remark on this by saying: "The above ceremony (*doro remvura*) has been replaced unconsciously by the Christians with the *Svondo ye nyaradzo* (1998:8).

Christians of various denominations gather for *nyaradzo* without opposition and criticism in order to pray with the bereaved families some weeks after burial. The practice helps to comfort those who are mourning. Much more is to be done in inculturating the funeral rite in Zimbabwe. We must accept that the Shona traditional funeral rite we described above has been in existence before Christianity came. It is not easy for people to abandon such rites, where they maintain close links with their dead relatives. The main difference is in the belief that the spirit of the dead person is not settled until it is appeased and purified. In so doing, the spirit of the dead person will be brought home to watch over the living members of the family. The church disagrees with this belief on the grounds of its faith that it is God who looks after his people, and it is Christ who reconciles us with God, not the spirit of the dead person. On the other hand, it is not enough to tell the people that their practice of *kurova guva* (ceremony of appeasing and purifying the spirit of the dead) is "satanic and devilish" (Mavudzi 2000:3). There is need for a substitute. If there is no substitute as it is now, they will continue the practise even if it means performing the ritual at night or in the rural areas.

There is need for a thorough catechesis on the church's belief in the communion of saints. The church teaches that there is a spiritual union which exists between the saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory and the faithful living on earth. The Second Vatican Council document (*Lumen Gentium* No. 51) explains this belief as "the living communion which exists between us and our brothers [sisters] who are in the glory of heaven or who are yet being purified after their death...". Our people will understand this teaching because it will enable them to maintain relationship with the dead members of their families. The possible day of inculturating *kurova guva* is All Souls day, that is, November 2 every year. On this day, everybody is encouraged to go to church in order to pray for their dead relatives. At a particular time during Mass, especially during the prayer of the faithful, enough time will have to be given for individual families to pray for their dead ones the way they like. At the end of the Mass, people could bring what they like, such as flowers, pictures, water etc., to be blessed, which they would take to the grave yard to be placed or sprinkled on the tombs of their relatives. At different times of the year the *nyaradzo* (comforting memorial) should be encouraged. During these times, small Christian communities may go to stay and pray with the bereaved families. The inculturation of these two times of the year, the *nyaradzo* and All Saints day would enable the church to gradually phase out the practice of *kurova guva*.

### **5.3 Conclusion.**

Inculturation becomes meaningful when it is put into real practice. In this chapter, we have examined how inculturation is practised in the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Marriage. Our findings are based in Africa but particularly in Zimbabwe. There are some elements of inculturation going on especially in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and a bit in marriage celebration. Not much has been done in baptism except the adoption of African names at baptism. Even so, only those parishes located in the cities are comfortable with African names for baptism. There is also much confusion and disagreement among the faithful in Zimbabwe concerning the practice of *kurova guva*. Thus, much research work needs to be done here. The Protestant and Independent Churches have their own ways of celebrating various activities where inculturation is anticipated. The next chapter will focus on these churches to see if there is any or to what extent inculturation is going on in their various services.



## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **INCULTURATION IN PROTESTANT AND INDEPENDENT CHURCHES**

#### **6.1 Introduction.**

Christianity was brought to Africa by missionaries from Europe and America, who tried to impose European practices on Africans. It was not unusual, therefore, to see African Christians pray the way Anglicans in Britain were doing or the Methodists in Africa sing the way their evangelisers from America were singing. The school provided the missionaries an opportunity to teach the young Africans the European culture. At various mission places, Africans were not only attracted by gifts, they were also taught both Christianity and the European culture. Tovey describes this practice in these words:

The missionary sometimes in preaching the gospel to the Africans, tended to export the worship of the parent body, either in exactly the same form or in the form that was seen to be ideal. Thus in Uganda the first missionaries began by translating parts of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Together these books formed the gospel received. Hymns were from Ancient and Modern, and Canticles were chanted in the Anglican way. In areas not evangelised by CMS, the tendency was to provide a liturgy in keeping with the different ideals of the particular missionary society (1988:5).

In the early sixties, Churches founded by the Anglican Communion were the work of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS). In those days, the members of the CMS and the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), as they were called, were not in good terms. They looked at themselves as great rivals and even enemies, without any communication whatsoever. Waliggo alludes to this rivalry in another context: "The creation of [the] *Index* which forbade Catholics to read books by Protestants and their Catholic sympathizers was one clear example. Knowledge and dialogue were blocked and a theory of complete separate development sanctioned" (1986:36). The new understanding of ecumenism emphasised by the Second Vatican Council encouraged a change of attitude and co-operation between Catholics and the other mission churches. It is in the spirit of this ecumenism that this chapter tries to find out whether there is any inculturation going on in some of the old mission Churches, like the Anglican and the Methodist churches in Zimbabwe as well as the African initiated churches.

## 6.2 Anglican Church In Zimbabwe.

There was a gradual contact between the Church of England and the people of Zimbabwe, which eventually led to the permanent presence of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe in 1890. It was at the synod of the province of South Africa that the Bishopric of Mashonaland was created in 1891. It is remarkable to note the spirit of indigenisation which Bishop Knight-Bruce had at that early time. According to the *Encyclopaedia Zimbabwe*, “the bishop brought with him African catechists who began their work in the Mangwende and Makoni areas...”(1987:322). These catechists from South Africa helped to facilitate the consciousness of indigenisation in the Anglican church in Zimbabwe. Moving in this direction, the first African Anglican priest was ordained in 1923, and by the end of 1957 the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe had about 35 African priests. From 1981 an indigenous clergyman, Hatendi, became an African bishop, now heading a diocese. This made it possible for more ground work to be done, which helped to bring about the creation of other new dioceses like Runde and Manicaland, with bishops Siyachitema and Masuku heading these dioceses. At the time of the present study, Bishop Hatendi was the bishop of Manicaland.

In an oral interview on 28/08/2000, Rev. Ruwona, the parish priest of St. John’s Anglican Church, Mutare, describes inculturation in Zimbabwe as “spontaneous, not planned. This is because it is coming as an initiative from the laity.” This active role being played by the lay people in the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the foundation laid down by the early African catechists, who came to work in the country. The areas of inculturation we are looking at, as in the previous chapter, are baptism, Eucharist, marriage and burial. We have chosen these areas because they are celebrated mainly in the mission churches we are investigating.

Not much has been done in the area of baptism in the Anglican Church. Here people have not yet started to adopt Shona names at baptism. Music has been indigenised in the sense that the language is Shona, accompanied by local instruments. At Eucharistic celebration, singing in unison makes the Eucharistic celebration lively and interesting. However, most of the tunes are adapted to the tunes in Britain. The celebration is done in the vernacular.

There is no effort at the moment to produce a Shona rite for the Eucharistic celebration, where African cultural practices will be incorporated. In marriage, there is a practice similar to what happens in Hwange Catholic diocese (see chapter 5), which is encouraged in the Anglican Church. The traditional practice of *Kupana nhumbi* (exchange of dress), is also encouraged. This is a time when the boy and the girl exchange their clothes at the early stage of their marriage. According to Rev. Ruwona (interview 28/08/2000), “this is symbolic, in fact much more meaningful than the exchange of rings. However, it helps the man and his wife to understand better the exchange of rings at Church wedding.” An African traditional culture which is never missed at Church weddings is the presentation of the bride to the groom by the father.

During burial ceremonies, certain rituals are performed, irrespective of what those concerned believe. For example, putting a mat inside the grave serves to tell the deceased person to sleep well. While Ruwona commends this ritual, describing it as “comforting,” he rejects the idea of *Kurova guva* which he sees as “bringing Satanism into the Church” (Oral interview 28/08/2000). His conviction is that those who go to the graveyard to bring the spirit of their relatives back home in order to look after them, are practising Satanism. Unlike the Catholic Church, where some consultations on the issue of *kurova guva* are going on, nothing is being done in the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe. However, Rev. Ruwona admits that many of their members perform the ritual of *kurova guva*. Bishop Hatendi has this to say about this practice:

As I go round my diocese ministering to the bereaved and burying the dead, I shall not tell you about the hours I spend waiting for the relatives of the dead to finish doing their things behind closed doors, and I agonise as to whether my ministry is required and what the will of the deceased is regarding his burial rites (1998:1).

Once again, we can see how our people are having double standards in life. There is, therefore, an urgent need for dialogue at the grass roots level between the Church leaders and rural dwellers so as to agree on what to adopt for the promotion of inculturation. The danger here is that when a local Church in Africa is funded from outside, the last decision comes from the donor. Inculturation will play an important role to liberate the African Church and make it self-reliant, self-supporting and self-propagating.

When the African churches begin to fund themselves, they will be in a position to adopt certain policies and perhaps also approve some indigenous practises without frequent references to Rome, England or America. Inculturation in the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe is still very slow. Many people do not know about it. The ordained ministers need to support the lay people so that inculturation may be well implemented. There is need for more awareness to be created among the members of the Anglican Church, through seminars and workshops on inculturation. There is also an urgent need for publications on inculturation, so that the members can read and become aware of the importance of inculturation.

### **6.3 Methodist Church In Zimbabwe.**

There are two separate divisions of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, namely, the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (UMCZ) and the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ). In 1897, what is now known as the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe came into the country from Mozambique. At that early stage, it was known as the Methodist Episcopal Church with its base in America. A prominent mission school was founded in Old Mutare, taking the name of its founder, "Hartzel", who by then was a Methodist Bishop.

The United Methodist Church started from 1960 to train Zimbabweans for leadership in the Church. Among those trained during this time was Abel Muzorewa, who in 1968 became the first Zimbabwean Bishop of that Church. The African University is another outstanding mark for which the United Methodist Church is known in Zimbabwe. The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe was established here in 1891. Among the prominent members of this Church is the former Zimbabwean President Rev. Canaan Banana. The first African President of the Church, as he was called by then, was Andrew Ndhlala. By 1989, the *Encyclopaedia Zimbabwe* gave the figure of the Church's members as "30,000 for the former [UMCZ] and 80,000 for the latter [MCZ]" (1989:324). During my interviews I tried to cover the two Churches. My discussion with the ordinary members revealed to me that they did not know anything about inculturation. Instead they continued to refer me to their pastors. Some of their female pastors I was referred to were not at ease with the topic, they also referred me to other people. Some of them were lecturers at the African University.

In these interviews in Mutare, our discussions centred on the four main areas of inculturation, namely baptism, Eucharist, marriage and burial. In the area of baptism, there is a slight difference in the way the two churches practise inculturation. While members of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ) prefer Shona names at baptism, the members of the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (UMCZ) like to go by English names. The latter associate English names at baptism with Christianity.

Both Rev. Masimba of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and Rev. Hlahla of the United Methodist Church agreed that there is inculturation in the celebration of the Eucharist. During this celebration, instruments like drums, rattles or *hosho* in Shona are used. Demonstrating this, Masimba echoes: “Our celebration is characterised by singing melodious hymns accompanied by soft drumming and dancing. Indeed, African music makes our Eucharistic celebration lively”(oral interview 18/08/2000). The atmosphere and the mood of worship by the members of this Church can be summarised by this sentiment, expressed by Matsikenyiri in these words:

It is in music and dance that the African is most himself. If we are to understand him as a human being, we must try to understand his music and dance. To do this, it is necessary to know how African music is put together as well as the role it plays in his everyday life...(1992:7).

There is clapping of hands before receiving communion. Some members, especially in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, prefer to use the wine brewed with *Rapoko* and *Sadza* (staple food items in Zimbabwe) for bread. In Marriage, the ritual of presenting the bride to the groom by the father at a church wedding is well accepted in both Churches. Going further than this practice of presentation, Rev. Hlahla comments: “The effort to fully involve the two families during the church wedding is highly appreciated and always encouraged” (oral interview 19/08/2000). Opinions are divided among members of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe whether the church wedding should take place on the same day as lobola is paid.

Concerning burial, there is a problem especially on the issue of *kurova guva*. Declaring the position of his Church on *kurova guva*, Hlahla has this to say:

Our denomination does not approve the ritual called *kurova guva*. This is resisted because of the notion behind it. That is, the spirit of the dead person is brought home to look after the family. Some others take this ritual as “*tsvitsa*”—the handing over of the dead person’s spirit to the ancestors. As Christians, we believe that God looks after the family members, not the spirit of the dead person (oral interview 19/08/2000).

It was not clear whether the members of this particular denomination practice this ritual or not in the absence of their Church leaders. On the other hand Rev. Masimba (18/08/2000), pointing out the problem surrounding this ritual, has this to say: “There is a problem with burial because our people do certain things (*kurova guva*) which they would not want the *Mufundisi* (pastor) to know about.” Rev. Kadenge of the Anglican Church laments this double standard in his article on “Unveiling of tombstones an African innovation”. He states:

What I have discovered as a pastor is that when I am invited to the unveiling of the tombstone, the people there want to believe that I am an ignorant person who does not know what went on the previous night(s). They will have spent the previous nights conducting “*Kurova guva*” and then on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday they call the pastor to come and unveil the tombstone (*Sunday Mail* October 25, 1998:8).

This is a general problem for all the Christian Churches in Zimbabwe, especially in the area of burial, which needs immediate attention. When an adult dies, Masimba contends, “Some plants grown on the river are put on the grave in order to calm the dead person [so that he or she may] not be harsh on the living” (Oral interview 8/08/2000).

There is an effort in the area of self-reliance, especially at the United Methodist Church. The members here sponsor most of their church projects with funds raised locally. The over-all conclusion, though, is that not much inculturation has taken place in the Methodist Church.

A way forward can be found because the divination (*kushopera*) practice found in the African Independent Churches was borrowed by the Methodist Church and transformed. Instead of going to the n’anga for divination, the prophet now does the prophesying. It is important to note that real inculturation may be easier at MCZ than at UMCZ because, according to Rev. Hlahla (19/08/2000), “most of our members are not very keen to promote inculturation.” There is thus need to liberate the members of the Church from undue attachment to Western cultural practices associated with religion. In this much work still needs to be done in both the Anglican and the Methodist Churches, especially in the area of producing reading materials on inculturation.

#### **6. 4 Inculturation In African Independent Churches.**

We now proceed to consider inculturation in the African Independent Churches. Before doing so, it is worthwhile to know why they are called Independent Churches and also the causes of their independence. Looking at Independent Churches as a whole, Bourdillon regards them as : “A specifically African form of Christianity developed alongside the missionary versions” (1990:271). In his paper, “Inculturation in African Independent Churches”, Mbon states more concretely why they are called Independent Churches.

The word “Independent” in the collective name of these Churches is intended to underscore the fact, of course, that these Churches are “independent” (that is, free from), as the claim goes, of the leadership, domination, organisation, doctrine, financial support, and, in many cases, the liturgies of missionary, Euro-centric Christianity (1991:55).

The ideas put across by Bourdillon and Mbon explain the nature of these Independent Churches. In the first place, the original leaders of the Churches were once members who were trained by mission Churches. Hence, they have some orientations from mission Churches which are implicit in their new Churches. On the other hand, the organisation, doctrines and liturgies are done without reference to mission Church headquarters in Rome or London. For example, every Independent Church has a different, unique way of conducting its liturgy, unlike the Catholic Church, in which the way Mass is celebrated in Rome is the same as in Africa and America. One major reason which accounts for the origin of the Independent Churches in Africa was the protest of blacks against white domination in mission Churches. Baur maintains:

The first foundations of Independent Churches were the result of schismatic, that is separatist, movements of protest: in South Africa they originated from a rising against the colour bar within the Church, in Nigeria against missionary domination, in Kenya against cultural alienation (1994:489).

Supporting this idea of Baur but in a much more particular way, Bourdillon says: “In the early days and particularly in South Africa, it was easy to see Independent Churches as a response to colonial domination and domination by foreigners from colonial powers in the mission Churches” (1990:271).

The general effect of Christianity on Africa as a whole also accounts for the emergence of Independent Churches. On this note, Peel contends that:

Christianity has been both cause and catalyst of social change in Africa; and one of the most prominent features of Africa has been the emergence of independent churches, founded by Africans in protest at some feature of the Christianity of the missionary societies (1968:1).

The initial reaction to these protest movements was rejection from mission Churches. Somehow, members of these new African Independent Churches were looked down upon. Pointing out at how these new Churches were formerly rejected by national and international organisations, Turner comments: "Independent Churches which had their applications for membership in national Christian Council rejected at the start of the decade were members of the same council a few years later" (1978:45). It was not just on a sympathy basis that these African Independent Churches were recognised and accepted, they really proved their worth with their works. Ndiokwere observes: "A measure of recognition of the achievements of these Churches has been noticed; at least a recognition that they constitute a challenge to Christianity in Africa (1981:274).

The relationship between Mission Churches and African Independent Churches at membership level can be termed reciprocal in a way. Turner describes this relationship in this way: "Those from the older Churches often sought the services of a prophet or healer among the independents, and usually somewhat secretly, while the independents use Church or mission schools for education of their children" (1978:45). The healing offered by these Independent Churches has made them influential and also appealing to some people. Commenting on the relationship between Independent Churches and the Anglican Church members, Rev. Ruwona in an oral interview (22/08/2000 in Mutare) observes: "African Independent Churches have influenced our members in rural areas, especially in times of crisis. Our Church is found wanting here because there is no traditional method of healing. Prayer is not enough. Hence, they go to these Independent Churches that have got African traditional healing in their Churches." In fact, this is one major area that attracts mission Church members to the Independent Churches. On another note, some men are attracted to Independent Churches because here they are allowed to marry as many wives as they can afford.



In the words of Bourdillon (1990:274), “mission Churches do not allow polygamy, and many Independent Churches do”. When many mission Churches dismiss witchcraft as nothing, it is an issue of great importance for Independent Churches. Hence, divining out witchcraft and cleansing of witches occupies an important place in these Churches. Over and above all these, the Independent Churches pay attention to dreams which they often regard as a sign of vocation to leadership positions. African Independent Churches are also known for their lively worship especially during singing and dancing. Everyone is involved. Ndiokwere sees their worship as “a place of free movement and total participation in the acts of worship” (1981:277). The areas that attract people to the Independent Churches are the areas where Christianity has been inculturated in these Churches. Since our task here is to examine how inculturation is practised in the African Independent Churches, we will now consider two of these Churches, namely Vapostori of John Marange and Aladura. In doing so, we will not restrict ourselves to the four areas on which we focussed above, namely, baptism, Eucharist, marriage and burial. Our approach here will be slightly open.

#### **6.4.1 VaPostori In Zimbabwe.**

What we know today as “VaPostori” was started by Johane Marange, who was initially known as Muchabaya Momberume. He was born in 1912 in Marange, South-West of Mutare in Zimbabwe. Perhaps the name VaPostori came as a result of the vision which John himself saw, which declared him an apostle. This vision is well recorded by Titus (1996:157-158) in these words:

On the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1932, Johane was on his way home, having visited his in-laws. Near Mt. Nyengwe, he suddenly noticed a strong light falling on him. He heard the voice saying: “You are John the Baptist, an Apostle. Now go and do my work! Go to every country and preach and convert people! Tell them not to commit adultery, not to steal and not to become angry! Baptise people and keep the Sabbath Day.” John described this experience as being awesome, his soul “becoming very small” while the light was on him.

As a way of fulfilling this mission to go to every country and convert people, the Vapostori indigenous church, which started in the rural area of Marange, has spread across Zimbabwe. This fact is confirmed and documented in the *Encyclopaedia Zimbabwe*, which states: “By 1940s his movement had spread to Mozambique, Zambia and across much of Zimbabwe” (1987:323).

The son of Johane, Clement Momberume, told me recently in an oral interview (Dangamvura 02/09/2000) that “they are presently in Congo, Botswana and plans are underway to send the first missionaries to Nigeria.” One can say that mission vision and task orientation are central in this vision of Johane Marange. Like other African Independent Churches, Vapostori attracts people through healing. Titus records the testimony of some converts as follows: “Many members say they joined the Church after Apostolic prayers enabled them to bear children or to recover from major illness that neither MFCs nor Western-style hospitals could cure” (1996: 159). This confirms the powers conferred on Johane in his vision where he was also told:

You will have power to cure the sick by laying hands on them and by consecrating water for them to drink; you will be able to drive away any kind of shavi [evil spirit] through the laying on of hands. Take the long staff wherever you go, for healing purposes. Through your hands, fertility will be conveyed to the barren and when you step in fire you will not be burnt... (Titus 1996: 158).

With the power conferred on him in mind, Johane taught his followers that consulting the n’angas is an evil and to go to hospital is irrelevant. In his own words, Clement Momberume declared during our conversation (2/9/2000) that, “as a Church, we do not consult or visit the n’anga. When any one of our members falls by the way to visit the n’anga or the hospital, he/she must confess and he/she will be forgiven.” Thus, the members of VaPostori see consulting the n’anga or visiting the hospital as a spiritual lapse, which is easily interpreted as a sign of weak faith.

The members of VaPostori not only keep these rules but they also observe and uphold Shona culture which does not contradict their faith. Jules-Rosette is right when she comments that: “Members accept that the most basic doctrine and rituals in the Church originated with John Marange and are therefore somewhat rooted in Shona tradition” (1972:192). This conviction prompts Jules-Rosette to conclude that “membership involves learning a set of instructions and rules relative to traditional customs” (1972:188). In Shona culture, men and women sit separately. This is strictly observed at the praying session of Vapostori. There is also no way a female member of VaPostori will be allowed to carry the long staff meant for men. VaPostori as a church teaches and upholds Shona culture.

Baptism is very important and compulsory to all the members of VaPostori. In order to illustrate the importance of baptism, Clement Momberume (02/09/200) told me that “baptism can take place any time even for one person. It is like giving birth which comes any time. But it must be done in a river by triple immersion.” Emphasising the importance of baptism and the dominant role men play in that Church, Jules-Rosette states:

Only the Apostolic baptism makes the candidate a member of the Church. Apostles do not accept previous Christian baptisms, even in Zionist or other independent Churches as grounds for membership. Baptism is performed by triple immersion of the candidate in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and is conducted by a male member, generally one with the confirmed gift of baptism (1972:41).

During the course of the present research, no baptism was conducted and no official healing session was organised. However, in one of the prayer sessions I attended, a woman came to a junior baptist with a bottle of water after prayers for blessing and for prayer for healing. The water was blessed by the baptist, who sprinkled some drops of it on those parts of the body where the woman was having some pains.

The Passover is a very important feast for the VaPostori where everyone is expected to attend and participate. Hence, Bennetta says: “The Passover celebration is the most direct point of international contact for most apostles” (1972:226). It is the time when the members have the opportunity to receive the communion. “As the Church grew, the main ceremony at *Bocha* (the village) no longer sufficed. New Paschal sites were introduced to which John, with a baptist and a prophet, travelled to deliver the communion” (Bennetta 1972:227). It is not only a time of spiritual renewal and growth, it is also expected to be a time when the Church resolves some of its internal problems, formulates doctrines and plans for the future growth of the Church. Bennetta did not lose sight of this point. She comments: “The Church anxiously awaited the arrival of the Passover to arbitrate major leadership disputes and points of doctrine” (1972:228). The celebration of the Passover helps the members to be purified in anticipation for eternal life. Thus, it is proper to insist on purity. In the case of girls, before they marry, they are taken to a river where an elderly woman tests them to find out if they are virgins. If they are, they are entitled to be the first and head wife of their husbands. Bennetta (1972:200) tells us the fate of non-virgins, saying: “Non-virgins are generally placed in polygamous marriages to older men in the Church”.

However, it is important to note that even though polygamy is allowed, it is not compulsory. Mr Clement Momberume makes this point clear in these words: "In marriage, our members are free to marry one or more wives" (oral interview 02/09/2000). Polygamy is not an inhibition to men to become members of the Church. Polygamy is an aspect of African culture which they incorporated into their Church.

We have discussed some of the religious activities that take place at VaPostori Church in Zimbabwe. As an independent church, the members of VaPostori Church have demonstrated that they can witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ as Africans without external pressures. In the first place, they are self-reliant. In order to remain self-reliant, they structure and organise their church in such a way that it will depend solely on human and material resources that are available locally. They do not import vestments, sacred vessels and liturgical books for their celebrations. Their uniform is simple. This general disposition is important for Christian inculturation because it makes an African Church not only self-reliant, but also an indigenous church. The relaxed law on marriage is also an area that encourages inculturation.

As long as a member is baptised at VaPostori, he or she is a full member. This member is never denied any of the church's rights on the grounds of marriage status, as it is done in the Catholic Church. Many married people do not receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church because of the prevailing marriage laws, which forbid those without a church wedding to receive Holy Communion. This does not happen at VaPostori. Their belief in the power of healing is also another aspect of Christian inculturation. This is important because it helps to reduce the double standard of being a Christian and at the same time consulting the *n'anga* (diviners). It also reduces the fear of witchcraft, which terrorises Christians. The use of story telling during preaching is also a good way of inculturating an aspect of African life style into Christianity. Story telling makes preaching interesting and easy to remember. It is an easy way of teaching other African values.

In spite of the many factions within VaPostori Church, the members feel much more at home within the Church because they see themselves as belonging to a Church which is not foreign to them. Rather, they are in a Church that knows them and which is rooted in their culture. Consequently, they feel proud that their land has become a holy land where pilgrims do come to visit from time to time. It is important to observe here that instead of going overseas to buy the bishop's crosier, the VaPostori are proud and happy that their own staff is produced locally. Foreigners who have become their members come to their land and get their own staff from the trees grown on their soil here in Zimbabwe, their own cultural heritage. The staff is used to indicate the role of a shepherd.

The photos we have below here illustrate some of the points we have discussed above. Let us now see how some of the above trends manifest themselves in the Aladura Church.

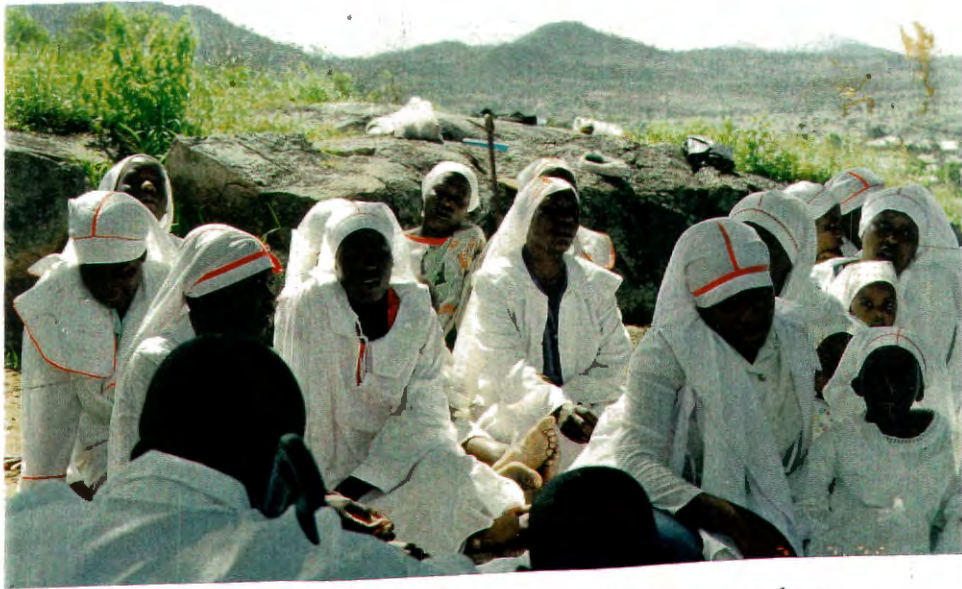
**(Photos on Vapostori)**



**Vapostori**  
Passing through a gate to a place of service.



A moment of prayer led by a Baptist.



A section of worshippers listening to a preacher.



The researcher with a prophet and a Baptist with their different staffs.

### 6.4.2 Aladura.

The Aladura Churches are those indigenous Churches which sprang up in Nigeria. Moede (1972:3) traces the etymological origin of the word “Aladura” back to the Yorubas of Nigeria and explains: “Aladura is a Yoruba word meaning those who pray to an uncommon extent and represents a main emphasis in this new Church”. The backbone of these Aladura Churches is prayer. Peel explains this by saying: “Aladura Churches are well-named; adura, prayer, is the focal point of all their doctrines and practices” (1968:119). The Aladuras teach and maintain that God answers prayers. In their prayer sessions, they spend time preaching, singing and dancing. Sometimes they spend long hours in night vigils. They also encourage fasting for effective prayer and spiritual visions. Because of their origin in Nigeria, we can say that Aladura Churches are indigenous to this country. Akin confirms this fact in these words:

They are Churches which began as indigenous Churches, founded by indigenous persons and run under indigenous leadership. They have always regarded themselves as independent especially of European or foreign domination and therefore, had no manifest cause to look forward to the political independence of this country to foster their growth, expansion and influence (1978:96).

In effect, this shows that the Aladura Churches were started before Nigerian independence, which took place in 1960. As far back as 1925, one of the Churches that make up Aladura, the Church of the Lord, came into existence. The other Churches include: Cherubim and Seraphim, Christ Apostolic Church and Faith Tabernacle. Our discussions in this section will be based on the first two churches, which we consider as the two leading Aladura Churches. Each of these Churches has had its own splinter groups, resulting in the proliferation of other Aladura Churches. According to Akin, “similar expansion can be documented on the other Aladura Churches especially the Cherubim and Seraphim Church which is noted for its proliferations, and the Church of the Lord Aladura, not to mention the hundreds of other smaller Aladura Churches” (1978:96). The founder of the Church of the Lord was Josiah Olumowo Oshitelu. On the other hand, Cherubim and Seraphim was jointly founded by Abiodun and Orimolade, who parted company in 1929, just four years after the new Church was founded.



Many people have different reasons for joining the Aladura Churches. Africans as a whole and the Yorubas in particular have deep love for life. So they could go anywhere in search of health, life and good fortune. Enumerating the reasons why people decide to join the Aladura Churches, Akin (1978:99) has this to say: "It is, however, true that people in distress flock into them in search of solutions for their spiritual problems, for the cure of their diseases, or protection from both their physical and spiritual enemies and for the fulfilment of their ambitions and hopes". We must not forget the youths who are attracted by the praying band which keeps them alive and happy. Thus, people of different social statuses have become members. Even top leading politicians were among those consulting Aladura prophets. Since these Aladura Churches emphasise not only prayers but also dreams and visions, they were able to meet the expectations of their converts and followers.

The figures given by Peel show that most of the Aladura converts came from the Anglican Church. While 63% of converts to Christ Apostolic Church were Anglicans, 66% of converts into Cherubim and Seraphim also came from the Anglican Church (Peel 1968:205). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Aladura Churches have some elements of Anglican influence in them. For example, the structures of their Church buildings are typical of the Anglican Church. The method of conducting services at Christ Apostolic Church is similar to the Anglican, while that of Cherubim and Seraphim is different. In spite of these minor Anglican influences, Aladura Churches are conscious of the fact that they are indigenous in character. Hence, their method of praying tends more toward traditional methods. Peel points this out by remarking that: "Prayers... which are widely used, especially in Cherubim and Seraphim, resemble traditional procedures..." (1968:121). The African way of singing, hand-clapping and dancing is a practice that wins Aladura Churches the admiration of the mission Churches. Mission Churches, therefore, are beginning to imitate some of these practices, either in order to pray well or to keep and hold their members so that they do not also rush to join Aladura Churches. Akin is therefore correct in his observation that: "Praying bands after the manner of the Aladura Churches have been organised in many mission-oriented Churches: musical instruments have been introduced to put life into their worship" (1978:102).

In principle, Aladura Churches renounce any dealings with pagan practices, even native medicine, but they stress the importance of healing through divine power. Ndiokwere points out that “Dealings with any kind of juju or pagan religion, and belonging to secret societies are seriously forbidden” (1981:61). This, however, is not exactly so in practice. Sometimes members of Cherubim and Seraphim combine traditional methods of healing with prayers during their healing sessions. Peel quickly points this out saying: “Although many individual members of the Cherubim and Seraphim have thought this, none of its branches officially holds this view today. Rather they are not averse to the judicious use of herbs and curative medicines” (1968:128). The use of natural herbs in healing is an aspect of inculturation in these Christian Churches. The herbs which come from indigenous trees are prayed over by the priests or pastors, and the herbalist administers the drug to those who are sick. The faith of the sick person, the members of the church and the power of the herbs, bring about healing. Thus, the combination of the traditional way of healing, especially the use of herbs, and prayers can be well inculturated in mission churches.

Some sections of Cherubim and Seraphim are well known for their ritual ceremony at the river late at night. That is, these sections frequently go to the river at night to pray and at the end, offer sacrifices to the god of the river. All these are done in the night. Many of them believe that they have magical powers through the god of the river. On this ground, many people question whether Cherubim and Seraphim is a true Christian Church. In effect, it is not easy for one to leave off one’s conviction very easily. Hence, Peel remarks: “For anyone to give up the native medicines, for whatever reason, would be strange and unusual; the total renunciation of all kinds of medicine by the Christ Apostolic Church is, for Yorubas, a most singular and untypical thing” (1968:129). In their healing sessions, Aladura Churches make use of blessed water. Observing the importance of the blessed water, Ndiokwere remarks: “Consecrated water is believed to be charged with magical powers, and is poured on charms or bad medicines to neutralise their effect” (1981:61). Peel reports that: “During a small pox outbreak in Ibadan in January 1965, the Seraphim said that sanctified water was the best protection possible, and the same is implied at the frequent testimonies at Aladura Churches” (1968:33).

In the area of marriage, the Aladura Churches have no problem with polygamy, and divorce. One important area where Aladura Churches have inculturated well is the harvest feast. The harvest feast in these Churches is a typical Yoruba cultural festival. The decoration of the Church for that day is done with symbolic things such as green banana plants which symbolise life and abundant fruits. The gifts presented that day are the local produce and the hymns are original and native. People celebrate happily and joyfully without being worried about time. The cultural symbols are very important in inculturation because they evoke a deep sense of participation and satisfaction. They are more meaningful than imported objects of worship which have no symbolic meaning for the people. The Aladura Churches, like other Independent Churches, are self-supportive and self-propagating. The use of local materials like objects of worship in these churches is also an aspect of inculturation which makes them indigenous and local.

Viewed from the above points, one can say that Aladura Churches are biblical, pentecostal and evangelical. They are biblical because they get their directions from the bible, pentecostal because the Holy Spirit inspires them to good and godly actions, and evangelical because they are involved in full-time ministry of preaching to win souls for Christ. The Aladuras emphasise the need for good health of body and soul. It is that health of body and soul that can be attained through prayers. Moede (1972:8) summarises this as follows: "the Churches lay upon their members the efficacy of the faithful prayer for the health of body and salvation of the soul...". Thus, healing is an important ministry in Independent Churches especially in Aladura Churches.

#### **6. 5 Inculturated Healing Ministry In Mission Churches.**

In our discussions on the two African Independent Churches, we found out that these churches incorporate healing in their services. As a result, they attract many members from the mission churches who join them after they have been healed. For this reason, people think that only the Independent Churches practise inculturated healing. This impression is made clear by Healey, who remarks:

Healing was always very important in the early Christian Church. Yet, ironically, the healing aspect of ministry has been inculturated in only some Christian Churches in Africa today, such as the African Independent Churches and different types of Pentecostal Churches. The Catholic Church, and many of the mainline Protestant Churches, such as the Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians, continue to hesitate and to hold back in this regard (1996:304).

Bate comments that “It is only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the healing ministry begins to re-emerge as a powerful force in the Church. The re-emergence of this ministry can be traced to the rise of the Healing sects and the Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the century” (1993:187). The aim of this section is to find out the extent of healing ministry in the mission churches and also whether they are making efforts to inculturate healing in their Christian celebrations. We talk about healing because life is precious to every one. In the words of the Theological Commission of the Zimbabwean Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC), “life is a constant battle for health” (1989:3). This same commission agrees that: “Healing means overcoming adverse spiritual forces, restoring peace and being reconciled” (1989:3). This short definition centres on the spiritual well being of the sick person where the sick person needs peace of mind that will come when he/she is reconciled with God and with the community. The Church’s primary role here is spiritual healing while the doctors and nurses take care of the bodily healing. On the other hand, the church does not exclude bodily healing in her prayers of healing, as we shall see in the activities of the three mission churches selected for this study. We continue to focus on the Methodist, Catholic and Anglican Churches for our study because they are the dominant mission churches in Zimbabwe.

### **6.5.1 Methodist Church**

Recently, the members of the Methodist Church in Manicaland had their annual convention at Mutambara, from 22 to 26 August 2001. The theme of this convention is summarised in a quotation taken from 2 Chronicles 7:14, which according to the version of the bible not mentioned reads: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land.” In this sentence, I underline “heal their land”.

Again, one of the items on the programme for Thursday, 23 August reads: "10:30 - 12. 00 p. m. Healing Service". From these two references, I became interested because I had come to this convention in order to find out whether there was healing in the Methodist Church. The message of healing was central in the preaching of one of the participants, Baba Machedza, who spoke about healing in general, especially healing for Zimbabwe in the difficult time the country was facing. The preacher tried to encourage the members present to persevere and seek God's guidance and healing. In order to emphasise this perseverance, the preacher said repeatedly: "Receive power, but you must accept humiliation." This means that before one is healed, one must be prepared to be humiliated.

The preacher's sermon became more concrete when he referred to Acts 16:22-25, where God freed Paul and Silas from the chains and prison humiliation. In the same way, the preacher said, God unties all those chained by the devil and frees them from their sicknesses, afflictions and demon possessions. His preaching was punctuated with Shona singing and hand-clapping. The one chorus that touched everybody and even moved some to shed tears says: "In Jesus we believe, in Jesus the great healer we believe." It is important to note that one of the attributes the Africans have for Jesus is "Jesus our great healer" (Healey 1996:300). This explains why many were touched by this chorus, where they are calling upon Jesus as a great healer to come and heal them and the country as a whole. There was a time for special prayers on behalf of those who had peculiar problems. People who wanted prayers came forward to kneel down for prayers.

In these prayer sessions, I observed that prayers for healing were said but there was not yet an aspect which showed an effort to inculturate healing in the Methodist Church. During the laying of hands on one boy, for example, I was expecting an incorporation of some African values, but in vain. In an effort to find out whether there was any effort to inculturate the healing ministry in the Methodist Church, I later had an interview with Rev. Elisha Kabungaidze, one of those with the gift of healing. According to him, his gift as a healer started as a lay preacher and continued when he became a pastor. The gift of healing, he said, comes from God. In order to explain what this means, Kabungaidze said: "If the gift of healing is a choice, I would not have gone for it because it is not easy to fight with the unseen spirits.

This is because, some stubborn demons attack the person who is casting them out, thereby leading to wars which one cannot guarantee winning every time” (oral interview 23/08/2001). In answer to the question what effort the Methodist Church was making to inculcate healing, Kabungaidze said: “Those involved in faith healing ministry in the Methodist Church do not use any substance, not even blessed water.” He continued, “I say prayers, but it is God who heals.” The idea of inculturation here is still absent. There is no room yet for considering African cultural values. He agreed that the African Independent churches had inculturated healing more than the mission churches. These were his reasons:

We in the mission churches inherited the Western type of worship which left out a lot of Christ’s pastoral activities, namely, the care of peoples’ welfare. The mission churches focus much attention on intellectual and theological expertise, emphasis on correct biblical interpretation and scholarly exegesis. On the other hand, the African Independent churches are concerned with what affects the lives of their fellow Africans, with less emphasis on scholarly work. Thus, these independent churches centre their activities on rescuing the people from sickness, demon possessions and witchcraft (oral interview 23/08/2001).

Going further, Kabungaidze deplored the method these African Independent churches use in healing, such as: divination and soliciting the help of traditional healers. These churches, he insisted, “invite people to come to them in order to receive healing. Most people go there only for material benefits.” He concluded by saying, “Many of the leaders from independent churches have ended up becoming traditional healers. I do not want to become a traditional healer” (23/08/2001).

One of the African cultural values which Kabungaidze pointed out from the African Independent Churches is family solidarity with those who are afflicted. The churches’ involvement in whatever affects their members is an African cultural value which is lacking in mission churches. This solidarity, care and concern for the suffering member, helps the members to recover faster. This could be a starting point for inculturating healing in the Methodist church. Agreeing with this point, Kabungaidze affirms that: “The need to identify with our people in their sufferings is a rich African culture which we must aim at and practise in our churches”(23/08/2001). It became a matter of interest to him when I suggested that these are some of the African cultural values we expect to be inculturated. We may say, therefore, that there is healing ministry in the Methodist Church. On the other hand, there is no effort at the moment to inculcate healing in this church.

The main problem is the general understanding of inculturation, which is negatively understood by many, even by those who are directly involved in the healing ministry. There is need for the correct understanding of inculturation and also for an effort to do more research and publish documents on inculturation in the Methodist Church. The ability to identify some of the African cultural values in the African Independent Churches may encourage the members of the Methodist Church to incorporate these values into their ministry. We now look at the Catholic Church to see whether there is any effort to inculturate the healing ministry in it.

### **6.5.2 Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that God, who is the owner and giver of life, is the greatest healer. On the other hand, God heals through people whom he uses as “his own instruments” (ZCBC 1989:20). The Catholic Church not only prays for the sick, it also encourages prayers for those who look after the sick. The Church holds the position that: “Prayer should accompany the work of the Christian doctors and nurses who know, even if they have all the necessary skills and have all the latest gadgets and medicines at their disposal, that they are only acting on behalf of the Giver of Life and are answerable to him” (ZCBC 1989:21). It has always encouraged healing services through the anointing of the sick.

The sacrament of anointing, known as extreme unction, was misunderstood in the past to mean a sacrament for the dying. This misunderstanding came about because the sacrament was deferred till the last minute of one’s life on earth. Thus, for many people, to receive this sacrament means to be made ready to die. The Second Vatican Council corrected this wrong impression by explaining that: “Extreme Unction, which may also and more fittingly be called anointing of the sick, is not a sacrament for those only at the point of death” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1966:73). It is in the introduction to the rite of anointing that we see the aim of this sacrament. “This sacrament provides the sick person with the grace of the Holy Spirit by which the whole person is brought to health, trust in God is encouraged, and strength is given to resist the temptations of the evil one and anxiety about death” (ZCBC 1989:11-12).

In the real act of administering this sacrament, the prayer said on the spot emphasises the two aspects of healing: physical and spiritual. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes how this sacrament is administered:

By anointing them on the forehead and hands with duly blessed oil pressed from olives or from other plants saying, only once: Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up (1994:339).

The sick person is prayed for, for the forgiveness of his/ her sins to enable him/her to be reconciled fully with God, and also for his bodily recovery. This means that “A return to physical health may even follow the reception of this sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person’s salvation” (ZCBC 1989:12). That is, a person can be touched by the fact that he/she has been healed and start living a Godly life. The Theological Commission explains why the church prays for the physical and spiritual healing of the sick person in these words: “If we neglected the first aspect [physical] we would lack the humanity and compassion of Christ, if we neglected the second [spiritual] we would be presumptuous and try to dictate to God” (ZCBC 1989:13). It is important to bear in mind that prayer made in faith gives room for the will of God to be done on the sick person. That is, it can be the will of God that the person is healed bodily or it can be his will that the person dies physically, while he/she is healed spiritually. That is why praying for the sick person is important.

In the African extended family system, what affects one member of the family affects the others. In the light of this extended family system and communal solidarity, the small Christian community can play an important role. The family members of the sick person inform the small Christian community about the sick member. The members of the small Christian community would then, in turn, not only keep the sick person company, but also attend to his or her needs. In some places in Africa the immediate family members of the sick person abandon their relatives who are AIDS patients. Here, the small Christian community could become helpful and useful by collecting drugs from clinics and administering the drugs to the patient as well as cooking and washing the person. In the case of a non-AIDS patient, the presence of the small Christian community would reassure the sick person that his/her sickness is not caused by any members of the community.



Very often, many people who are sick in Africa, in general, and in Zimbabwe, in particular, think that their sickness is caused by someone else. The Theological Commission demonstrates its awareness of this attitude: "If a person has been involved in a severe conflict with a neighbour or relative he/she easily assumes that it is this conflict, and the anger and hatred going with it, that has made him/her sick" (ZCBC 1989:15). It is important to keep a sick person company in order to keep the person away from such evil thoughts. The small Christian community can be helpful in this aspect. In a recommendation given on how to inculcate healing, diocesan representatives from the Bulawayo Archdiocese suggest the presence of the whole Christian community and the priest during the anointing of the sick person. During prayers, the names of saints, especially African saints regarded as ancestors, are invoked to come and pray for the sick person. The belief is that since human beings can pray for their sick members, the saints can also be asked to pray for the living.

The representatives also encourage physical contacts like touching and holding hands firmly with the sick person. This is important because it not only gives the sick person support, but it also offers the sick person the warmth of relationship, which he/she needs for recovery. As Catholics, these members recommend the sprinkling of holy water on the person as well as placing the crucifix on the person. These are what we call sacramentals. "These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994:372). These recommendations are being implemented in many dioceses in Zimbabwe. In some places, the people join the priest to lay hands on the sick person. In other places it is only the priest who lays hands on the sick person and anoints him/her with holy oil. The Catholic church is not against the use of herbs. This is also an aspect that is being inculcated. Hence the representatives from Bulawayo affirm that: "The use of herbs is acceptable to Christian faith, provided it involves no divination or being guided by spirit mediums".

In Nigeria a Catholic priest by the name of Arazu knows different types of herbs that cure different diseases. He gives people these pure herbs for their ailments and also prays for them. Many people have received healing through this process. These pure herbs are what Healey describes in these words: "A practical example of holistic healing is African herbal medicine which uses fruits, seeds, roots and stems of fruits and plants as remedies for

ailments” (1996:321).

The use of herbs in healing is thus being inculturated in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Healing masses are not common, however. For this reason the representatives from Chinhoyi diocese remark as follows: “Very often this sacrament [of anointing of the sick] is only administered in the home of the sick person, but perhaps if we have more healing services and more healing masses, then the laity would appreciate it more” (1996:20). In East and West Africa, healing masses have become regular and common. According to Healey, “There are a wide variety of healing masses in East Africa: In some parishes, healing of the sick is a regular part of the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. After the gospel or after communion, the sick are invited to come in front of the altar. The priest anoints them, prays over them, and blesses them by the laying of hands” (Healey 1996:311).

In Nigeria, for example, many healing ministries have been established in the Catholic church. Prominent among these centres is the Catholic Prayer Ministry of the Holy Spirit in Elele. Many people go there for healing prayers. The co-ordinator of this prayer ministry prays over those who are sick, with the laying of hands by all the priests present at the Eucharistic celebration. People who come with olive oil and water have them blessed. Holy water is sprinkled in great quantity on all present. At the end, the sick people go to the Eucharistic chapel for adoration. With such centres, many Catholics do not rush to the Independent churches or to the local traditional healers. These areas which are inculturated in the healing ministry of the Catholic Church have a considerable impact on the lives of Catholics in particular and of other Christians in general, because they feel the church understands and sympathises with them in their troubles. The people also feel that the church cares for their spiritual and physical welfare. With the healing masses which are celebrated any where and at any time, peoples’ problems are regularly attended to. This is in line with the African way of life, where there is no demarcation between social and religious activities.

### 6.5.3 Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church is another mission church at which healing ministry is practised. Rev. Michael David Zambezi, a retired Anglican priest, confirmed this in an oral interview held with him on 24/08/2001 in Mutare. According to him, “there is healing ministry in the Anglican church. We do not have any specific time or one particular place where prayer for healing takes place”. This means that just as Christ was going around healing those who were sick, in the same way the “Anglican church offers prayers for those who are sick wherever they are found” (Zambezi 24/08/2001). Prayers are offered both at homes and in hospitals. Rev. Zambezi was the Anglican hospital chaplain at the Mutare Provincial hospital. According to him, there are three stages to be followed when a priest prays for the sick. These are: “the prayer for the sick, the anointing with blessed oil, and finally the Holy communion” (24/08/2001). In order to emphasise the importance of the Holy Spirit in healing, our elderly priest sang a Shona chorus which is normally sung when prayers are said for the sick. *Handinge ukuru, handinge simba asi nge Mweya unoera waMwari*. (It is not by might nor by strength but by the holy spirit of God that one is healed). Zambezi insists that: “There is no part of the human being which is beyond the reach of God’s healing power” (24/08/2001).

As a former hospital chaplain, Zambezi emphasises spiritual healing when praying for the sick. This idea is stressed in the Anglican rite of anointing which reads:

It is not the function of the church to apply its means of restoration if no higher end is sought than the recovery of bodily health. Indeed, to do this would gravely compromise the meaning and purpose of the church’s rites and sacraments. No sick person must look to the clergyman to do what is the physician’s or surgeon’s duty to do... Whether the sick person throws off the sickness or not, the work of the church will have been effective if he [she] has thereby found truer peace of spirit and a more real knowledge of the uplifting presence and power of Christ (Cafer 1952: v).

Praying for and anointing the sick is the work of the priest. The people are not yet involved in this activity in the Anglican church. There was an effort by a priest called Rev. Moore, who tried to work with a group of people or lay Christians to pray for the sick. Since this action was not officially approved by the Anglican Church, the group disbanded as soon as the priest left the country.

Though the Anglican Church has not started delegating members of small Christian communities to go and pray for the sick, Rev. Zambezi agrees that it is a good practice to involve Christian members, considering the value of the African extended family system where the families take care of their relatives. This is an area where the Anglican church can start inculturating the healing process. The Christians can be of help by supporting the sick person in different ways. Explaining how this could be experimented, Zambezi says:

When the water has been blessed by the priest, the Christians present hold the bowl of water for the sick person as a sign of support and solidarity. The sick person takes the water from the bowl and signs himself/herself with the sign of the cross on the forehead. If the sick person is too weak to do this, one of the members does the sign of the cross on the sick person's forehead (24/08/2001).

This is a good and possible way to start inculturating healing in the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church is not against the use of herbs by Christians. The church does not support the use of herbs that are associated with divination and spirit mediums. This is against the will of God and against the church's law, Rev. Zambezi maintains. He admits that there is an inculturated healing in the African Independent Churches. However, he cautions that most of the African Independent Churches combine their healing with the African traditional means of healing which include divination and spirit mediums. Consequently, he concludes: "Many of them have become traditional healers who are no longer Christians" (24/08/2001). This is the danger of inculturation, he warns.

We may say that there is a healing ministry in the Anglican church, without much effort at present to inculturate some of its aspects. There are possibilities of inculturating a healing in this church especially through the laity. Two problems need to be overcome before inculturating healing in this church. The first one is the priest's dominant role, which does not allow the laity to participate actively in praying for the sick. The second problem is an effort to change the rite for anointing the sick to reflect some African values. At present, the rite published in 1952 with the European background is still used. It is important that we promote African cultural values in our celebrations because they help to make the church's celebrations more meaningful to our African Christians.

Photos on Healing



Healing Ministers praying for healing.



Testimony for healing.



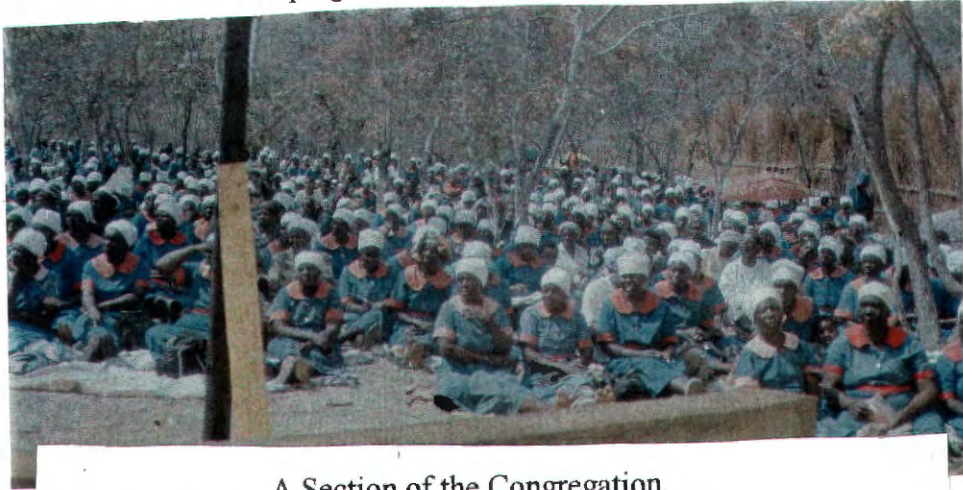
General Prayers for healing



Members asking for healing.



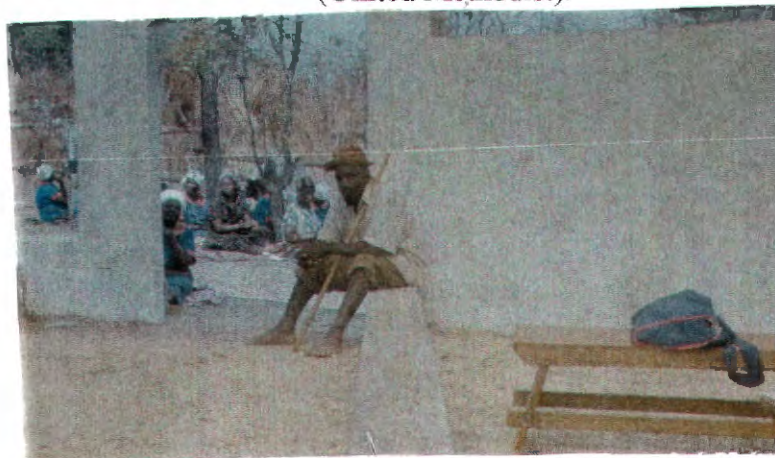
Camping Site.



A Section of the Congregation.



Researcher, A Patient, Dist. Supretendent  
(United Methodist).



## **6. 6 Conclusion.**

This chapter has tried to examine the practical aspects of inculturation in some selected mainline Churches and African Independent Churches. In the Anglican and Methodist Churches, some inculturation is happening, though many of their members are not aware of it. The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe is ahead of these churches in the promotion of inculturation. For example, Catholic hymns composed in Shona and Ndebele are original because they are not translations from English to Shona or Ndebele. The gestures at the Eucharistic celebration are spontaneous and they are characteristics of Shona culture. However, the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe appears to be more self-reliant than the Catholic and the Anglican Churches. The Independent Churches are by far more advanced in the promotion of inculturation in their various churches than all the mission churches.

In both the mission and African Independent Churches, there is a healing ministry. The African Independent Churches most often use the traditional ways of healing, and emphasise healing more than the mission churches. On the other hand, the Catholic Church makes more effort to inculturate healing than the Anglican and Methodist Churches. The understanding of inculturation especially in the area of healing differs in mission churches. While the Catholic Church has a positive understanding of inculturating healing, the Methodist Church has a negative understanding about it. The Anglican Church sees the reason for inculturating but it is cautious and much more inclined toward the English method.

In the spirit of ecumenism and dialogue, the African Churches must come to understand and appreciate the importance of African cultural values and inculturate them in their Christian worship. Such understanding will come when these churches interact among themselves to see what others are doing to inculturate the gospel in general in African culture. We now proceed to examine critically and evaluate how inculturation has been implemented so far in these churches, with the intension of making some recommendations for future progress.

**CHAPTER 7:  
INCULTURATION SO FAR: REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**7. 1 Introduction.**

In chapters five and six, we examined the efforts made by various churches to inculturate some aspects of their ministry. The churches chosen included three Mission Churches: the Catholic, the Anglican and the Methodist Churches, and two African Independent Churches: VaPostori and Aladura. In all the mission churches we discovered that some level of inculturation is going on in areas such as baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, burial and healing. The extent of the progress made in the implementation of inculturation differs from church to church. Our examination of inculturation in the Independent churches was not focussed on these areas but was more general.

In this chapter, we wish to assess whether inculturation is succeeding or failing in these African churches. Okure (1991:87) tells us that “The aim of inculturation is to have an effective evangelisation.” This review will enable us to establish where the African churches stand in their inculturation efforts. My one-time professor at the seminary, the Very Rev. Fr. Mbefo, always reminded us that “An unexamined life is not worth living.” In the same way, we can equally say that an unexamined attempt at inculturation is not worth the effort.

We also hope to find a way forward and later make some recommendations which may help the African churches to implement inculturation effectively. This way forward is important because we live in a world that is dynamic, where every human being hopes for an improvement in life and some progress in future. It is our wish that Christianity in Africa can become strong and deeply rooted in the African soil and culture. The idea of a forward-looking church is also expressed by Buhlmann when he states: “She [the church] must move forward courageously herself and imbue the whole humanity with confidence in the future” (1977:8).



## **7.2 Evaluation And Critique Of Inculturation.**

We must first recognise and acknowledge the efforts which have been made so far to inculturate certain aspects of African values in the church. We can call these efforts achievements or successes. They were simply efforts to promote inculturation in the African Church.

As we have seen in chapter 5, in a general assessment of inculturation the Inter-regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) acknowledges the followings as successes which have been recorded so far in the implementation of inculturation:

African dances during the offertory.

African food crops offered during Mass.

Dramatising the readings to make Holy Mass more lively and ensure wider participation.

Use of small Christian communities to enhance brother/sisterhood and togetherness.

Use of African liturgical garments.

Zairean Mass, which has incorporated many elements which are purely African.

In architecture, churches and chapels are sometimes built in "round hut" African design, and in art the images of Jesus and Mary portrayed in black colour. The rotation days adapted and changed into the days of planting, with the blessing of fields, cultivating tools and the seeds whereby each blessing is followed by the appropriate action (1993:55-56).

IMBISA identifies the above as areas where some of the successes have been recorded, and also categorises them together as achievements on inculturation. We intend therefore to discuss briefly these inculturated aspects before we review the specific areas discussed in the preceding chapters. We devote a paragraph to each aspect.

At offertory in the Catholic Church, the celebration becomes more lively because everybody becomes involved. The singing, the drumming and the rhythms evoke active 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.

People bring what they produce as a way of thanking God, who gave them their own land and the power to till that land. The offering of African food crops gives people a sense of belonging because they feel their effort is recognised and their gifts appreciated. In Nigeria, for example, the men happily bring to the church tubers of yams selected from their barns. On the other hand, the women bring a combination of cocoyams, okra, plantain, pumpkins and vegetables. The priest receives these gifts in the name of the church and blesses those who bring them. When peoples' gifts are accepted by the church, the people feel that the church belongs to them, since they have been accepted as they are. The offering of African food crops also helps to feed the church leaders. It promotes self-reliance, which is necessary for inculturation.

The emphasis on drama is full participation. The people who perform drama during celebration are fully involved in the day's celebration. This helps them to be at that celebration well prepared, knowing fully well that both their presence and the message they will communicate are very important to the worshipping community. Those watching the drama are also very attentive so that they can receive the message meant for that day. In this case, therefore, both those performing the drama and those watching are actively involved. The church benefits from drama because the talents of her members are very much utilised. Through drama, church members become committed in their faith.

When people gather on Sunday for celebration, it becomes hard to know everybody because of a huge crowd. It becomes even more difficult to know peoples' individual problems in such a situation. In small Christian communities, people are well known and their problems are easily attended to by the members of their Christian community. In this case, the church is modelled according to the African family system. The church also becomes strong because it has a base at the grass-roots.

The use of African liturgical garments helps to depict the African 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 African priests in the mission churches celebrate much more comfortably with the African liturgical garments because they feel at home with such garments.

It is important to remark that the African Independent churches are doing much better here because all their church garments are made locally.

The Zairean mass has helped to incorporate some aspects of African culture into Christian celebrations, as we have pointed out in chapter five. This innovation by the Christians in Zaire is inspiring other African Christians in different countries, offering the hope that one day, each country will have its own Mass, known and identified with that country, such as the Zimbabwean Mass, the Ivorian Mass, the Nigerian Mass, etc.

Some churches are built to resemble rondavels (round-hut houses) found in many African countries. These architectural designs help to identify Christian church buildings with African culture, a sign that what is African is also good. In arts, some images of Jesus and Mary have been portrayed in black colour and African shapes. These images in black colour, with an African background, depict the illustriousness of an African man and the beauty of an African woman. The presence of these round chapels and African images used to decorate them inspire people to pray.

Finally, the activity rotation days enable African Christians to adapt to a situation favourable to their Christian worship. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Sunday of 14 October 2001, was celebrated throughout the country as "Sunday of prayer for Rain." Rain is important for planting. Thus, this day was dedicated for prayer for rain so that people in Zimbabwe would obtain enough rain to plant. When they plant, there is hope for abundant harvest which is important for people's livelihood. On this day of prayer for rain, the prayers and the hymns were invocations for rain. Praying for rain in Zimbabwe enables the Christians here to feel that their future well-being is being considered.

Having discussed these various areas enlisted by the IMBISA, we now look at the various areas of worship, especially the sacraments. We have explained and discussed in detail the meaning and importance of some sacraments. We do not intend to explain them again in this chapter. Instead, we intend to evaluate the inculturation that has taken place through them.

### 7.2.1 Baptism.

The area where a little effort has been made in inculturating baptism in most of the churches is in the adoption of African names. In Zimbabwe, for example, the baptism records from 1986 to 2000 show that a very small percentage of Catholics was baptised with Shona names. The same is applicable to other churches. This small percentage of people who adopt Shona names in Zimbabwe consists mainly of urban dwellers. Not much progress has been made in the adoption of Shona names because the local bishops and priests do not insist very strongly on the importance of African names.

In Nigeria, on the other hand, most parents prefer to baptise their children (infants) with African names. The Nigerians are much more at home with their culture and they are happy to show their culture everywhere they are and much more also when they are in the church. This explains why many Nigerians adopt African names at baptism. Even so, however, not all have done so. The adoption of African names at baptism would generally encourage people to value their culture and background.

The initiation process which is common in African culture and which can easily be adapted to the Rite of Christian Adult Initiation (RCIA) is completely absent in the administration of baptism in Zimbabwe as well as in many other countries in Africa. The rite of passage in African initiation brings about a fundamental change in a person's social and religious relationships, which enables the initiated person to be fully received in the community. In the same way, the rite of Christian Adult Initiation would help to prepare very well those who are to be baptised, which in turn would make them become committed and convinced Christians. The failure to incorporate the RCIA, thus promoting the stages of initiation at baptism, is mainly the result of a lack of proper understanding of this rite. The priests, in particular, have not taken time to study the rite nor pains to explain it to the people, its meaning and importance, and how it is related to African culture. That is why the people of Zimbabwe regard it as "not fit for their situation and also impractical" (*Liturgical Inculturation* 1996:27). Some Catholic dioceses, however, promote the RCIA while others are not keen to do so for the reasons explained.

On the other hand, the other churches are not worried whatever name is used at baptism. What matters for them is baptism itself. At the moment, the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is not interested in adopting Shona names at baptism. This is different from the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe which prefers Shona names. The initial training given to the foundation members of these two churches is part of the cause of this difference which exists between them. For example, the influence of bishop Hartzel, a white missionary, is still felt greatly in the United Methodist Church today. On the other hand, the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe started early to associate with indigenous names such as Ndhlala, that is the name of the first early African president of that church. The Anglican church accepts both Shona and English names at baptism. It does not prevent a candidate for baptism from choosing any name of his/her choice. According to Rev. Zambezi, "We encourage them to adopt Shona names at baptism but we do not force them to do so"(oral interview 24/08/2001). The members of Vapostori prefer names taken directly from the bible. Since they are content with these names from the bible, they do not think it is necessary to change to African names.

In all, we can say that not much inculturation has gone into baptism. This is because there is not much room for the Africans to experiment and introduce some aspects of African cultural values except the adoption of local names, which many do not adopt. Again, the leaders of the different churches have not done much to explore other avenues and to utilise profitably the existing ones.

### **7.2.2 Eucharist.**

Generally, remarkable progress has been made in inculturating the Eucharist in many churches. In fact, most of the success referred to by the IMBISA document is largely found here. Africans in general like lively celebrations. This explains why there is dancing in every Eucharistic celebration.

Our people are generous and so they are happy to bring whatever they produced in their farms as gifts to God, who gave them the land and life. They believe that God must be thanked with their whole life and with what they have.

In a society where everyone's effort and contribution counts, it becomes reasonable that there is greater participation in African churches during the Eucharistic celebration. Those who naturally feel shy are encouraged to take part. One way of overcoming this shyness is through drama, which not only helps people to participate but enables them to depict the prevailing life style of the community as implied in the scripture readings. Drama also helps people to develop their talents.

The Zairean Mass is a landmark, but it is practised only in the Catholic Church in Zaire. The Zairean Mass exists because the Zairean bishops, priests and lay people are very committed, courageous, and ready to sacrifice time and effort. They are not scared of criticisms from headquarters. Other countries in Africa celebrate Mass with the Roman rite, with few modifications. For example, instead of standing up when the gospel is read, people in Zimbabwe sit down as a sign of respect to an elder whose word is proclaimed.

Another area in which no inculturation has taken place is in the materials used for the Holy Communion. Many African theologians have recommended food items produced in Africa and wine brewed locally. These recommendations have not been implemented because of fear of what Rome or London may say or do. Okoye gives us a picture of what can happen to those who take this risk, saying: "Bishop Dupont of Pala (Chad) actually experimented with millet bread and beer between 1973 and 1975. He was promptly retired" (1992:283). This means that the materials used in making the altar bread and sometimes the altar wine are to be imported from outside Africa. This attitude does not promote inculturation in Africa. In order to promote inculturation in Africa, we must insist on unity in diversity.

### **7.2.3 Marriage.**

Another aspect where all the churches agree that inculturation has taken place is in the handing over of the bride to the bride groom in marriage ceremonies. This aspect has been inculturated faster because marriage in Africa is an affair between two extended families. It is not an exclusive affair between the man and his wife. The two families must be involved.

This handing over of the bride to the bridegroom is to be done in the presence of the two families, where the father of the bride tells the family of the man that the whole family which he is representing, agrees that their daughter be given in marriage to the family of the husband. This speech is followed by a prayer for blessing on the couple and on the two families. This aspect has been inculturated also because most African culture does not encourage elopement. By handing his daughter to the man, the father of the bride shows that the man has not eloped with his daughter.

There is no inculturation yet on how to integrate the traditional and church weddings. The reason for this is the lack of catechesis on the part of the people. When the lay people become aware and convinced that it is possible to have the two weddings together, it is hoped that they will start pressing for an integrated ceremony. In such a situation, the church will have no alternative but to grant the peoples' request. It is important to inculturate marriage in order to avoid the friction between the African traditional wedding and the church wedding. Those Christians who accepted only the traditional wedding, are being prevented from receiving Holy Communion in some churches. It is only the church wedding that enables the couple to receive Holy communion in the Catholic Church. This denial of Holy Communion does not help Christians to be strong in their faith. In fact, it does not help them to feel that they are active, practising members of the church. In Zimbabwe it is said: "*Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nokudya.*" (Relationship is strengthened in eating). It is only through inculturation that the traditional and church weddings can be integrated. The integration of the two weddings will help African Christians to appreciate and value their culture. On the other hand, the African Independent churches have no problem in this regard because of the indigenous nature of their churches, where they have one recognised marriage.

What is still most symbolic during a Christian wedding in Africa is the exchange of rings. The exchange of other symbolic African objects has not yet been inculturated, objects which symbolise fidelity and love, fruitfulness and solidarity. Such objects are to be encouraged. The reason for the failure in doing so is seemingly that many people still feel that they are highly respected when they display Western marriage symbols. For many, it is a sign of prestige, of affluence and a mark of high and noble status.

There is much work to be done in order to inculturate marriage in Africa especially in mission churches.

#### **7.2.4 Burial.**

The only area where inculturation has taken place in burial rites, in all the churches, is the *nyaradzo* (comforting ceremony). All the churches accept and practise *nyaradzo* in their various assemblies and also join other churches for this celebration. *Nyaradzo* has both social and religious effects on the bereaved family. The presence of Christians who visit the bereaved family a month after the burial of the deceased, helps to comfort the family. It also helps to uplift these mourners spiritually.

Instead of the bereaved family engaging the diviner's service as it is customarily done a month after burial, the Christians help them to understand the death of their loved one in the light of Christian faith. This aspect is easily inculturated because of African communal solidarity. In Africa, what affects one person, affects others. That is why the Igbos say: *Anyabewe, imi esoro bewe*. In Shona, it is rendered thus: *Kuchema kwemaziso, mkunodzinochemawo*. This means, when the eyes begin to cry, the nose also cries. African solidarity is very strong especially in times of suffering and death. *Nyaradzo* builds on African communal solidarity.

In Zimbabwe, *kurova guva* (purification of the spirit of a dead person) is not yet inculturated. Many people have condemned this practice as devilish and unChristian. Thus, there is no effort yet to do a thorough research on this practice. The consequence is that many Christians practise *Kurova guva* in secret. Here again, Christianity is not strong when the members are divided on certain practices based on African tradition. There is not much inculturation in burial.

#### **7.2.5 Healing.**

African Independent churches have inculturated healing and it is working for them. The inculturation of healing in African Independent Churches is possible because some of them do not make any distinction between African traditional healing and healing through prayers.



They do not practise the anointing of the sick, which is ritualised and common among the Catholic and the Anglican Churches. Their prayer for healing is persistent and spontaneous. On the other hand, Baur tells us that “There are some of these Independent churches who rejected the indigenous and the European medicines alike and trusted in healing through prayer, the prayer of a charismatic prophet, usually enhanced by the prayer of the whole community” (1994:417).

The Catholic Church is working to inculturate the use of herbs faster than the Anglican and the Methodist Churches. This is possible because the Catholic Church is much easily convinced of the importance of herbs and so goes on to experiment on them. The Methodist Church is still suspicious of the use of herbs in healing. Baur’s remark is correct that: “Rarely did [the missionary] show himself to believe in the efficacy of African herbs” (1994:417). Not much, therefore, has been inculturated on healing in the mission churches. The African Independent Churches excel in this aspect. It is necessary to have Christian herbalists who administer drugs in a Christian way. This will prevent Christians from flocking round the traditional healers and diviners who are not believers. When Christians receive healing from their fellow Christians, they are likely to be more strengthened in faith.

Apart from the areas mentioned here, it is also clear that the Independent Churches are generally more self-reliant than the mission churches. This is because they did not start their churches with financial and other material aid from Europe and America. In other words, they were not pampered by the missionaries who brought Christianity and introduced it to the Africans mostly through material gifts. Since most of them were opposed to the Western type of Christianity and rejected it outright, they incurred the anger of the West. The Independent Churches were not interested in financial support from the West, and the West was not prepared to fund those who opposed them. An inculturated church is both self-supporting and self-propagating. Inculturation, therefore, encourages self-reliance in personnel and material goods. Moreover, the Independent Churches wanted to be autonomous, without any interference from the West. This contributed to their development of self-reliance. Among the mission churches, the Methodist Church is becoming more self-reliant than the Catholic Church, where most of the members still depend on donations from outside donors.

It is a common attitude in Zimbabwe to hear people easily and freely saying, “let us ask *madonors* (the donors) for help.” It has been a problem to divest the people of this mentality. However, the sudden withdrawal of outside donors in Zimbabwe has become a blessing in disguise. The Catholics in particular are now forced to support their church activities financially. In all the mission churches, there is a gradual effort to have indigenous priests who preach the word of God. There is not much dependence on the West in this respect. It is the indigenous priests and trained lay leaders who will help to facilitate inculturation in Africa.

So far it is clear that there are some benefits that are noticeable in the African Church as a result of inculturation. Inculturation generally helps Christianity to be more meaningful to Africans. Through it Christianity gradually becomes more indigenised. This can be seen also in the area of personnel, where most of the leaders in various churches are mainly Africans. These church leaders use local proverbs and idioms that are relevant to various occasions which are important to the worshipping community. When people hear the word of God in their own language, they appreciate it because it communicates important messages to them. It is this word of God which they hear in their own language that helps to change the lives of these believers.

On the other hand, inculturation has not yet gone deep into the lives of African Christians. The type of life people live when they are outside the church does not always agree with what they profess. Our inculturation ought to go beyond external manifestations. Inculturation must help African Christians to match what they profess with what they do. Since inculturation is an on-going process, we hope that it will help African Christians to become mature and authentic practising Christians.

We have looked at some of the areas in which inculturation has been implemented in the African churches, and also explained why there are some successes in some churches and failures in others. We have also pointed out some of the benefits brought by inculturation. We now focus our attention on the possible way forward. That is, we make some recommendations that may enable inculturation in African Churches to be effectively implemented. Our focus here is only on the Catholic Church.

### **7.3 Toward A Comprehensive Approach To Inculturation In The Catholic Church.**

In this section we make recommendations for a more comprehensive approach to inculturation in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is chosen here mainly because the writer is a member and a priest of this Church. We will group our recommendations under two headings: church community and sacraments. Under church community we consider the Bishops, the Priests and the laity. The recommendations on the sacraments will focus on the five areas which served as points of reference for our investigations namely, baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, burial and healing. While healing is used here to represent the anointing of the sick which is a sacrament, burial as a corporal work of mercy, is not a sacrament.

#### **7.3.1 Church Community.**

The African Synod of 1994 had every African Christian at heart when the fathers of the church sat down to discuss and formulate the principles that will help to build up the African church. Our recommendations here have in view the growth of church communities in Africa.

The decisions on inculturation made at the African Synod of 1994 must be fully implemented throughout the continent if the principle of inculturation is to be meaningful and successful. The bishops of Africa and the Vatican delegates spent much time to deliberate on issues relating to inculturation in Africa. These bishops, therefore, have the responsibility to see that their decisions are implemented by being the first to put them into practice in their various dioceses, as well as encouraging others to do the same. If these decisions are not implemented, the synod resolutions will remain dead letters, only to be found in the documents they are written on. On the other hand, the implementation of these decisions, will truly promote inculturation. The African bishops are also to be courageous and united when they make their position on inculturation known to their church's headquarters. Since some African bishops, like Milingo of Zaire and Dupont of Chad, have been silenced, it is important that African bishops be united and courageously present their case to their headquarters as a group, not as single individuals. When they speak collectively and convincingly, their request on inculturation will be taken more seriously.

The priests who are liturgists, on the other hand, are to restructure their catechism method to include story telling, the use of proverbs and idioms based on biblical passages. Our catechism as it is used in Africa, is the same as the one used in Europe. It does not have much impact on the people of Africa, since it is not adapted to African culture. On the other hand, Africans learn faster and more meaningfully when they are taught through the use of African stories, proverbs and idioms. These stories, proverbs and idioms communicate lessons that are related to the African way of life.

The African priests must be encouraged to take up African studies, especially in cultural anthropology. These studies should be done in Africa, so that theory can be related to actual practice within the African communities. When these studies are done in Africa they will enable the African priests to be well versed in such problems as witchcraft, which trouble many African people. They will be well prepared and well equipped to tackle such problems. African anthropologists will be in a better position to understand the problems their fellow Africans are facing than the majority of white anthropologists. The latter may have done studies in these areas, but lack the real African background which determines these solutions to the problems.

Concerning lay people, there is an urgent need for catechetical institutions for them where they will be trained as catechists, lay leaders, and where also workshops and seminars on inculturation will be conducted for them from time to time. The establishment of these institutions is very important in order to give the laity sound training on catechesis and thus encourage them to participate more actively in the building up of the Church, in the promotion of inculturation, and to minimise their dependence on the ordained ministers in matters concerning their faith.

The lay people must be encouraged to express themselves freely in poetry, sculpture carving, painting, music composition, dancing, preaching, and architecture for the purpose of promoting inculturation in the church. This will not only motivate them to be highly interested in inculturation, but also to be actively involved in its promotion through their talents. Karecki makes this point clear when she says: "The art [the laity] produce is worthy of the one they worship" (1990:117).

Schineller gives us very valid reasons why the lay people are to be encouraged to use their talents freely on religious issues, especially on inculturation. He observes: "Laity are readily inserted, involved in positions of power in society, and can and must bring Christian values to bear on seemingly secular decisions" (1998:47). The consequence of what will happen if the laity are not given the opportunity to exercise their right in the church, is what Schineller prophesies as follows:

If this process of incorporating the laity as the prime movers in the task of inculturation in the modern world does not occur, the church will only become more and more an irrelevant ghetto church, speaking a word that will not be listened to, a word that does not address the culture of modernity. The gap between gospel and life, church and world, will grow ever wider (1998:47).

The modern world in general, and Africa in particular, wants to be fully involved so that everybody in the society or in the church will actively participate. Thus the lay people, including our energetic youths, are to be fully involved in the implementation of inculturation in African Churches.

### **7.3.2 Sacraments**

Side by side with the church community is the ministry of the church, which in the Catholic Church, finds the highest expression in the sacraments. Our life as Christians is regulated by the sacraments, which we celebrate almost every day. In order to celebrate these sacraments much more meaningfully as Africans, the following recommendations are made, starting with baptism, which is the first sacrament of the church.

#### **Baptism.**

There is need for constant encouragement of people, especially in the rural areas, to find meaning in adopting African names at baptism. This can be achieved through catechetical instructions organised for parents who are preparing for their children's baptisms. When parents become interested in African names at baptism, they will favour African names for their children for the reason given in chapters 5 and 6.

### **Eucharist.**

In the celebration of the Eucharist both the local garments and food items should be used. This is important because the prayer over the gifts will be more meaningful to the people of Africa when they know that what is elevated in thanksgiving to God is what they produced themselves from their lands.

The priests who put on the locally made garments and the people who made these garments will feel happy when they worship God as they are and with what they themselves have made. It is this type of confidence that will enable people to be more creative so as to help in the promotion of inculturation in Africa. The type of Mass similar to the Zairean Mass should be popularised in Africa. This will help to make the mass known to people in Africa, who will come to appreciate it more. Many people in Africa do not know much about the Zairean Mass. It is knowing what makes this mass indigenous that will attract the people to it. In turn, they will adopt it and adapt it to their own situations.

### **Marriage.**

Marriage is another area which is in dire need of inculturation. There is an urgent need to combine the celebration of the African traditional wedding and the Christian Church wedding together in those countries where this is not yet taking place. This will enable the people to appreciate their culture and its importance in the church, cut down costs incurred in two separate weddings and enable the people to be accepted both in the society and in the church as fully married people. There is need also to exchange African symbolic objects at marriage. Objects that symbolise faithfulness and love can play an important role in the inculturation of marriage because they have cultural values of unity and solidarity. This will enable the man and his wife to understand very well the importance and value of marriage as it relates to them as African Christians. These symbols must portray some of the cultural values the Africans cherish and uphold. They would, in this way, always remind them to love and respect themselves and also to cherish and honour their marriage.

### **Burial.**

The celebration of all souls day on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November every year should be transformed in Africa, in order to allow Africans to pay special respect to and pray for their dead relatives. The Africans do not abandon their dead relatives very easily. The African church has to be conscious and sensitive to this fact. In the liturgical celebration on all souls day, the church in Africa can make provisions that will encourage people to remember and honour their dead relatives. This can be done through special prayers relevant to Africans, the blessing of objects and flowers meant to be kept at the graves.

### **Healing.**

Concerning inculturated healing, mission churches, including the Catholic Church, are to be encouraged to do thorough research on healing in the African Independent Churches. In this way they will know those good aspects of healing that could be borrowed from these churches. These aspects can be transformed, as we have seen in the course of our discussions. All the churches must be encouraged to promote the use of African herbs. This is important because in this way, we will not only honour God, the creator of these herbs, but we will also be honouring the African land that produced these herbs as well as promoting the work of our African Christian herbalists

These recommendations are made with the ardent hope that they will be implemented in Africa, or at least added upon and improved before implementation. Such implementation will help to promote inculturation and the active participation of all the Christians in Africa.

### **7.4 Conclusion.**

We have tried in this chapter to review and evaluate the implementation of inculturation in African churches, pointing out its successes and failures as well as its benefits. Our findings reveal that among all the areas under which inculturation is discussed and evaluated, namely baptism, Eucharist, marriage, burial and healing, some remarkable inculturation has taken place in the area of the Eucharist in all the mission churches.

In the other areas, varying degrees of success have been observed in the various churches, ranging from almost none to significant progress at inculturation. We can conclude that much work still needs to be done in order to implement inculturation effectively. On the other hand, the African Independent Churches have registered more successes, especially in marriage, healing and self-reliance. These successes came as a result of the autonomous nature of these churches.

In order to implement inculturation effectively in Africa, we have also made some recommendations for the Catholic Church, specifically. These recommendations are made on the understanding that provisions will be made for those who will facilitate the implementation of inculturation, and also for specific areas of focus. In conclusion, there is hope that more awareness of inculturation will help the churches in Africa to succeed in the implementation of inculturation, in the spirit of love, unity and solidarity, where they will see themselves as one extended family of God in Africa. The African churches need to unite in order to promote African culture and consequently promote inculturation. This is important because Christianity has come to stay in Africa, it has to be indigenous so as to enable the gospel to be incarnated and inculturated in African culture. The poem below supports the efforts we have discussed on inculturation in African churches, with particular reference to Zimbabwe.



### My Dream Of An African Church.

There in my mother's womb I dreamt of Africa,  
 A black figure of six letters shown to me,  
 A stands for All,  
 F stands for Freed,  
 R stands for Race,  
 I stands for In,  
 C stands for Cultured Church,  
 A stands for Assembly,  
 From your large womb oh! Mother Africa are  
 All A Freed Race In A Cultured Assembly.

A Church in Africa my beloved continent,  
 A Religious prayerful continent,  
 Where religion pervades every activity,  
 A home for blacks, their lovers and posterity,  
 An African Church that welcomed me at birth,  
 Under whose protection my mother lays my destiny,  
 In whose hands I have surrendered my life,  
 To serve defend and uphold your wisdom all my life,  
 For it will always be called an African Church.

A Church of warmth and zeal,  
 A Church where traditional instruments speak,  
 Singing and dancing melodious and rhythmic,  
 Bodies vibrate in movement,  
 Perspiration pours out like running stream,  
 Participation spontaneous and satisfying,  
 A Church of no spectators and idlers,  
 As in a family each is one's keeper,  
 All growing together in this one African Church.

A Church where Jesus invitation is apt,  
 Mother Church invites all overburdened come!,  
 A Church where the lonely find company,  
 The hungry fed, the thirsty quenched,  
 A place where each is known by name,  
 Where one's worth is recognised and appreciated,  
 A place where racism and sexism drown in ocean,  
 Where ancestors are honoured, African values recognised,  
 For it will always be called an African Church.

A Church of old and modern Saints,  
 Saints: Cyprian, Augustine, Perpetua, Felicity of old,  
 Martyrs of Uganda, Anuarite of Zaire, Bakhita of Suddan of recent,  
 A Church that teaches her children to  
 Appreciate their colour and value their worth,  
 Worship their God and honour their ancestors,  
 Be kind to all and show hospitality to strangers,  
 Till their land and enjoy their fruits,  
 Joining hands to build up the African Church.

African Church that gave birth to illustrious children like:  
 Lumumba of Zaire,  
 Nkurumah of Ghana,  
 Nnandi Azikiwe of Nigeria,  
 Nyerere of Tanzania,  
 Mbuya Nehanda of Zimbabwe,  
 Mandela of South Africa and others,  
 From Nile to Zambezi, God is worshipped and adored,  
 To the credit of the one African Church.

A Church with vision and aspiration,  
 Accommodating both rich and poor,  
 Welcoming old and young, sinners and saints,  
 A Church rich in mercy and forgiveness,  
 A Church that is loving and caring,  
 A place of refuge for the homeless,  
 A Church that is indigenous and cultural,  
 A real home where God is experienced as Father/mother,  
 Always to be known as an African church.

Today you are young oh! African Church,  
 Facing difficulties of life,  
 External pressures mounting high,  
 Internal unfaithfulness and betrayal rampant,  
 Yet, you have many young mouths to feed,  
 Spiritual and physical feeding awaits you,  
 Lose not heart oh! Mother Church of Africa,  
 For tomorrow, the young shall grow,  
 Adulthood to be known as mature, inculturated African Church! So help us God.  
 (By Fr. Amadi, I. A., Personal reflection in verse).

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS.**

The aim of this thesis was to study the status of inculturation in the church in Africa, with special focus on the Catholic Church, and the degree of progress that has been made in achieving it. We have established that varying degrees of inculturation have taken place in selected mission churches and that, on the whole, the African Independent Churches may be declared leaders in this area.

The first chapter states the problem at stake and the purpose of the study. It explains the importance of the study, its method, its scope as well as its procedure. The chapter provides direction for the whole work and sets the scene for the whole discussion which follows.

Chapter 2 begins with an important question, "What is Inculturation?" We examined the meaning of inculturation as well as the concepts that are related to it. These concepts: adaptation, accommodation, indigenisation, contextualisation, enculturation, acculturation and incarnation were briefly discussed and explained. Furthermore, in our attempt to answer the same question, we discovered that it is important to integrate the gospel into the culture. In the case of Africa, for example, this means to incarnate the gospel in African culture, leading to the establishment of an authentic African Christianity. This does not mean that Christianity in Africa is to have nothing in common with the universal church. It only means that African Christianity is to be in union with the universal church in its diverse operations, that is, unity in diversity.

In the various definitions we examined and the definition we formulated on inculturation, we tried to show that an inculturated African Church has a wealth of experience to contribute to both the local and the universal church. The definition we adopted in this chapter, which was to be referred to later, is focussed on the African church, culture and religion. However, the understanding of inculturation becomes more meaningful in the church context when the origin and development of the concept of inculturation are well understood.

Accordingly, chapter 3 offered us an opportunity to trace the origin and development of the concept of inculturation in the Bible, that is, mainly in the Old and New Testaments, and in the teachings of the church. In our reviews of the traces of inculturation in both the Old and the New Testaments we found that culture is an important (key) word in inculturation. For example, the Israelites came into contact with people of various cultures and some of these foreign cultures influenced them. The Israelites borrowed some aspects of the dominant Canaanite cultures and adapted them. Inculturation makes room for such adaptation.

In the New Testament, we saw how Jesus came to incarnate himself in the Jewish culture. In the same New Testament we also saw how the early Christians grappled with the problem of integrating the Gentile Christians with different cultures into a Christianity dominated by Jewish culture. From the bible, therefore, we learnt two principles that can promote inculturation. That is, that Christianity can borrow some aspects of a host culture and purify them; and that it is not good to impose one's own culture on others. This means that no culture is superior to another.

Our discussion on the church's views on inculturation centred on the instructions given to the early missionaries and how they were to deal with the cultures of those they were sent to evangelize. We saw that some of the Popes' pronouncements, especially the most recent views of Pope John Paul II, emphasised the importance of culture and the need to respect other peoples' cultures. Some of the Popes, for example, Paul VI and John Paul II himself acknowledged that African culture is rich and has something to offer to the universal church. The chapter affirms, therefore, that culture is very important for the purpose of inculturation.

Chapter 4 centres on culture, where we look at the concept and definitions of culture. We found out that culture has many definitions. From these definitions, we noted that culture is learned, it is not static. Rather it is dynamic. This chapter also looked at culture from various perspectives such as the relationship between religion and culture, Christianity and culture, and evangelisation and culture. It became clear from these discussions that there is no universal culture.

We also examined in the same chapter some values in African culture. We found that Africa has a rich cultural heritage which can be used to promote inculturation. This chapter led us to conclude that: (1) The gospel must take root in African culture so as to make Christianity authentic in Africa (2) Africans must make use of their rich cultural values to build up an authentic African church.

Chapters 5 and 6 are the real hub of the dissertation in the sense that the determining investigation practically takes place here. In other words, these chapters enabled us to determine how inculturation is practised in the churches selected for this examination. In the investigation carried out in Zimbabwe through oral interviews, reviews of related literature and personal observation, we discovered that inculturation is going on gradually. In the Catholic Church, for example, a remarkable inculturation has occurred in the sacrament of the Eucharist and a little on marriage. Nothing much has happened in the case of baptism except the adoption of Shona names, mainly in the cities.

There are also some traces of inculturation in the Anglican and Methodist Churches. In both churches, a good progress is also recorded in the area of the Eucharist. The adoption of Shona names at baptism is optional in the Anglican Church, while one section of the Methodist Church accepts Shona names at baptism. While the Catholic Church is ahead of these two churches in inculturation, the Methodist Church is moving towards becoming more self-reliant than the Catholic and the Anglican churches. On the other hand, the African Independent Churches are much more at home in the promotion of inculturation than the mission churches. This is as a result of the nature of these churches, which are more indigenous than the mission churches.

In all the churches, there is a healing ministry because life is central to the African people. However, the African Independent Churches are also ahead in inculturating healing in their services. The Catholic Church is making some effort to inculturate healing. Both the Methodist and the Anglican Churches are yet to be fully involved in the inculturation of healing.

Chapter 7 evaluates the implementation of inculturation in these African churches, with the intention of making some recommendations. Our review in this chapter showed that in all the areas under which inculturation was discussed and evaluated, including baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, burial and healing, there is a remarkable achievement of inculturation in the Eucharist in all the mission churches. Considering that our evaluation was based on five areas, it became clear that only one area, the Eucharist, showed great achievement. This is where all the churches registered success.

In the other areas, some churches made varying degrees of effort to inculturate while others are yet to begin. Much work still needs to be done in mission churches to embark fully on and implement inculturation effectively. On the other hand, the African Independent Churches have recorded more success, especially in marriage, healing and self-reliance. This success on the part of the African Independent Churches at inculturation came as a result of the autonomous nature of these churches.

In order for inculturation to be effectively carried out in Africa, some recommendations were made specifically for the Catholic Church, in which the author serves as a priest. The aim was to identify the various levels of participation in the church, to facilitate the implementation of inculturation, and also to review the areas where this implementation is to take place.

In conclusion, hope was expressed that all the churches in Africa will succeed in the implementation of inculturation, in the spirit of love, unity and solidarity, whereby they can see themselves as one extended family of God in Africa. The African churches need to unite, love themselves and promote African culture. This is important because Christianity has come to stay in Africa, and it has to be indigenous so as to enable the gospel to be incarnated and inculturated in African culture.

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