

# Contents

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**ANNUAL RETREAT**  
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**INAUGURAL MASS, OATH OF FIDELITY AND INSTALLATION**  
The inaugural Mass for the 2024/2025 formation year took place on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024, presided over by His Grace H.E. Bishop of Bamundi, with 18 concelebrants. On behalf of the Bishops of BAPC, His Grace welcomed the new formation and the first-year theology students to STAMS Bamundi. The

remarkable peculiarity of this inaugural Mass was Solemn Profession and reading of the Oath of Fidelity by Fr. Kenneth NGWOBELA and Fr. Augustine NDU respectively as formator and Vice Rector. Also, seminarians were installed into the military Lector and A3 seminarians were installed into 1 ministry of Eucharist.

**VISITS**  
In the course of the term, the STAM community received a series of visits. On Sunday 2 December 2024, the members of the Caritas Women Association (CWA) – Sect of Wundia District Baka 1 visited the Seminary. They assured the seminarians of their prayers and support. Also, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 the Seminary common has a visit from the members of the Catholic Women Association (CWA) – District Wundia District Baka 1.

Furthermore, STAMS was graced with the presence of Fr. Charles John ANAKI, the Rector of the Pontifical Mission Society, accompanied by the Secretary Sr. Rose White NEM YIMAN (TSD) and Fr. Anthony (ANAKI) Director of Pontifical Mission Societies in the Archdiocese of Bamundi, on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Fr. Charles John ANAKI, the Rector and the Seminary Community for the warm reception. He readily gave a brief history of the Pontifical Mission Societies the Church.

In addition, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, 11 members of the Association of the Sacred Heart Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (ASHIM) the Archdiocese of Bamundi paid a visit to 1 Seminary. They joined the Seminary Community the Eucharistic celebration and had a common meal with the seminarians after Mass.

Lastly, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 delegation of the AId to the Church in the Organization paid a visit to the Seminary. 1 delegation from Switzerland and Germany accompanied by their collaborators and 1 Chancellor of Bamundi were received with a lot of enthusiasm by the seminarians into the Seminary building.

## Vox Pop



The local Church has incorporated indigenous languages into liturgies, making Mass and prayers accessible to many people. This allows congregants to fully understand and engage with the faith in their native languages, enriching their spiritual experience. The inclusion of local languages and the Bible into local languages has been a journey of understanding, culture, and spirituality. (C. J. Deo)

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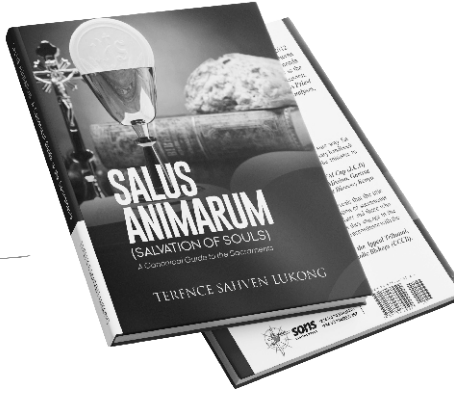


## INTERVIEW

OFF FR. KENNETH NGWOBELA

AUTHOR  
**TERENCE SAHVEN LUKONG**

ISBN 78-978-60653-8-8



## MUSIC ARTICLE

SOME PRINCIPLES TO BE CONSIDERED IN CHOOSING SONGS FOR SUNDAY MASSES

### INTRODUCTION

A song may be very beautiful in relation to its composition, harmony and genre but fails to meet up with the needs of a Eucharistic celebration, thus making it unsuitable. We established in the previous edition the criteria to be used in the judgment of the suitability of songs for the Sunday liturgical celebrations. In this edition we shall be considering some principles for judging songs that are suitable for use within the liturgy.

#### 1. PLACE FOR THE CHOIR

Musicians and instrumentalists should be located within a section of the congregation (*General Introduction of the Roman Missal*, n. 312). This is to enhance their active participation and enable them to lead the assembly in the singing.

#### 2. THE HUMAN VOICE

It is the human person present for the celebration who is the most important element. A song

1069.) For it does not promote the participation of the faithful. However, sacred ministers are permitted especially in cases which involve a dialogue with the community such as in acclamations and responses.

#### 5. TEXTS

The texts sung during liturgical celebrations should be approved by competent authorities such as the Bishop or the Liturgy Committee. Such texts should be in accord with the scriptures and with reliable liturgical sources in order to ensure orthodoxy of doctrine.

#### 6. SECULAR MUSIC

Secular music and all other religious music which do not express the Catholic faith should be eliminated from the liturgy. Music directors should be careful in this regard not to be seduced by the beautiful music which has been woven into such



# EDITORIAL

## INCULTURATION:

### The Dialogue of Faith with Culture

In recent times there has been a plethora of activities in the liturgy especially in the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda in the name of 'Inculturation' that have left many Christians in confusion. Some Christians have questioned the whole idea of Inculturation. Has the Christian faith been overtaken by culture or has the Christian faith become a display of local cultural practices? It is necessary that we make some fundamental clarifications about the concept of Inculturation as a form of dialogue between faith and culture.

We also need to consider the origins and development of the idea of Inculturation with reference to the person of Christ, who is at the origin and in the development of Inculturation. This kind of discussion will bring us to a profound and theological understanding of Inculturation.

In common with all religions, the Christian faith can only be expressed and lived through a human culture. Like other world religions, it is accessible to more than one culture. The Christian message does not exist independently of culture. Thus, the term Inculturation has to be understood in the context of the dialogue between the Christian message and any given human culture (Cfr **AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain 1988, 59.**). Christianity is not the religion of a book but of a person. The real message of Christianity is Christ himself who is the subject of his own message. The act of faith has to do with wonderment and awe, with personal risk and commitment, not with rational proofs. Faith is not simply believing a message to be true, but a dwelling in the Truth. The knowledge that comes of faith is the 'eye of love'. It is part of our loving response to God in Christ revealing himself to us in our experience. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 60.)

The entire meaning and relevance of Inculturation cannot be well ingested without a sufficient appraisal of the importance of culture to a people. "Culture is the particular way in which a human group interprets life and relates with nature, God, the world and other people. Culture is not an accidental, but an integral part of human life and nature. Culture is lived and expressed through traditions, language, relationships, food, music, and a corresponding religious expression. It embraces the totality of the life of the group and the life of each individual who belongs to it; therefore all human beings belong to God and express this relationship of faith from within their culture." (MANUEL GONZALEZ, "Parish Reconstructing in Multicultural Communities," in *Origins*, Vol. 24, n.46, May 1995, 784.). Against this background, Inculturation is seen as "an on-going dialogue between faith and culture (...), the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures (Cfr **AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward an African Theology of Inculturation*, Orbis, New York 1980, 11.**). More adequately stated, Inculturation in the words of Schinelller is: "The

Incarnation of the 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 but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it to bring about a new creation." (PETER SCHELLER, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, Paulist Press, New York 1984, 6.).

Inculturation has two dimensions: firstly, the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and secondly the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures. By its profundity, inculturation is differentiated from a merely external adaptation or what can be referred to as "a copy and paste" attitude. It implies an ultimate and intimate transformation of cultural values in the process of informing them to express the Christian faith. Faith takes from culture those elements which can be transformed to express Christian mysteries, while culture seeks to appropriate to herself the truths revealed to the Christian religion (Cfr ***Lineamenta of the Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Africa*, Vatican City 1990, 50.**). In the ensuing dialogue, faith searches indigenous culture to its roots, absorbing and transforming its real values, finding out how if these values are already an implicit expression of Christian values or if these values can be developed as seeds of the Gospel to embody and express the Christian faith. Any value in the local culture which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error, but which can be harmonized with the Spirit of the Gospel, can contribute to manifest the glory of the Creator; and is open to a communion with the universal Church, becomes flesh into which faith incarnates itself (Cfr **JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 62.**).

From this background, this edition of the *Searchlight Magazine* titled "INCULTURATION" aims at undertaking a profound theological study of the term "Inculturation" without any prejudices; it aims at clearing the air that has been crowded with different and limited expressions of the concept of "Inculturation". Hence, this edition presents articles such as: *The Principles of Inculturation; Culture and Religion; Biblical Antecedents of the Concept of Logos; Jesus and other Cultures; A study of Acts 15 as a paradigm for Inculturation; The Logic of the Incarnation amongst other interesting articles*. Our Christmas article, "The celebration of a 'born house for Jesus' on Christmas Day as an aspect of Inculturation," articulates the significance of celebrating the birth of Christ in a Cameroonian way. I hope that this edition of the *Searchlight Magazine* will give our readers a better understanding of Inculturation and the possibility of appreciating the Gospel better.

As we prepare to welcome Christ this Christmas, let our hearts be a comfortable manger where the baby Jesus can comfortably rest. Let us cleanse our hearts from every sin so as to welcome Christ who came to redeem us all. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2025!

**Rev. Cyril Sangnyuy Kiran**  
(Editor-in-Chief)

# SEMINARY AFFAIRS **RE- OPENING**

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## ANNUAL RETREAT

The annual retreat for the formation year ran from Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The retreat was facilitated by Rev. Fr Albert Marc William TATOU, a *fidei donum* priest from the Archdiocese of Garoua currently serving in the diocese of Bafoussam. The retreat had as theme: **"PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP WATERS" (Lk 5:11) "Duc in Altum"**. In his opening session of the retreat on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 at 8:30pm, Fr Albert Marc William Tatou, drew from Luke 5:1-12, with focus on verse 4 which reads "Put into deep waters and lay down your net for a catch", said that the attitude of faith is rooted in the attachment to an ideal, and the love of God and neighbour are at the core of our faith. He challenged the seminarians at the end of the retreat to summon the courage to respond to the invitation of Christ opening up to put into the deep, dropping their insecurities, in order to become miracle materials and fishers of men.

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The inaugural Mass for the 2024/2025 formation year took place on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024, presided over by Mgr George NKUO, Bishop of Kumbo diocese, with 18 concelebrants. On behalf of the Bishops of BAPEC, Mgr George welcomed the new formator and the first-year theology students to STAMS Bambui. The

remarkable peculiarity of this inaugural Mass was the Solemn Profession and taking of the Oath of Fidelity by Fr Kenneth NGWOBELA and Fr Augustine NKWAIN respectively as formator and Vice Rector. Also, 50 seminarians were installed into the ministry of Lector and 43 seminarians were installed into the ministry of Acolyte.

## VISITS

In the course of the term, the STAMS community received a series of visits. On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the members of the Catholic Women Association (CWA) – Seat of Wisdom Division Baba I visited the Seminary. They assured the seminarians of their prayers and support. Also, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2024, the Seminary community has a visit from the members of the Catholic Women Association (CWA) – Spiritual Vessel Division Ndop.

Furthermore, STAMS was graced with the presence of Fr. Cletus Ashu AMAH the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies accompanied by the Secretary Sr. Rose Witht Kemjei YIRAN (TSSF), and Fr. Anthony BANGSI Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Fr. Cletus Amah thanked the Rector and the Seminary Community for the warm reception. He equally gave a brief history of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Church.

In addition, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, the members of the Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (ASHJIM) of the Archdiocese of Bamenda paid a visit to the Seminary. They joined the Seminary Community at the Eucharistic celebration and had a common meal with the seminarians after Mass.

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# Notice! Notice!! Notice!!!

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Information for the attention of Exseminarians and Priests alumni of **Saint Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (STAMS Theologicum)**, Bambui.

If you wish to collect documents from the secretariat of the Theologicum, kindly make your request via the email address provided below:  
bambuiseminary@yahoo.co.uk

Indicate clearly what kind of documents you wish to be prepared for your collection and leave a contact phone number by which you can be conveniently reached when the documents are ready for collection. Your appointment to collect documents should be on working days, that is, from Monday to Friday, during working hours, that is, from 9:00AM until Midday.

Thank you for your understanding and collaboration.  
Sister Secretary

We use this opportunity to thank you who have been sending Mass Intentions to our Seminary. We appeal for more intentions. Our Seminary has eleven resident Priests, and ten intentions could

be exonerated everyday. Mass Intentions to STAMS could be sent through any Bishop's House or through any member of the STAMS family-Priest or Seminarian. Once the Mass is celebrated, the Mass Offering is used for the upkeep of the Seminary as a whole. Thus, when you send these intentions, besides reaping the assured Spiritual Benefits, you contribute to the upkeep of the Seminary materially. May God continue to bless and reward you for all your kindness towards our House of Formation for future Priests.

**Rev. Fr. Charles BERINYUY SENGKA**  
(Rector)

## A PLEA FROM STAMS LIBRARY

We plead with Priests and Christians to send copies of Sunday Newsletters, Wedding cards, Funeral booklets, Wedding booklets, Invitation cards, Thank You cards, Souvenirs of Religious Professions, Papers, Magazines and any other souvenir cards for preservation in the archive section of the Seminary library. We also use this opportunity to acknowledge, with profound gratitude, having received a good number of these items. However, we remain open to receive even more. You could hand any of these to any member of the STAMS family (priest or seminarian) or, if possible, bring them yourself to the Seminary.

**Rev. Fr. Evans SHANG**  
(Father Librarian)

Dear Readers, we would like to inform you that Subscription Forms for the Searchlight Magazine are now available. To get the form, kindly get to any seminarian from STAMS Bambui and Subscribe for a year or more. Thanks.

## NOTICE! NOTICE!!

Dear brothers and sisters, we would like to remind all those who visit the Seminary, that whenever they come, they should dress decently.



# PRINCIPLES OF INCULTURATION



**Honoré ASONG EHO**  
(Theology II)



**Philippe Alain  
MVONDO TONGALE**  
(Theology IV)

## INTRODUCTION

Inculturation is the term that the Church uses to denote the process of engagement between the Christian Gospel and a particular culture. The term is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the Gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts. Inculturation, as a theological notion, has been specifically associated with John Paul II's strategy for evangelization, including what is known as the "new evangelization". The word inculturation is sometimes mistakenly confused with the social science terms "acculturation" and "enculturation". Acculturation, on the one hand, refers to the process of adapting religious beliefs and practices to a dominant culture. It could also refer to the merging of two cultures to create a new mix of ideas. While enculturation on the other hand, refers to the process of incorporating religious faith into local cultures and adjusting local values to the practice of the faith. It's a dialogue between Christian faith and traditional culture.

The Second Vatican Council made the first detailed statement about the relationship of the Church and diverse cultures. In the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern times, the Fathers of the Council state that "the Church

profits from the experience of past ages, from the progress of the sciences, and from the riches hidden in various cultures, through which greater light is thrown on the nature of man and new avenues to truth are opened up." (COUNCIL VATICAN II, *Gaudium Et Spes* n. 44.) Therefore, in order to understand and fully appreciate the concept of inculturation, we shall consider some six principles which are central in inculturation.

## 1. CENTRALITY IN CHRIST

Inculturation is rooted in the mystery of the incarnation. Every community should be Christocentric, because Christ is the Truth. This means that whatever is brought into a culture or accepted from a culture must be rooted in Christ. It is to be understood and applied in this radical sense because the action of God in history is paradigmatic for the Church's mission. The incarnation of Christ takes seriously the implication of human finitude, history, creativity, temporality, vulnerability and fallibility. Some divisions, tribalism, racism, and ethnocentrism can be overcome if we are imbued with Christ's love. (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, n.51.)

## 2. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE GOSPEL

Inculturation must be guided by its compatibility with the Gospel. That which is received from cultures must be in accord with the Gospel. Lives have to be configured through the instrumentality of the gospel, which helps to reshape our mode of thoughts and actions, and helps us to seek God. *Familiaris Consortio* explains that "in conformity with her constant tradition, the Church receives from the various cultures everything that is able to express the

unsearchable riches of Christ". (JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981, n.10.) The Gospel becomes meaningful to different people through inculturation, that is, the Good News of God's Kingdom becomes rooted firmly and indigenously for the people receiving it. Values are being transmitted from the Church to cultures and good elements which existed in the culture are renewed from within by the Gospel. Through inculturation, the Church for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission. (*Ibid.*, n. 52) The proclamation of the Word of God has Christian conversion as its aim; a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his gospel through faith. (*Ibid.*, n. 46)

### 3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLORY OF THE CREATOR

Whatever man does should be for the glory of the one who created him for that is the ultimate goal of our striving. From its origin, the Church has encountered at many levels the

question of religions. Today, Christians constitute only about one third of the World's population. Christians are called to live in a world which expresses a growing sympathy for pluralism in religious matters. Inculturation borrows from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of the people everything which could be used to praise and give glory to the Creator. (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree, *Ad Gentes*, 7 December 1965, n. 22.) Inculturation is a process with twofold movements: there is simultaneously inculturation of the Gospel and the evangelization of the culture. The incarnational dimension of the Gospel, which is identified with Jesus Christ, incarnates and incorporates itself in the people and their culture for the glory of God. The Gospel remains Good News while it becomes a cultural phenomenon adopting and integrating the system of the culture in question. At the same time, it gives the culture the knowledge of divine mystery while





**Felix EDIBEL**  
(Theology III)



**Joel CHUKWUJEKWU  
OHAGWU**  
(Theology II)

# Justin the Martyr and The Spermatic Logos

## INTRODUCTION

With the advent of Christianity to Africa, the early missionaries were confronted to the challenge of cultures that were entirely alien to them. Many of these cultures had practices that were contrary to the Gospel message and its values. The mistake often made was to see such cultures as fetish and demonic, totally lacking the presence of the Divine. This article revisits Saint Justin the Martyr's theory on the *Logos Spermatikos* which postulates that the Seminal Word was present in human cultures even before the incarnation of the Divine Logos in human history. After giving a brief biography of Justin the Martyr, it gives a detailed summary and exposition of his theory on the *Logos Spermatikos*. Against this backdrop, the incarnation is established as a model for inculturation.

### 1. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SAINT JUSTIN THE MARTYR

The second-century Christian apologist Justin the Martyr (c. 100–165 AD) was born at Nablus in Palestine of pagan parents. In his search for meaning to his life, Justin dabbled with stoicism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism. He was converted to Christianity when he was about thirty years of age, by reading the Scriptures and witnessing the heroism of the martyrs. Justin the Apologist is widely regarded as one of the earliest and most influential figures in Christian philosophy; and his great contribution to the Christian thought was his idea of the *Spermatic Logos*. He was beheaded in Rome with other Christians. (Cfr BENEDICTINE MONKS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY, *The Book of Saints*, 1989, 328) What is the *Spermatic Logos* according to Justin?

### 2. JUSTIN'S THEORY OF THE SPERMATIC LOGOS

As already mentioned above, one of Justin's most significant contributions is his doctrine of the *Logos Spermatikos* (the *Spermatic Logos*), a concept that sought to reconcile theology and pagan religious traditions with the revelation of Christ. Justin taught

that the whole *Logos* took shape in Christ and became man through the incarnation. Men of every culture are capable of gleaning the elements of the truth because they possess seeds of the logos or divine reason. Justin's thought about the seeds of the word got grounds in the Church from Vatican II in connection with the concept of inculturation. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain, 1988, 76) According to Justin, the *Spermatic Logos* or seed-bearing word is implanted in the heart of every culture, since all things were created through Him and with Him. (Cfr Col 1:15-17) In his major works, "*First Apology*" and "*Dialogue with Trypho*", Justin argues that the *Logos* is the divine reason that has been partially revealed to all people throughout history even before the full revelation in Christ. Justin's doctrine of the *Spermatic Logos* offers a perfect model of inculturation, a term used in modern theology to describe the process of integrating the Christian message with various cultural contexts. Inculturation, in this context, refers to the process by which the Christian faith is expressed and lived out in different cultural contexts, while maintaining the integrity of the gospel message. It touches and penetrates each people's culture. (Cfr *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 854)

### 3. THE INCARNATION OF THE LOGOS

Saint Justin sees the *Logos* (λόγος) as that which is more than an abstract philosophical principle; it is the divine Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ. When we read the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we see how he (John) already identified Jesus with the *Logos*: "In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) He expanded on this idea to show that the *Logos* was not only manifest in Christ, but also present throughout all

of history and human thought. Therefore, Christ whom the gospel of Saint John identifies as the *Logos* in line with Justin's idea, is the Divine *Logos* which had been active in the world long before the incarnation, disseminating seeds of truth through human reason and conscience (Cfr OSBORN ERIC, *Justin Martyr*, 2002, 22). In this regard, the *Logos* has been present even before creation.

The Church's Magisterium, in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, lists four reasons for the Incarnation: **a.** 'The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who 'loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins' (CCC, 457). Thus, the expiation of our sins as a necessary prerequisite for heaven is one reason for the Incarnation. **b.** 'The Word became flesh so that we might know God's love' (CCC, 458). Through the Incarnation, mankind comes to know the love of God, who so loved the world that he sent his only Son. (Cfr John 3:16) **c.** 'The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness' (CCC, 459). Through the Incarnation, we learn to be like Christ, who was tempted in every way but did not sin. (Cfr Heb. 4:15) In the incarnated Word, Jesus Christ, we learn how to be more human and more holy. **d.** 'The Word became Flesh to make us partakers of the divine nature' (CCC, 460). It is purely a gracious and gratuitous act through which God extends His hands in love and invites mankind to partake in His divine life.

#### 4. INCULTURATION AND THE SPERMATIC LOGOS

Justin's teaching on the *Spermatic Logos* can be understood as an early form of inculturation. Although Justin did not use the term inculturation, his approach to Greco-Roman philosophy and religion is an early example of this dynamic. Hence, by acknowledging the presence of divine truth in non-Christian cultures, Justin provided a theological rationale for the integration of Christianity with the intellectual and cultural traditions of the Greco-Roman world. He did not reject Greek philosophy outrightly, but saw it as a preparatory stage in humanity's journey towards the fullness of truth in Christ. In this sense, Justin's *Spermatic Logos* doctrine affirmed the value of human culture and reason while also asserting the uniqueness of the Christian revelation. (Cfr BARNARD L. W., *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*, 1967, 34)

This approach to inculturation has several important theological implications. First, it allows for a respectful engagement with non-Christian cultures, recognizing some elements of truth and goodness which can be found in all human traditions. Secondly, it provides a framework for explaining how Christianity can be adapted to different cultural contexts without losing its

essential identity. Just as the seeds of the *Logos* were present in Greek philosophy, so too it can be found in other cultural traditions, and by so doing, preparing the way for the reception of the gospel. His doctrine provided a theological foundation that all humans, regardless of their cultural or religious background, had access to truth through the *Logos*. Christ the eternal *Logos* is at the heart of culture, thus making the incarnation the model for our discussion about inculturation.

#### 5. THE INCARNATION AS THE PERFECT MODEL OF INCULTURATION

The remembrance of the notion of the *Spermatic Logos* in the mid-twentieth century is confronted with the reality of cultural pluralism. The *Logos* (Christ) brings out a convenient relationship between non-Christians and Christianity. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 77) It is also a form of dialogue between faith and culture, allowing the Christian message to be communicated in ways that resonate with the lived experiences, values, and traditions of a particular society. Theologically, it emphasizes the universality of Christ's message and its ability to transcend cultural boundaries. This is to say that Divine Truths reach the various cultures in the incarnate Word (Christ), the Seeds of this Divine Truth brought to life through the Incarnation of the *Logos* (Christ), grow through the experience of intercultural penetration. Inculturation remains a serious problem in the African Church. According to Penoukou, the fact is not that the African Church compromises with paganism but that the Christian message is brought without respect for the differences of the People. Thus, universal love which Christianity stands for should recognize and reckon with cultural differences. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 78) A lived faith demands inculturation and the acknowledgment of other people's right to an inculturated faith. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 78)

#### CONCLUSION

While Justin the Martyr's theory finds its fulfillment in the doctrine of the incarnation, it is a profoundly rich theological foundation for the incarnation of the Gospel in African cultures. This is because it sets the background for the presence of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, in every human culture. Christ is at the very heart of all human cultures and is responsible for whatever is true and good in them; and He makes them vehicles of salvation. To arrive at this level, there must be a profound openness of the cultures to the Gospel, and the Gospel must be open to our cultures as well. This is to say that the Gospel evangelizes and purifies the culture.



# OLD TESTAMENT TITLES:

## INCULTURATION IN NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY



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### INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament serves as the cornerstone for New Testament theology, particularly Christology—the study of Christ's nature and role. For “a Christology that ignores or plays down the Old Testament can only be radically deficient.” (GERALD O' COLLINS, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, Oxford University Press, New York 1995, 23.) The intrinsic connection between the Old and New Testaments underscores the continuity of God's redemptive plan. The Old Testament illuminates, informs and enriches our understanding of Jesus, establishing a blend of two cultures. Among the titles ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament by drawing upon established Old Testament titles, themes and prophetic expectations can be included: The Christ (Messiah), High Priest, Last Adam, Wisdom, and Logos. This article therefore examines how these titles serve as foundational antecedents that shape the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus as

the culmination of God's salvific purpose.

### 1. “CHRIST” (MESSIAH): THE MESSIANIC HOPE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS REALIZATION IN CHRIST

The title “Christ,” derived from the Greek Χριστός (Christos) and the Latin Christus, meaning “anointed one”. Anointing is central to the Old Testament, where kings (Cfr 1 Samuel 10:1), priests (Cfr Leviticus 8:12), and prophets (Cfr 1 Kings 19:16) were anointed and consecrated. These figures foreshadow the ultimate Messiah, destined to restore Israel.

In New Testament Christology, “Christ” encapsulates Jesus' identity as the fulfillment of messianic hopes, transcending national confines to become the Savior of all. (Cfr OSCAR CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament*, Westminster John Knox Press, Philadelphia 1959, 234-237.) Peter declares in Acts 2:36 that, “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and

Christ,” linking His resurrection to His anointing. Thus, for O'Collins the title “Christ” or “Messiah” signifies Jesus as the anointed one expected by the Jewish people, embodying their hopes for deliverance and divine intervention. He emphasizes that this title does not only identify Jesus as the awaited deliverer but also as the Divine Son of God who fulfills messianic expectations. (Cfr GERALD O' COLLINS, *Christology*, 28-30.)

### 2. “HIGH PRIEST”: FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT TEMPLE TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CROSS

The title of High Priest is essential to Israel's relationship with God. The High Priest serves as a mediator. His duties, outlined in Leviticus 16, reach their zenith on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), when the High Priest offers sacrifices for the atonement of the sinners of the people. This sacrifice is not yet perfect (Cfr Hebrews 10:1-4). This Old Testament priesthood anticipates a Perfect Mediator, as foretold in Psalm 110:4.

The New Testament identifies Jesus as the ultimate High Priest, particularly in the Letter to the Hebrews. Linked to Melchizedek (Cfr Hebrews 7), Jesus offers a singular, all-encompassing sacrifice that accomplishes what the Levitical offerings could not—complete atonement (Cfr Hebrews 9:24-26). His priesthood transcends earthly limitations, granting direct access to God's presence (Cfr Hebrews 4:14-16). DUQUOC states: "Christ is the true High Priest by virtue of his condition with God (...). Christ, superior to the angels, is superior to the priests of the Old Covenant: he is of another priestly order, of the order of Melchizedek." (CH. DUQUOC, *Christologie, Essai Dogmatique*, Cerf, Paris 1968, 211.) Thus, the High Priesthood serves as a bridge between the two Testaments, revealing the continuity of God's redemptive purpose culminating in Christ.

### 3. "LAST ADAM": CHRIST REVERSING THE FALL

Christ's sinless solidarity with humanity evokes the image of him as the "Last Adam." As the first human and representative head of humanity, Adam's disobedience introduces sin and death into creation, necessitating a redemptive figure, a Saviour who can reverse these effects. "The birth of Jesus counterbalanced the fall of Adam, bringing forth redemption." (JEAN DAILLE, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians*, Forgotten Books, London 1995, 194.) As the Last Adam, Jesus reverses the disobedience of the First Adam, offering new life and restoration. While Adam brought death, Jesus, through His obedience, imparts life, signifying a cosmic shift, with a redeemed humanity. "His birth, Crucifixion and Resurrection brought forth a new man and a new world." (WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Jesus God and Man*, Westminster John Knox Press, Philadelphia 1968, 31.).

### 4. "WISDOM": CHRIST AS INCARNATE WISDOM

The Old Testament theme of "Wisdom" proved its worth for the first Christians when reflecting on their experience of Jesus. This concept is critical for New Testament Christology, depicting God's engagement with creation. Wisdom, personified in Proverbs 8, mediates Divine Revelation, foreshadowing Christ. Early Christians recognized Jesus as the embodiment of Divine Wisdom.

In the Old Testament, Wisdom is linked to the Law, guiding righteous living (Cfr Deuteronomy 4:6). Jesus fulfills this Law, embodying its essence rooted in love and righteousness. Paul identifies Christ as "the wisdom of God" (Cfr 1 Corinthians 1:24). The New Testament further highlights the church's role in manifesting divine wisdom and

presents the cross as a paradoxical embodiment of God's wisdom leading to redemption (Cfr 1 Corinthians 1:18-25). Ultimately, the Old Testament title of "Wisdom" illuminates Jesus as an incarnation of Wisdom, bridging the Testaments and revealing the continuity of God's redemptive plan.

### 5. "LOGOS": CHRIST THE REAL AND ETERNAL WORD

The term "Logos" (Greek: λόγος), translated as "the Word", is a profound theological concept central to New Testament Christology, particularly in John's writings. While the term is rooted in Greek philosophy, its theological implications are deeply intertwined with Old Testament themes, notably "God's active power and self-revelation toward and in a created world." (GERALD O' COLLINS, *Christology*, 40.)

In the New Testament, particularly in John 1:1-14, Jesus is identified as the Logos, affirming His pre-existence, divinity, and incarnation. This establishes Him as both fully divine and fully human, integrating the transcendent and immanent aspects of God. John's prologue underscores that the Logos is not merely a concept but a personal engagement with creation, embodying the ultimate revelation of God (Cfr Hebrews 1:1-3). "The Logos encapsulates everything, since it has been with God from the beginning... Revelation in Jesus is accomplished by virtue of that which founds it: the Logos of God...He is in himself, the Reveler par excellence." (CH. DUQUOC, *Christologie, Essai Dogmatique*, 272.)

### CONCLUSION

In summary, the Old Testament serves as the foundation and preparation for New Testament Christology. Each of the titles reveals an aspect of Christ's identity and mission, illustrating how He fulfills the prophetic and thematic expectations established in the Old Testament. The New Testament does not simply take up the Old Testament titles, but it transforms them and uses them to convey how these are revealed and fulfilled in all the richness in Jesus Christ. This interconnectedness does not only enhance our understanding of Jesus as the culmination of God's redemptive plan but also invites us into a deeper relationship with Him, affirming His role as the anointed Savior, the perfect Mediator, and the ultimate embodiment of divine wisdom and revelation. Therefore, we see that the seamless narrative of God's purpose unfolding across both Testaments, culminating in the transformative power of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, bringing about blend of both cultures. In this way, the foundational basis of inculturation is established.

# INCULTURATION FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT:



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## BIBLICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE CONCEPT OF LOGOS

### INTRODUCTION

Understanding the true meaning of the message of Christ is indispensable for the study and assimilation of inculturation. Jesus, whose message is at the centre of inculturation, though he is God, became flesh and identified with a specific culture. The incarnation of Jesus offered us the opportunity to study his life, and his message of love of God and of our neighbour (Cfr Jn 1:14). In the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible is the permanent witness of the revelation of the living God to the members of a chosen people. Ancient Israel was born in a world which had already given birth to great cultures and progressed together with them. (Cfr INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Faith and Cultures*, 1988, 5) Let us now turn to the whole issue of God and human cultures.

### 1. GOD AND HUMAN CULTURES

Human cultures have been deformed by sin, but God takes the initiative to purify and redirect them. This process of purification of human cultures by God's message takes place during inculturation. Isaiah 55:6-11 explains this concept. In the Old Testament, inculturation is an on-going dialogue between biblical faith and the culture of Israel. This faith is arrived at through reflection on Israel's history and its encounter with other cultures. The next question that comes to mind is: how does God insert His thought and His ways into the culture of Israel and other cultures in the Old Testament.

### 2. ELEMENTS OF INCULTURATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### 2.1. God's Revelation-Salvation in Cultures

Aylward Shorter remarks that "the Bible is culturally ethnocentric", that is, we see God's actions towards a particular people, the Jews. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain 1988, 106) Firstly, the 'fertile crescent' of the Middle East was a veritable crossroad of cultures from the earliest times. Secondly, the Ugarit language, a local language in ancient Canaan provided an extent to which Israel carried out a dialogue with the culture of Canaan, through their myths, legends, psalms, letters and even the names of their 250 gods. Thirdly, Abraham would have entered Canaan from Mesopotamia. By so doing the stories that were handed down about them were often the common patrimony of several ancient cultures. Beauchamp asserts thus: "there was a listening to each other's stories", and these narratives had a way of crossing over to a whole set of Near Eastern cultures." (BEAUCHAMP 1983, p.12. in AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 107) Lastly, the laws of the covenant are to be placed in the tradition of the Mesopotamian codes, particularly that of Hammurabi, c.1700 BC. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 107-108.)

#### 2.2. The Canaanite Inculturation

Flowing from Israel's Exodus experience and the

exile, they had to contend with several Canaanite forms of culture encountered in the promised land. By and large Israel reinterpreted this culture in the light of its own experience of revelation-salvation. Perhaps this the most outstanding instance of inculturation in the Old Testament. Moreover, they borrowed some elements from the Canaanite cultures into their cultures, such as: Canaanite mourning ceremonies which (continued in Israel) and, the theme of the struggle between the Creator-God and the sea monster reappears again and again in the Psalms and in Isaiah, the psalms generally borrow themes, style and rhythm from Canaanite hymns which were used in their worship. Psalm 29 is a striking example. Lastly, the various feasts (like: Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Ingathering and a host of others) in the Israelite calendar. Other feasts, and even the Sabbath itself, also derived from Canaanite traditions. A case in hand is Hosea, who is categorised by scholars as the prophet of the Canaanite inculturation. He challenges the Israelites to enrich themselves with the Canaanite cultures. Thus, the Canaanites inculturation gave rise to the Yahwistic faith and helped a nomadic clan-structured people to adapt to the agrarian economy. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 111)

### 2.3. The Tension between Israel's Election and Her Universal Mission

People are not chosen merely for the sake of being chosen. There is a purpose for every choice, a vocation or a call to carry out God's plan and to further the salvation of the world. There was a crude ethnocentrism which saw Israel as the centre of the universe and all the nations of the earth as its slaves, flocking to Jerusalem with riches and tribute. The restoration of Israel was to be a new golden age, comparable to that of King Solomon. Similarly, Isaiah propounds that, God's gift of salvation and his Covenant are not solely or primarily for Israel but for the whole world. (Is 49:6) In addition to this, the various aspects of the culture of Israel do not all maintain the same relationship with divine revelation. It is worthy to note that, the combination of election and universal mission characterises the unique nation of Israel.

### 2.4. The Cultural Implications of the Wisdom Economy

The Wisdom economy refers to the common element discerned by biblical writers in cultures. It is the supposition that all cultures are ethically linked, and that, God speaks to all of humanity irrespective of cultural particularities. From this background one can assert the following attributes concerning

wisdom literature. Wisdom is with God and proceeds from Him; she is given to every human being as an internal illumination, and passes into holy souls, making them 'God's friends and prophets. Wisdom is the source of right conduct and of salvation; wisdom is life and gives an assurance of immortality, being incarnated in a special way in the Torah of Israel. Finally, wisdom is ultimately God's own self-revelation, and as such is personified as a kind of female companion of God (Cfr Wis. 7:27). From this, Paul openly speaks of Christ Jesus as the Wisdom from God (Cfr 1Cor.1:30 Jn 6:34,35). After these considerations, one observes that the fruits of wisdom are typically the Greek virtues of self-control, prudence, justice and courage. Hence, the book of Wisdom is a perfect example of how inculturation is understood as the dialogue between Jewish faith and Greek cultures. This helped to steer the Jewish community in Alexandria away from the dangers of syncretism. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 115-116)

### 2.5. The Jewish Encounter with Hellenism

In Palestine itself, the Jews were divided in their reaction to the inroads of Hellenistic culture. Due to the series of revolts, the Hellenistic culture was impossible for them. For them, inculturation was a strict necessity, not a luxury. It was, in fact, the only safeguard possible against syncretism. The Jews of the Diaspora were greatly assisted in their fidelity to the faith of their ancestors by their possession of a Greek Bible (Cfr *Ibid.*, 116). It is true to say that the Christian inculturation was founded on an earlier stage, that of the Hellenistic inculturation of Judaism.

### CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ himself was to be brought up in the culturally heterogeneous corner of Palestine of Galilee, while his followers were to spread the Gospel throughout the Hellenized world of the Mediterranean after his death and resurrection. Jesus not only identified with Jewish tradition but also, as a Jew, celebrated and affirmed most of their cultural practices while he purified many of these practices by using himself and the message of his Father as an example for all to follow.



# ACTS 15 :

## THE FIRST COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM AS A PARADIGM OF INCULTURATION IN THE CHURCH



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### INTRODUCTION

Before His ascension into heaven, Christ, in the Great Mandatum, commissioned the Apostles to spread the Good News to all nations (Cfr Mt 28:19-20). This mission, rooted in the divine command, continues today and reaches across diverse cultural contexts. Inculturation involves the transformation of authentic cultural values through integration with Christianity and the insertion of Christianity into different human cultures (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52.). In Acts 15, Christianity, deeply intertwined with Jewish culture, encounters a tension as Jewish converts to Christianity see circumcision as a requirement for Gentile converts. Let us examine this text to understand how the Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit and sensitive to both Jewish and Gentile concerns, forged a path that accommodated both groups within the faith.

### 1. ACTS 15 IN CONTEXT: THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

At the dawn of Christianity, the question of inculturation arises. The tension between the Jews and Gentiles on the question of circumcision surfaces. In subtitles that follow we shall consider the immediate and proximate context and attempt an interpretation of the Council of Jerusalem.

#### 1.1. HISTORICAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

Christianity was born in a Jewish cultural setting, and its

early followers struggled with how to integrate Gentile converts without imposing Jewish customs on them. Points of contention included circumcision and dietary laws, which some Jewish Christians regarded as essential for righteousness (Cfr Acts 15:1). However, these laws were unfamiliar to Gentile believers. As a universal faith, Christianity needed to include both Jews and Gentiles while preserving the core values of Christianity. Thus, the first Church council (Cfr Acts 15) was convened to resolve this issue. Jewish Christians advocated for adherence to Mosaic laws, while Gentile Christians, represented by Paul and Barnabas, argued for inclusion based on the Holy Spirit's acceptance of both groups. They might have echoed, "If God has accepted them, who are we to object?" This Council demonstrated that revelation transcends culture, purifying and perfecting it in Christ (Cfr INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Faith and Inculturation*, n. 6.).

#### 1.2. THE DECISION AT THE COUNCIL

After extended debate, Peter emphasized that salvation is granted by grace, not by adherence to cultural or ritualistic laws. James then added to Peter's guidance by suggesting core moral requirements, such as abstaining from idolatry, while taking away unnecessary burdens like circumcision (Cfr Acts 15:20-21). This decision facilitated the spread of Christianity beyond Jerusalem. Inculturation requires learning from and contributing to a culture through mutual encounter (Cfr KLAUS KRAMER - KLAUS VELLGUTH, *Inculturation: God's Presence in Cultures*,

2019, 54.). The Council's compromise reflects how both Christianity and Judaism contributed to this decision.

## 2. ACTS 15: A MODEL OF INCULTURATION

Building on the previous paragraph we could, therefore, adopt the Council of Jerusalem as a model of Inculturation.

### 2.1. PRINCIPLES OF INCULTURATION IN ACTS 15

Inculturation advocates respect for cultural diversity and encourages dialogue. The Council of Jerusalem illustrates the Church's openness to different cultures by allowing Gentile Christians to retain their cultural identity while embracing essential Christian values. Gentiles did not need to become Jews to follow Christ. Dialogue between the Church and cultures is essential for the Church's future (Cfr INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Faith and Inculturation*, n. 4.). Additionally, inculturation distinguishes between essentials and non-essentials, upholding core doctrines while allowing flexibility in non-essential customs. In Acts 15, physical circumcision was seen as non-essential and, thus, not required, echoing the Catholic Church's approach of engaging with different cultures while safeguarding Gospel integrity.

### 2.2. THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY IN DISCERNMENT

Just as the Apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to discern, the Church today relies on the Magisterium to guide the process of inculturation, ensuring fidelity to deposit of the faith (*depositum fidei*). Discernment involves examining culture through the lens of the Incarnation and Redemption (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 61.). Acts 15 exemplifies synodality, where local and universal voices, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, discern together. This collective discernment shapes the Church's direction, affirming a shared faith while allowing cultural expression.

## 3. ACTS 15 AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION OF INCULTURATION TODAY

Harmonizing the Church's mission today and the ideals drawn from Acts 15 the following could be recommendations for the Church in Africa.

### 3.1. THE AFRICAN CHURCH AND INCULTURATION

The growing African Catholic Church faces the challenge of integrating local customs into its faith practices. For example, the *Wimbum* people express concern that incorporating aspects of their culture into Church rituals risks diluting and effacing their cultural identity. Acts 15 offers a model for

discerning which cultural elements can enrich the Gospel and which require adaptation or exclusion. This discernment, crucial for evaluating rites, symbols, and family structures, aligns with Vatican II's *Ad Gentes*, which emphasizes the importance of local cultures in expressing the Gospel (Cfr VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 22.).

### 3.2. AVOIDING SYNCRETISM

Inculturation must avoid diluting the Gospel and should aim instead at deepening the faith in culture. Acts 15 shows that while cultural flexibility is permitted, the core tenets of faith remain unchanged. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, stresses that evangelization should respect and uplift local cultures without compromising the Christian message (Cfr POPE PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20.). This ensures that adaptations should enhance rather than weaken the faith, and providing a genuine Catholic witness.

### 3.3. CATHOLIC EXAMPLES OF INCULTURATION

The Church's history offers examples of inculturation that respect both cultural richness and doctrinal integrity. African rites in Catholic liturgy incorporate local music and symbols, enriching worship without compromising faith. Asian theological perspectives provide fresh insights while grounding them in universal truths, as John Paul II highlights in *Redemptoris Missio*, which advocates inculturating the Gospel in varied cultural contexts (Cfr POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52). Devotions like those of Our Lady of Guadalupe illustrate how culture can shape worship meaningfully. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* emphasizes the importance of embracing cultural diversity within the Church while preserving unity (Cfr POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 117). These examples show inculturation as a dynamic process that enhances both local cultures and the universal Church, as discussed by Stephen Bevans in *Models of Contextual Theology* (Cfr STEPHEN BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 2002, 25).

## CONCLUSION

Acts 15 provides a robust framework for inculturation within the Church, demonstrating how to embrace cultural richness while remaining faithful to core beliefs. The lessons of this early Council remain relevant as the Church engages a diverse world, promoting unity without sacrificing Gospel integrity. The council's outcome also underscores that while core principles—such as prohibitions against idolatry—must be upheld, there is space for cultural adaptation. This flexibility allows local customs to deepen expressions of the faith while maintaining it in its purity.

# THE INCARNATION AS AN INCULTURATION



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## INTRODUCTION

The Christian mission of evangelization which is rooted in Christ's command in Mark 16:15 – “Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel” – calls the Church to make the presence of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, accessible to all cultures and peoples. Inculturation is a vital part of this mission, as it respects and engages the cultural identity of each community, allowing theology to interact dynamically with human history and cultural evolution. This approach ensures that no theology remains isolated from the lived experiences and social movements that shape humanity (Cfr JEAN-MARIE ELA, *My Faith as an African*, Orbis Books, New York 1988, 171.). Through inculturation, the message of Christ is introduced within the diverse cultural fabrics of societies worldwide. Just as Christ took on flesh to become fully human, so the Gospel message must be “incarnated” in the various cultural expressions of humanity. Inculturation does not dilute any culture but rather enriches it, allowing the Gospel to bear fruit within different cultures in a way that feels both authentic and transformative.

## 1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

### 1.1. INCARNATION

“Incarnation” derives from the Latin *Incarnatio* and the Greek *sarkosis*, meaning “flesh” or “human nature.” Often, humanity is symbolically represented as “flesh” to reflect its finite and limited nature (Cfr WALTER DRUM, “Incarnation”, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, Charles G. Herbermann et al., eds., The Encyclopedia Press, New York 1910, 706.). Within Christianity, the Incarnation is the central mystery of God taking on human form in the person of Jesus Christ. By becoming flesh, the divine Logos, or Word, entered the human realm, embodying the hypostatic union – the joining of divine and human natures in one person (Cfr ROBERT KRIEG, “Incarnation”, in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard P. McBrien, ed., HarperCollins, USA 1995.). This concept underlines the approach of the Church to inculturation: as Christ fully embraced humanity, so the Gospel seeks to immerse itself in human cultures.

### 1.2. INCULTURATION

Inculturation is the process of bringing the Word of God into various human cultures, establishing a meaningful relationship between them and God. For Shorter that it is the ongoing dialogue between the Gospel and culture. It is what has been describes as a process that allows each culture to receive the Gospel in a way that resonates within its unique context (Cfr MARY MOTTE & JOSEPH R. LANG, *Mission in Dialogue*, Orbis Books, New York 1982, 489.).

## 2. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF INCULTURATION

### 2.1. JESUS CHRIST AND HIS WORD

The subject of inculturation is Christ Himself, the focal point of the Gospel message. Through engagement with various cultures, Christ is “incarnated” in traditions, becoming accessible to people within their own cultural framework. In this way, the incarnational approach of the Church respects and uplifts each culture, enabling Christ to become known and experienced within it (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of*

*Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain, 1988, 80.).

## 2.2. THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Christ's message of the Kingdom of God is inseparable from His person, making inculturation essential to communicate this transformative message across cultures. Jesus' earthly ministry is characterized by encounters with different cultures, as He embraced the customs of His time to spread the good news. Inculturation, therefore, serves not only as a method but as a theological necessity to share Christ's life and teachings with humanity.

## 3. THE INCARNATION AND INCULTURATION

### 3.1. INCARNATION AS INCULTURATION

Incarnation, signifying God's assumption of human nature, serves as the foundation for understanding inculturation. Some theologians argue that inculturation, rather than incarnation alone, better expresses the dynamic relationship between the divine and human in the cultural sphere (Cfr *Ibid.*, 81.). Through inculturation, God's transcendent holiness and cultural perfection descend into human culture, forming a union that respects human traditions while transforming them. Each encounter between the Gospel and a particular culture enriches both, creating an ongoing history of cultural "incarnations" where Christ becomes present in new and meaningful ways.

### 3.2. HIGH CHRISTOLOGICAL APPROACH

A Christology "from above" begins with the divine nature of Jesus and then considers His human life. This approach aligns with the incarnation model, where God fully assumes human nature. According to the Council Fathers, the incarnation model contributes significantly to the development of inculturation, as Christ is inculturated across diverse histories and cultural landscapes. This approach emphasizes that God's love for humanity extends to every cultural expression, which He sanctifies and transforms through His presence.

## 4. INCULTURATION THROUGH THE CHURCH

### 4.1. THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Focusing solely on the Incarnation could lead to a limited understanding of Christ, emphasizing only His physical presence. However, inculturation demands a broader view of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which must inform the way the Gospel engages with cultures. The entire mystery of Christ's redemptive act must be applied analogically in the inculturation process, recognizing that His suffering, death, and resurrection are part of His mission to redeem all cultures and peoples (Cfr *Ibid.*, 82).

## 4.2. PURIFICATION OF CULTURES

The Incarnation demonstrates that while Jesus fully assumed human nature, He also confronted and purified cultural practices that were incompatible with His teachings. This purifying influence is evident in His teachings that challenge common practices, such as replacing "an eye for an eye" with the call to "love your enemies." Inculturation, therefore, does not imply mere cultural assimilation but includes a critical engagement that challenges and refines cultural practices in the light of the Gospel.

## 4.3. MEMBERS OF CHRIST

Through His Incarnation, Christ engaged with specific cultures, yet His resurrection universalized His presence, allowing Him to belong to all cultures simultaneously. Through the Gospel, He becomes accessible to every nation and culture, allowing each to claim Him as their own. This universality makes inculturation not only possible but necessary for the Church's mission. Through inculturation, each believer is united to Christ, who is present in all cultures, from African to Asian and to Western, embracing each in the spirit of universal love and solidarity (Cfr *Ibid.*, 83.).

## CONCLUSION

The complete mystery of salvation begins with the Incarnation but continues through inculturation. Just as Christ embraced human culture through His birth, so the Gospel continues to enter new cultures, becoming "incarnated" in them and renewing their life from within. Inculturation allows the Gospel to flourish in diverse expressions, constantly reintroducing Christ in new and culturally relevant ways. As the Church continues her mission, a commitment to ongoing inculturation is essential for the faith to remain dynamic and relevant. By engaging cultures in a dialogue that respects and refines them, inculturation deepens the faith and allows the transformative power of the Gospel to resonate with people in ways that are culturally authentic and spiritually profound.





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# THE CHALLENGE OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY FOR INCULTURATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Paschal Mystery is at the heart of the Catholic faith. It refers to Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, and his glorious Ascension. This is central to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The Catechism puts it so beautifully that, "by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens us the way to new life." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 654). Inculturation on the other hand is a term coined by Catholic leaders and theologians to denote a process of engagement between the Christian Gospel and a particular culture. Inculturation demands that the Christian Gospel takes root in cultures in order to become part and parcel of the people's life pattern and to be in turn enriched by the cultural values of the people (Cfr PATRICK CHUKWUDESIE, *Paschal Mystery of Christ: Foundation for Liturgical Inculturation in Africa*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt 2001, 4). Although the fullness of revelation took place in time, space, and culture, it is not exclusively tied up to any particular culture, race or time. Revelation cuts across all boundaries, and it is open to receiving all and being received by all cultures. Therefore, the Paschal Mystery paints a clearer and more accurate picture in the process of Inculturation (AYLWARD SHORTER, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain 1988, 83.). The purpose of this article is to consider the intimate link between the Paschal Mystery and Inculturation, as well as the challenges that the Paschal Mystery poses for Inculturation.

## 1. THE PASCHAL MYSTERY AND THE INCULTURATION PROCESS

The work of human salvation was accomplished principally through the Paschal Mystery which is the redeeming death of Christ and his resurrection-ascension to glory as Lord. Thus, though born into a particular culture, through the Paschal Mystery the God-man transcends every culture and race. The Inculturation Process becomes more evident within the context of the Paschal Mystery than any other means.

### 1.1. THE PASCHAL MYSTERY AND OPENNESS TO EVERY CULTURE

The Paschal Mystery forms the basis of the gospel to every culture and nation. It is mainly through His death and Resurrection that Christ has become part of every culture. While discussing the relationship between the Paschal mystery and inculturation we must pay particular emphasis on Christ's death and resurrection without leaving out the Pentecost experience which was the disciples' proclamation of their encounter with the Risen Lord (Cfr K. KRAMER - K. VELGUTH, eds., *Inculturation: God's Presence in Cultures*, Claretian Communications Foundation Inc., Philippines 2019, 120). The resurrection made it possible for Christ to be identified with every culture. It gave the foundation for the openness of the Gospel as Christ transcended every limitation. But the transcendence of Christ does not therefore isolate him above the human family but renders him present to all, beyond all restriction. He cannot be considered foreign

anywhere or to anybody (THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Faith and Inculturation*, n. 21).

### 1.2. THE RESURRECTION IN THE INCULTURATION PROCESS

The Resurrection of Christ enabled him to transcend the physical limitations of an earthly life restricted by time, space and culture (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 83). During his earthly life, Jesus' contact with cultures were limited. In sending out the Twelve, Jesus instructed them saying: "Do not make your way to Gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town, go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Mt 10:5-6). Their mission was limited to a particular race, town and culture. After his Resurrection, Christ mandated his Apostles: "Go therefore, make disciples of all nations," (Mt 28:19). In another passage he said to his apostles as follows: "You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end," (Acts 1:8b). Through the Paschal Mystery, there is the call for a universal mission of evangelization of all peoples and cultures. A mission whereby the transcendence of Christ does not therefore isolate him above the human family but renders him present to all, beyond all restriction. He cannot be considered foreign anywhere or to anybody (Cfr THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Faith and Inculturation*, n. 21).

### 1.3. THE ASCENSION IN THE INCULTURATION PROCESS

The Ascension of Christ into heaven indicates the fulfillment of Christ's Mission and Presence within the community of believers. This emphasizes the idea of Christ moving beyond earthly existence. It was only after the Ascension that the Holy Spirit was released to the people of every culture (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 83). This truth is evident at Pentecost when people of diverse languages heard and understood the one language of faith (Cfr Acts 2:8-10). Thus, for the first time the message of the Gospel penetrated diverse cultures through language.

## 2. THE "LOGIC" OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN INCULTURATION

It is a law of nature that for anything to have another life it must die as scripture holds that "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it bears no fruit" (Jn 12:24). This is the logic of the Mystery of the Redemption which must be applied when cultures encounter the Gospel. Pope John Paul

II holds this strongly when he says: "Given the close and organic relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and the Word that the Church proclaims, the inculturation of the revealed message cannot but follow the 'logic' proper to the Mystery of Redemption". (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 61.) Inculturation always includes death: the dying to self of the person accepting the Gospel other than one's culture. The death refers to at least some aspects of one's own culture.

### 3. THE SELF-EMPTYING IN INCULTURATION

The first challenge we start encountering with inculturation and the Paschal Mystery is dying to self. Inculturation requires a letting go of certain familiar parts of one's life, rethinking many of its "dogmas" and habits; a real dying to self is expected and this is far from easy (Cfr K. KRAMER - K. VELGUTH, *Inculturation*, 120). The secret of death and life contained within inculturation takes us on to another classical axiom of Soteriology: "If there is no shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins" (Heb 9:22). Therefore, inculturation too will come at the price of giving up of our evil cultural practices, our cultural bias, ideologies and lead us through the inconvenience of changing our belief system in the light of the Gospel.

### CONCLUSION

Being Christians, it is our call to be partners in the Paschal Mystery; to go through the afflictions of life though being strengthened and comforted in the Resurrection. (Cfr VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22) Many cultures tend to run from death. We often hide elements of the reality of death around us. However, if we look to nature, we see that death is a part of the whole. It is a natural and rich element of tapestry and the well-being of the ebb and flow of life. If our Cultures must become the vehicles through which the Gospel message will move through, then we must embrace this challenge. If we desire inculturation according to the mind of the Church, then we must understand that the Paschal Mystery does not start with a rosy story or an easy path. It is an invitation to trust, the deepest invitation you will ever know. We are to submit to the path of the Paschal Mystery and not expect the Gospel to lower its standards to suit us.

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# Vox Pop



The Local Church, has incorporated indigenous languages into liturgies, making Mass and prayers accessible to more people. This allows congregants to fully understand and engage with the faith in their native languages, enriching their spiritual experience. The translation of liturgical texts and the Bible into local languages has been a monumental step in bridging cultural and spiritual divides.

**Miss Nicoline Atiedum, England**

The idea of inculturation as prescribed by the fathers of Second Vatican Council and later re-echoed by Ecclesia in Africa is very welcome. However, years after these exhortations we are still to see a full implementation of inculturation. What we have in many churches in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province most often is some limited cultural display during the Lectionary procession. We are yet to fully see inculturation reflected in the Mass vestments talk less of the Sacred Vessels used for Mass. Celebrating Holy Mass with locally produced artifacts that reflect our specific African/ Cameroonian culture used for sacred vessels would in my opinion be a great leap forward in inculturation. While we appreciate the inclusion of some songs in our local languages in the Liturgy especially during offertory, we think that a lot more needs to be done in the area of inculturation. We are looking forward to the day when many aspects of our local culture will be incorporated in the celebration of the liturgy.

**Mr. NJIKANG PLACIDUS KOGGE,  
ST JOHN OF GOD PARISH BONADIKOMBO LIMBE.**



*Inculturation* as I know is the adaptation of Christian teachings and practices to cultures. *Inculturation* has indeed been an outstanding if not the most effective vehicle in bringing Christianity to our local people since the arrival of the first missionaries in this part of the globe. Usually, many of us had the conception that Christianity is something foreign (a white man's religion) but through *inculturation* we have come to terms with the fact that Christianity is a universal reality because it makes use of every culture (languages, rites and practices) in conveying the Gospel of Christ. Such has been the case in our local Church.

**Miss Odette NWAH, Entrepreneur - Douala**

From my observation, the methods taken to implement inculturation in our local Church is commendable despite some seemingly exaggerated exhibitions. In the Archdiocese of Bamenda, the translation of the Bible and the composition and rendition of songs in local languages has facilitated the spread of the Gospel. In addition, some cultural groups have been approved in the church such as "Samba" with chaplains assigned to follow up their activities. These among other things have enhanced the participation of Christians in Church. The common man sees and hears words, signs and gestures used in his culture also used in the Church and this makes him feel belonging and worships God easily through these mediums.

**Mr. Athanasius AKENJI, Regina Pacis Parish Ndamukong**



Inculturation enriches evangelization by being relatable rather than foreign, enjoyable rather than dull, and fostering a sense of belonging in worship, vital for Liturgy. In Africa, where indigenous Church leadership is young, inculturation sometimes clashes with traditional authorities who see it as sacrilege. Bridging this gap requires well-defined terms and open exchanges, setting emotions aside. The journey of inculturation is still long and should go beyond dress, music, and language to embrace cultural values, like reverence and integrity, which align with faith. The Catholic priest, for instance, might learn from the traditional priest's virtues of silence and respect. With culture being dynamic, much remains to be explored for inculturation to fully blossom.

**Mr. Leonard KERNUY, Bamenda**



# Vox Pop



Inculturation thrives in the local Church, especially within the Liturgy, where cultural expressions shine through music, dance, and language. Many Mass parts and hymns are composed in local dialects, set to traditional melodies, enhancing relatability. I remember growing up in my parish and how, during peak celebrations, the Lectionary procession was fully rooted in local culture—from dialect to music, dance, and dress. This procession, in particular, exemplifies inculturation's effectiveness in the Liturgy. In various parishes I've visited, lectionary processions showcase diverse cultures, sometimes blending traditions, creating a lively and heartfelt connection with the faithful. I'll never forget the beautiful Igbo lectionary procession during the 2017 Chrism Mass in Bamenda—truly a testament to inculturation's power in the Church. **Mr. Frankz FUHNWINGWA, Douala**

The Church by her very nature is missionary in spirit and more so, dynamic in her mission of evangelization. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council upheld that if catechesis which is the mission of the church is to be done well, then, there has to be a missionary dynamism in the proclamation of the Gospel, for in this, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith. It is against this backdrop that the Church has been opened to Inculturation which is witness over the world. I think in our local church province (Bamenda), there is the celebration of the liturgy in our vernaculars especially in the proclamation of the readings such as Nso, Ejagham and kom. Also, the procession with the Lectionary by different cultural groups accompanied with suitable traditional songs are all expressions of inculturation in our local Church.

**MR. NGAPE YANICK, Great Soppo- BUEA**



Inculturation is a blessing in that it has greatly enhance the faith of the Christians. The church by means of inculturation has greatly deepen the faith of the Christians. For instance, by translation the word of God into the vernacular of the people, thus bringing across of the gospel message in the language of the people, has taken away the foreign cloth that surrounded it. Christianity is no longer seen as foreign affair but God speaking to us in our cultural reality and we being able to worship God from our own realities. It has also enhanced our understanding of the Christ.

**Alemnka Frederick defang, Teacher; Vietnam**

The church through inculturation has brought God to the reality of the local people- that God can now address us in our own language makes him very closed to us and gives us great comprehension of the scriptures and helps us to worship him with understanding. However, the church must wash out not to convert divine worship into the tradition cult of the particular people.

**Nguatem Emmanuel  
University of Buea**



One key aspect of cultural identity of every human person is Language. Most humans engage themselves more in conversation when their original language is used. During liturgical celebrations, some scriptural readings are proclaimed in our local language which of course bring God's message closest to the people. The use of musical instruments that are local and common to our culture also support the fact that Christianity is not alien to us but part of us. There is a wealth of songs composed in our local languages and are being used during liturgical ceremonies. These songs for the most part communicate the mysteries of God to us more than other foreign tongues. With these, it becomes obvious that in some meaningful way, Christianity is in some way incorporated in our cultures.

**Louisa Malaika  
Yaounde**

Christians within our local Church and beyond, are more involved in the life of the Church and in their commitment to the Christian faith because Christianity is not alien to their culture. The presentation of some Christian scenes with the art of our cultures bring us close to the experiences themselves. The use of our local languages to express this faith also open our scope of knowledge to the Christ faith. Holy Scripture for example has been translated into many of our local tongues and the Nso people for example have both the Old and New Testaments translated into their language *Lamsno*. This brings the sense of belonging and a more active participation our local people. From the above point of view and among other things, one cannot underestimate the key role of enculturation in enhancing the Christian Faith.

**Ashley Nyuyki  
Student-Nurse, CATUC Bamenda.**



This work is a commendable job well done. It is a sure way for salvation of souls (can. 1752) in a sacramental way. It is a necessary handbook for all ministers of the sacraments. This handbook helps the minister to administer the sacraments in a more informed way.

**Rev Fr Michael Chege Thinguri, OFM Cap (J.C.D)**  
Parish Priest St Michael Manderu Catholic Mission, Garissa  
Judicial Vicar, Garissa Diocese, Kenya

"The content in the book, *"Salus Animarum,"* reveals that the title effectively encapsulates the rationale behind the celebration of sacraments within the Church. It is my hope that those who administer and those who receive the sacraments will find this work beneficial as they engage in the celebration of the sacraments for the salvation of souls in accordance with the established norms and criteria."

**Fr. Thomas Nyambunde, C.M., MA, JCL. Judge at the Appeal Tribunal,**  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC).

The celebration of the sacraments as actions of Christ and the People of God (GIRM 16) follows a certain discipline through which is professed, celebrated, deepened and transmitted, the faith of the Church. This book which may rightly be called a Compendium on the sacraments, with a concrete outlook on pastoral realities, will prove to be a useful pastoral companion, not only for clerics but also for the laity.

**Jean Olivier Nke Ongono, Holder of the Chair of Global Church Leadership,**  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Deutschland (Germany)

The book, *Salus Animarum: A Canonical Introduction to the Sacraments*, by Terence S. Lukong, OFM Cap., JCD, is an excellent interplay of Canon law, the Church's teaching and pastoral practice on the munus sanctificandi (sanctifying office) of the Church. This book lifts the veil from the mystery of canon law and sheds ample light on the proper celebration of the sacraments. His treatment of each canon is carefully, clearly and simply presented in a highly practical format. This book is useful and timely and I heartily recommend it.

**Rev. Sr. Chin Ngoenso Kong Pia, TSSF, JCD**  
Judge of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of First Instance, Bamenda.

# SALUS ANIMARUM

(SALVATION OF SOULS)

*A Canonical Guide to the Sacraments*

## About the Author

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TERENCE  
SAHVEN  
LUKONG



ISBN 78-978-60655-8-8





# INTERVIEW

OF FR KENNETH NGWOBELA

**SL:** The Editors of Searchlight Magazine are happy to have you on this platform. Could you kindly tell our readers who you are?

**KN:** Thank you. I am Fr. Kenneth NGWOBELA, a priest of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, ordained on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2012. After my ordination, I served as assistant priest and manager of schools in All Saints parish, Bayelle (August 2012 - August 2013), after which I was appointed principal of St. Paul's Comprehensive College, Nkwen (August 2013 - June 2016). In

June 2016, I was sent to Rome for further studies, and from September 2016 - June 2020, I studied Sacred Scriptures at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI), obtaining the Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures in June 2020. In September 2020, I was sent to the Archdiocese of Florence (still in Italy) where, while serving as assistant priest in two parishes successively, I continued with my postgraduate studies at the *Facoltà Teologica dell' Italia Centrale*. Upon completion of my doctoral studies in Biblical Theology in May

2024, I was appointed as a lecturer and formator in STAMS, Bambui, an appointment which I took up on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2024.

**SL:** Which Courses do you teach and what is their place in the life of the Church and the Seminarian?

**KN:** I teach Sacred Scriptures and the biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, which are very important as they enable us read and study the Word of God in the original language in which it was written –

mainly Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament and the Septuagint (LXX – the Greek translation of the Old Testament). This explains why a course on the biblical languages is taught as an important aspect of the study of Sacred Scriptures. The Word of God is, of course, the very life of the Church, whose mission is to proclaim it unceasingly to the ends of the earth (Cf. Matt 28,19-20; Acts 1,8). Hence, it must occupy a central place in the life of the seminarian as he undergoes formation in view of the Priesthood. In

fact, Sacred Scriptures constitute the basis and foundation of all theological studies. In this regard, the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, issued by the Congregation for the Clergy in 2016, quoting *Dei Verbum* n. 24, clearly notes in relation to theological studies in the seminary that “the study of Sacred Scriptures is the soul of theology, and it must inspire all the theological disciplines” (n. 166).

**SL:** When you left STAMS after your priestly ordination in 2012, did it ever occur to you that you would one day be appointed to be a member of the permanent formation Staff of this Seminary? Can you make a comparison between formation then and now?

**KN:** (*Laughs*).... Definitely not! Actually, when we were in the final stages of formation in the Seminary, after priestly ordination, one of the things we used to say was that we prayed and hoped never to end up in the Seminary as formators. And yet, here am I, 12 years later, in the Seminary as a new member of the permanent formation team! I can only say that it is God's will for me now and I continuously ask Him for the graces needed to diligently and faithfully carry out this very demanding and delicate responsibility of forming future priests for the good of the Church.

Concerning your related question, I wouldn't really like to make a comparison, in the context of this interview, between formation then and now. However, I wish to note that while there are always (and sometimes inevitable) changes in the circumstances and contexts of Seminary formation (for instance, STAMS is no longer both a *philosophicum* and a *theologicum*; there is a great increase in the number of seminarians; there is the ongoing socio-political crisis negatively affecting everything in the North West and South West regions, etc), the formation to the Sacred Priesthood remains the same, with the goal of configuring future priests to Christ.

**SL:** The recent trend we have in our society and on social media is the uprising of self-acclaimed “men of God” who give different varieties of interpretation to Scriptures with apparent convictions that pull crowds to follow them. Since you have studied Scripture, what would be the criteria to judge the validity of an interpretation of Scripture, or what

should be taken into consideration when interpreting Sacred Scripture?

**KN:** The rising trend and exponentially multiplying number of self-acclaimed “men of God” is indeed a worrying phenomenon, especially because many people genuinely seeking God are often led astray by wrong or inaccurate interpretations of Scripture and are sometimes even deceived and exploited by some false and unscrupulous “men of God”. In considering the validity of any biblical interpretation, it is important to always remember what St. Peter says in this regard, namely, that “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1,20-21). Among other things, this means that Scripture does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation (for individual subjective interpretations) but receives its authentic interpretation in the community of the faithful, that is, in the Church – because the Holy Spirit who inspired it is the same Holy Spirit that guided the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Church to recognize the inspired books and to include them in the canon of Sacred Scriptures. It is this same Magisterium that, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, is able to provide the authentic and true meaning of the Word of God for the Church (Cf. *Dei Verbum* n. 10). Interpretations that are contrary to that given by the Magisterium of the Church are, therefore, to be rejected. And the Magisterium arrives at the authentic interpretation of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and meditation, careful and intense study of the sacred texts, separately and as a complete unity (through the use of various exegetical methods), in their original languages and contexts (literary, historical, social and cultural, etc), and in the light of the living tradition of the Church, which is the proper *locus* of Scripture.

**SL:** Is there any other thing you would like to tell our readers?

**KN:** I would like to wish the readers of SL a holy and joyful Christmas season and to encourage them to continue reading SL because of its rich contents. Thankyou.



# CHRIST AND OTHER CULTURES



**George FEADZERSIN**  
(Theology II)



**Christian NYAMBI**  
(Theology III)

## INTRODUCTION

The coming of the Son of God into human history included the penetration of the Word of God into human cultures. That penetration, which has not always been friendly, started in the Jewish world and expanded to other non-Jewish cultures. The fulfillment of the plan of salvation requires purification, by the Word of God, of the various human ways of behaving, thinking and acting, thus, the various human cultures. In this article, we aim at looking at how Christ and his message interact with human cultures.

### 1. JESUS AND THE JEWISH CULTURE

Jesus was born into the Jewish culture, grew up in that culture and associated with the culture. The earthly Jesus belonged to the Jewish environment of Galilee. He was born a subject of the Law and lived under the Law. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain, 1988, 119.) He agreed with some aspects of his culture. But he equally “strongly challenged certain aspects of the culture he had inherited” (*Ibid.*). Jesus “defiled the law”, called for the abolition of rules for ritual purity, “questioned the regulation of the Sabbath”, “opposed the punishment due to women taken in adultery” etc. (Cfr *Ibid.*). These provoked the anger of his people and became some of the reasons for his Passion. It would seem Jesus

had a double-sided attitude towards culture, but a closer look at his motives gives us a clue, that is, Jesus did not hate culture rather he sought to purify it of some human elements that down play the dignity of man created in the image and likeness of God. He made the glory of God shine in the Jewish culture, bringing it to its perfection.

### 2. JESUS AND NON-JEWISH CULTURES

Jesus, whose life greatly revolved around Galilee and cities like Jerusalem, also encountered people from non-Jewish cultures like the Syro-Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks and Samaritans. Though Jesus showed special attention to the members of the “house of Israel”, he called his apostles to a universal mission (Cfr Mt 28:19). The work of redemption Jesus included everyone Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus held an inclusive view of God's people. The word of God has to shine over all cultures for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. God is not God of the Jews only. The words and actions of Jesus show God's availability to all. Jesus came not to alienate human cultures, but to dwell in them and transform them.

### 3. THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S MESSAGE AFTER THE ASCENSION

The word of God, through the preaching of the apostles, reached the non-Jewish people in their own language. Christ's mission is for everyone. Paul

clearly expresses it both in his writings and especially in his pastoral method of evangelization. His ministry can be cited as evidence of inculturation, though his attitude towards cultures appears paradoxical. Paul questions any and every set of ideas and behaviors in the light of faith in Christ. While espousing the tastes and manners of human cultures, the word of God transcends the cultural categories, and abolishes social and cultural boundaries. With Paul, cultural differences matter little. Obedience to the commandments of God matters more than any cultural distinction.

However, cultural relativization does not mean the total abolition of cultural distinctions. This is what Saint Paul means when he writes, "let everyone continue in the part which the Lord has allotted to him, as he was when God called him. This is the rule that I give to all the Churches. If a man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised; when an uncircumcised man is called, he may not be circumcised. To be circumcised is of no importance; and to be uncircumcised is of no importance; what is important is the keeping of God's commandments." (1 Cor 7: 17-20). Christ does not drag the man out of his culture, but he meets him in his culture to save him. Christ uses human language to redeem man. Evidence of that adoption of human language by the Word of God is Paul's speech before the Council of the Areopagus. To combat paganism, Paul made use of secular wisdom. He begins his speech with a reference to the Greek practice of dedicating altars to the "unknown god". He uses an expression suggested by Epimenides of Cnossos and also quotes the words of a Cilician poet. All these was to pass across his message of repentance and to proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ.

#### 4. CHRIST AND AFRICAN CULTURES

Through the mystery of Christ's event, Christ does not only invite, but like the prodigal father, he comes to meet the African culture, in order that it be transformed. Christianity does not therefore annihilate and suppress African cultures. To be a Christian, as an African, does not entail the renouncement of one's culture. Christianity rather assumes African cultures, purifies them, rejecting those elements that cannot be assimilated to Christ's message. Christ elevates African cultures and brings them to fulfillment. But this is not without obstacles. The difficulties faced in the interaction between Christ and the African culture express themselves in two forms: the failure to differentiate between the message of Christ and the Christian message, and the challenge of the word made flesh. (Cfr ACHARUPARAMBIL DANIEL, "Dialogo Tra Cristianesimo e Induismo" in *Portare Christo*

*All'Oumo: Dialogo I*, Urbaniana University press, Rome 1985, 924.)

#### 4.1. Differentiation between Christianity and Judeo-Christianity

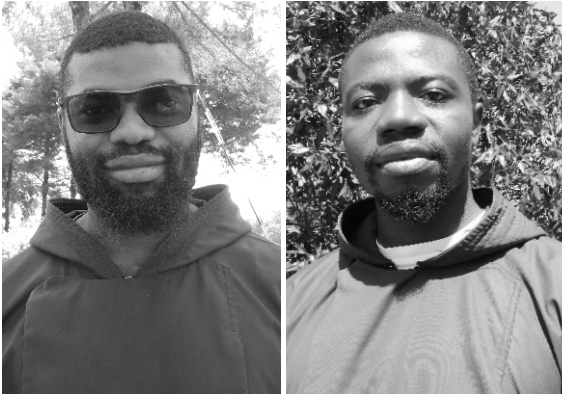
Christ's message came to Africa already interpreted in another culture, in the garments of Judaism, as Judeo Christianity or Hellenistic Christianity. So, there is need to return to the original message of Christ, which though immanent in the cultures which received it, transcends them. Pope John Paul II earlier mentioned that: "revelation is proclaimed satisfactorily and become fully understandable when Christ speaks the tongues of the various peoples, and they can read scripture and sing the liturgy with their own expressions, as though repeating the marvels of Pentecost." (JOHN PAUL II, *Oriente Lumen*, n. 25.) Christ can't be tied to one culture. (PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, n. 20.)

#### 4.2. Challenging the Message of The Incarnation

The incarnational dimension of the Gospel, which is identified with Jesus Christ incarnates and incorporates itself in the people and their culture. To say God became man and dwell amongst men to an African seems to be intolerable language. The reason is the high reverence African cultures have for God, who is revered as the Supreme Being. However, if Africans come to a deep realization of this stunning Christian fact, seeing God in each other, then Christ's message will move from the abstract to the concrete lives. The incarnation demonstrates God's great commitment to all of humanity, to live among us and to die on our behalf. This implies among other things a similar commitment to be with people, to be present, available to be used by God. The attempt to bridge cultures, means to step out of our foreign way of thinking and acting and adapt to indigenous pattern and also to be open to let the values of Christianity purify our cultures.

#### CONCLUSION

Christ came to revive in man the perfect model of Culture which flows from the Divine intellect. Culture in its real state, as in serving man, is a wonderful channel for the spread of Christ's Gospel which cannot be dissociated from his message. For the Christ of faith is also the Christ of reason who has culture as his legacy. Christianity does not mean the abolition of cultures, but the purification and perfection of cultures. The process of inculturation has its roots on the relation of Christ and the cultures. Christ, on his earthly mission, made the light of the Gospel to shine over the cultures, making them perfect.



**Helbert  
BURINYUY**  
(OFM Cap, Theology III)

**Melchizedek  
KPUDZEKA**  
(OFM Cap, Theology III)

# BASIC GREEK TERMINOLOGIES OF THE FIRST FOURTH COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

The Ecumenical Councils of the Church, held over the centuries, have played a vital role in defining, preserving, and defending core Christian doctrines. From the early centuries of Christianity, Church leaders gathered in Councils to address theological controversies, unify teachings, and resolve doctrinal disputes that arose as the faith spread across diverse cultures and societies. These Councils, often convened by Roman emperors or other political leaders alongside bishops and theologians, sought to clarify some foundational aspects of Christian beliefs. The Ecumenical Councils, recognized by most of the major Christian Traditions, include the councils of Nicaea I, Ephesus, Constantinople I, and Chalcedon. These Councils confronted disturbing heresies and established theological foundations that remain central to the Christian faith today. Each Council reflects the Church's commitment to theological unity, often navigating complex discussions to affirm the divinity and humanity of Christ, the unity of the Godhead, and the proper roles within the Church's hierarchy. This article aims at bringing out the basic

terminologies borrowed from the Greek world by the early Councils of the Church which have played a vital role in defining and developing the Church's doctrine.

### 1. THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325 AD)

The council of Nicaea, held in 325AD, was the first ecumenical Council of the Christian Church. It was convened by Emperor Constantine. Its primary purpose was to address Arianism, a theological belief that emerged in the early 4<sup>th</sup> Century, primarily through the teachings of Arius, a priest from Alexandria. Arius argued that Jesus Christ, while Divine, was not equal to God the Father in Essence or Eternity. According to Arius, Jesus was a Created Being, and he is distinct from the Father, thus, he was subordinate to the Father, though still considered above all other creatures. This idea opposed the traditional Christian teaching of the Trinity, which holds that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-eternal and consubstantial, meaning they share the same divine essence. The Council condemned Arianism as heretical and declared the doctrine of the Trinity, affirming

that Jesus is "of the same Substance" or "Essence" (*homoousios*) as God the Father. The use of *homoousios* directly opposed the Arian view, which held that the Son was of a different substance than the Father (*heteroousios*) or merely similar (*homoiousios*). This term was pivotal in the Nicene Creed. Also, the second article of this Creed, spoke directly of Jesus Christ of whom it affirmed the divine Sonship. To the biblical category of the "only begotten" (ὁ μονογενής) of the Father it added that of being born (γεννητός), not made (ποιηθείς) and the decisive term of being "of one substance" (*homoousios*) with the Father. To this effect, the Council affirmed that the Son of God is truly divine and equal in divinity as the Father. (Cfr JOHN MEADE, *The Council of Nicaea and the Biblical Canon*, Ehrman Press, 2004, 5-16.)

### 2. THE FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381AD)

The First Council of Constantinople held in 381AD, was convened by Emperor Theodosius I. This Council aimed at addressing theological disputes and solidifying the orthodox understanding of



Christian doctrine, particularly concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit and the role of the Trinity. Constantinople I reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, addressing Apollinarianism which denied the full humanity of Jesus. It went further to clarify that Jesus was consubstantial with the Father. Also, this Council elaborated on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, affirming the Spirit's divinity and adding to the Nicene Creed the language about the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, the "*filioque*" clause was added later in the Western church. Also, the Council formulated the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, articulated the Church's belief in the Trinity and the Holy Spirit's divine nature. (Cfr CROSS. F.L. (ed.), "The Nicene Creed", in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, New York 2005.)

### 3. THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (431AD)

The Council of Ephesus, was convened by Emperor Theodosius II in 431AD. It was an ecumenical Council of the Christian Church primarily called to address the teachings of Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius argued that Mary should not be called Θεοτόκος "God-bearer" or "Mother of God" but rather Χριστοτόκος meaning "Christ-bearer" or "Mother of Christ", believing that Jesus' divine and human natures were distinct and separate. This doctrine implied that Jesus was effectively two persons, one divine and one human, which challenged the unity of His person.

The Council of Ephesus condemned *Nestorianism*, affirming that Jesus Christ is one person with both divine and human natures inseparably united. It declared Mary to be *Theotokos* (Θεοτόκος), emphasizing that she gave birth to Jesus Christ, who is both fully divine and fully human. This decision was pivotal in upholding the doctrine of the hypostatic union, the belief that Jesus Christ is one person with two united natures.

### 4. COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451AD)

The council of Chalcedon held in 451AD in Chalcedon, was the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church. It was convened by the Roman Emperor Marcian. Its principal purpose was to assert the orthodox Catholic doctrine against the heresy of Monophysitism, a belief promoted by Eutyches that emphasized Christ as having only one nature "φύσις" after the incarnation. To this effect, he thought that Christ had only one nature, either Divine or the fusion of Divine and human. The central outcome of this Council was the Chalcedonian definition through the usage of the

word "hypostasis" (πόστας), that is, one person, Jesus Christ, with two natures Divine and Human. According to this Council, Jesus Christ is fully Divine and fully Human without confusion (συγχύτως), without change (τρέπτως), without division (διαίρετως) and without separation (χωρίστως). (Cfr CROSS. F. L., (ed.), "The Council of Chalcedon", in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.)

The usage of these Greek terminologies represents reality of inculturation already present from the very begins of the Church. These words and expressions have their original application in the Greek culture and philosophy. For example, before Christianity "ousia" has meant the fundamental substance or essence of a thing. With Christianity, the inclusion of the prefix "homo" (same) "ousia" came to represent unique way expressing the unity between the Father and the Son (that is they have the same essence). In like manner, Greek philosophy in Neoplatonism use the term hypostases hierarchy of being in the One, the Intellect and the Soul (all distinct realities). Christianity borrowed this pagan term, but use it to express the different persons of the Trinity. However, in this case the three represent the One God with no gradation.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Councils of the Church stand as pillars of Christian doctrinal development and unity, shaping the theological framework that defines much of Christianity to this day. From addressing early controversies over the nature of Christ and the Trinity to resolving critical questions of authority and doctrine, these Councils provided clarity, continuity, and consensus in a rapidly expanding and often challenged faith. They succeeded to make use of non-biblical terms to explain biblical realities. Their teachings serve as foundational references for both Catholic and Orthodox traditions. The legacy of the Councils reflects the Church's commitment in preserving the truth and responding to new challenges with faithfulness to its teachings. By confronting heresies, affirming essential beliefs, and establishing guiding principles, the Councils have helped the Church remain united across diverse cultures and eras. They remind believers of the importance of unity in doctrine, humility in seeking truth, and the ongoing work of theological reflection that continues to enrich the Christian tradition.



# THE TRANSFORMATION OF GREEK TERMINOLOGIES AT THE FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381 AD)



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## INTRODUCTION

The place of Councils and Synods in the life and history of the Church cannot be treated with less seriousness. Faced with some doctrinal heresies and controversies that were heating or plaguing the early Church, Councils were convoked and through the various Councils, the Church defended the orthodoxy of the Christian faith. The First Council of Constantinople, held in 381 A.D, convoked by emperors Theodosius I and Galian, was occasioned amidst other things by the constant propagation of Arianism, spearheaded by a priest named Arius. Arius, denied that Jesus was consubstantial with the Father. This teaching provoked the convocation of the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D).

The whole misunderstanding about the nature of Jesus is deeply rooted in the understanding of "substance". This word is derived from the Latin word "substare" which could be further broken into "sub" (under) and "stare" (to stand). Hence when we talk about substance, we mean that which stands as the foundation. The Greeks referred to

substance as "ousia", the fundamental, eternal, unchanging and above all essential aspect of a thing. The purpose of this article is to show how culture and religion could interact to bring about inculturation. The Council of Constantinople mediated the interaction of Christianity and the Greek Hellenistic culture. Certain concepts were taken from this Hellenistic background, transformed, modified and used to present core Christian truths to the Greek World. This in the long run facilitated the spread of the Gospel message among the Greeks. Some of these concepts will be examined below.

## 1. PREDICAMENTS OF THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

There are two main heresies which this Council was convoked to handle. These heresies were Appollinarianism and Macedonianism. Appollinarianism, was spearheaded by Apollinaris of Laodicea. According to him, Jesus had a human body and a sensitive human soul, but with a divine mind and not a human rational mind, whereas Macedonianism, a fourth century Christian heresy, promulgated by Macedonius I, denied the full personhood and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. For him therefore, the Holy Spirit was created by the Son hence, subordinate to the Father and the Son, and so is not divine even though superior to man. However, after the Council of Nicaea and before the Council of Constantinople in (381 A.D), one could clearly distinguish three types of Arianism. (Cfr V.C. De CLERCO, "Arianism" in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. I, Sydney 1967,

791.)

### 1.1. The "Anomoeans"

This group of Arians, taught that the Son is unlike the Father, that Jesus was not of the same substance or nature with the Father, implying no connection between the Father and the Son. The chief Anomoeans were: Aetius, Theodulus, bishop of Chaeretapa, Eunomius, bishop of Cyzicus and a host of others. To them, the Son is human even though he is a super human being. They are what the Greek term "Anomoios" describes.

### 1.2. The "Homoeousians"

They are the moderate Arians and they are of the opinion that the Word (Son), is similar to the Father with regard to substance, but the Father is superior to the Son. Their name is derived from the Greek word "*Homoeousios*". Some of the Homoeousians were: Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebas and Marcedonius.

### 1.3. The Homoeans

Unlike the "Anomoeans", these other Arians held the opinion that the Father and the Son are similar. Jesus is like the Father but without reference to substance. Their name comes from the Greek word "*Homoiios*". Some of the Homoeans were: Acacius, bishop of Cesecarea, Eusebius of Emessa and George of Laodicea.

## 2. RESOLUTIONS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GREEK TERMS

The resolutions of the Council of Nicaea played a vital role in the resolutions of the Council of Constantinople (Cfr CCC 465). This has to do with "*Homoousios*" and "*Enanthropesis*". The Church teaches that "...building up the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures." (PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8<sup>th</sup> December 1975) n. 20.) Of course, this is inculturation which is the adaptation of the Gospel to diverse cultures, without compromising its essential content. The Council of Constantinople of 381 A.D. in the transformation of Greek text did a form of inculturation which helped the then Greek world to understand the reality which Christians had as their belief. Two terms were very much stressed in this Council. We shall discuss them closely.

### 2.1. "Homoousios"

The term "*homoousios*" comes from two other Greek words which are "homo" (one) and "ousia" (substance). Hence when we talk about homoousios, we mean "one substance". The idea of "one substance" is translated in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as "consubstantial". By "homoousios" therefore, we mean that the Father and the Son are of one substance, hence affirming the divinity of the Son and his oneness with the

Father. (Cfr J.N.D. KELLY, *The Nicene Creed*, A & C Black, London 1968, 223.) The identification of the "homoousios" by the Council is contained clearly in what is called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that is the Creed which emerged from the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. The Council identifies the unity of substance between the Father and the Son by using the Greek concept "ousia" to help the Greeks grasp the Christian faith. (Cfr THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 32, A. 3.)

### 2.2. "Enanthropesis"

Enanthropesis is the teaching that Christ took human flesh and has a human soul. It is a very important aspect of the incarnation of Christ. Enanthropesis is derived from three Greek words: "en" (in), "*anthropos*" (man/human) and "esis" (becoming). Hence "enanthropesis" is concerned with "becoming man". By "enanthropesis" therefore, we mean that the Word has taken human form. (Cfr EDWARD R. HARDY (ed.), *The Christology of the Later Fathers*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1954, 127.)

### 2.3. The Trinitarian Unity

Even though the Council of Constantinople spoke about "*homoousios*" and "*enanthropesis*", one can see the stress on the Unity and Divinity of the Trinity coming across clearly in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Nicene Creed stated: "We believe in the Holy Spirit," but did not elaborate on His nature. The Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) expanded on this, confirming that the Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. This transformation is contained in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed: "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." (Council Documents, Session I) This addition emphasized the coequality and consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son.

## CONCLUSION

The Significance of the Council of Constantinople of 381 A.D. is twofold. Firstly, it decisively established the doctrine of the Trinity. It did so by upholding the decisions of the First Council of Nicaea. Secondly, it rejected Arianism and semi-Arianism and asserted that the Holy Spirit is God. From the foregoing paragraphs we could conclude that inculturation takes place when there is meaningful dialogue between religion and culture where concepts in a culture are clarified which also adds to the richness of the message of salvation.

# THE SALVIFIC VALUE OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS AND CULTURES



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## INTRODUCTION

In the annals of the Church, some Christians had believed that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the unbaptized to gain salvation. It was strongly believed that there is no salvation outside the Church. Some prominent Christians regarded those who were not baptised into the faith as damned. We can think here of prominent figures like Origen (2<sup>nd</sup> Century), Saint Vincent of Lerins (5<sup>th</sup> Century) in his 'Canon', Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe (6<sup>th</sup> Century), Saint Francis Xavier (16<sup>th</sup> Century), and Cardinal Lavigerie (19<sup>th</sup> Century). Overtones of this firm belief could be seen in their writings, discussions with their contemporaries, way of praying and living the Christian faith. It should be noted that this was not only the belief of some individual members of the Church, but it was in some way the general feeling of most members of the church at some point. The Church had not laid down any doctrine concerning the salvific value of non-Christian religions and cultures as such.

In our own era, the Church has developed a new approach towards other religious and cultural traditions. At the Second Vatican Council, the Church decided to reflect about the salvific value of other religions. The fruits of this reflection can be seen in the post Vatican II documents: *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), which proclaim a universal and salvific will of God which is limited only by the evil decision of the human conscience and nothing else. (Cfr RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 327.) This implies that there is a possibility of the adherents of non-Christian religions and cultures to attain salvation. We shall see what the Church thinks about the salvific value of these non-Christian religions and cultures in this article.

## 1. THE UNIVERSAL SALVIFIC WILL OF GOD

The universal salvific will of God set the groundwork for the discussion on the salvific value of non-Christian religions and cultures. This will of God is revealed in Scriptures which says: "He [God] wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim 2:4-6). So, everyone is in God's saving plan. This plan admits of a means, which is through the sacrifice of his son, through which anyone who believes in him gains eternal life. Belief in Christ is not simply notional assent, but an experienced or lived assent.

In many non-Christian religions and cultures, the adherents due to no fault of theirs, have no cognitive knowledge of the truth of the Christian faith but do exhibit a partial knowledge of the truth of God in their manner of living which is not contrary to the Christian faith. This way of life can guarantee them salvation, and the Church enlists them among "the people of God" as well. (Cfr *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16.)

## 2. SALVATION THROUGH BAPTISM OF DESIRE

"Baptism is the foundation sacrament of faith." (A. SHORTER, *The Theology of Inculturation*, 91.) Through

baptism, a believer becomes a member of the Church and a member of the Body of Christ. Hence, one can achieve salvation in Christ through baptism. Origen held that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation) and so did many early Christians. This kind of teaching was held in the early years of the Church because according to early geographers, the entire world consisted only of those countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, believed to be the centre of the earth. Hence, it was believed that the mystery of Christ had been effectively preached to the whole world and there was no possibility of invincible ignorance on the part of the unbaptized. (Cfr, *Ibid*, 92.)

From the end of the fifteenth century onwards, many explorers discovered other areas such as the Americas, the East Indies and Africa and their peoples whose cultures were morally good. Thus, the doctrine that the unbaptized were damned became less and less tenable. (Cfr *Ibid*.) To solve this problem, the notion of Baptism by desire or Baptism in *voto* as opposed to Baptism in *re* was developed and taught by Berllamine and Suarez, and later adopted by the Council of Trent. (Cfr *Ibid*.) The notion of Baptism by desire was extended from those who ardently desired Baptism but who died without receiving the sacrament to include those who due to no fault of theirs had no knowledge of Christ. In this light, the salvific work of Christ was not limited to the visible frontiers of the Church but extends to the adherents of non-Christian religions and cultures.

### 3. THE SALVIFIC VALUE OF IMPLICIT FAITH

We mentioned above that the salvific will of God is a call for all mankind to salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the one and only mediator of salvation; and it is only through faith in him that human beings are saved. This implies that the one who lacks knowledge of this fact can only possess implicit faith. (Cfr A. SHORTER, *The Theology of Inculturation*, 93-94.) The Church teaches that "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation." (*Lumen Gentium* n.16.) Also, the Church says "In ways known to himself God can lead those who through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him." (*Ad Gentes*, n.7.) Consequently, by following the dictates of their conscience and living a good life, adherents of non-Christian religions and cultures may come to have a complete knowledge of God and be saved through his grace.

### 4. THE FUNDAMENTAL LOVE-OPTION

Saint Augustine identified two forms of love that are always before man: 'the love of self that leads to the contempt of God' and 'the love of God that leads to contempt of self'. There is no other option that a human being can make, and salvation is thus available to all who do not freely make self-love the goal of their whole existence. Hence adherents of non-Christian religions can gain salvation if their fundamental love-option is not self-love.

### 5. THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER OF GRACE

Human beings live in a supernatural order of grace, that is, they enjoy an openness to God and to his self-communication which is freely bestowed by God. (Cfr RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 138.) The unbaptized are beneficiaries of this gift of revelation and salvation freely bestowed by God but are unconscious of Christ. Still, they receive the Spirit and effect of Christ's mystery in their lives and consciousness. These non-Christian religions by virtue of the supernatural order of grace contain some 'grace-filled elements' which help lead them to explicit knowledge of truth. Thus, it is abundantly clear that the individual non-Christian is saved with and through his own religious cultural system, and not apart from it, or in spite of it. (Cfr P. FRANSEN, *Divine Grace and Man*, 67-122.)

Also, from the various cultural traditions, the individual believer is able to develop a personal creed with categories and symbols which in a way are expressions of the fundamental love-option. Lonergan identified common features which demonstrate that world religions are implicit in a fundamental option of love. They are: that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness, love, mercy and compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer, love of one's neighbour and enemies, love of God, union with him, or dissolution into him. (Cfr LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 109-110.) These features parallel the teachings of the Gospel, and help each individual to be able to respond to God's call to salvation through one's own religious cultural system.

### CONCLUSION

We are able to see that salvation is possible through non-Christian religions and cultures if they are in accord with the teachings of the Gospel and if the adherents to such religions are ignorant of Christ due to no fault of theirs. God's universal call to salvation is therefore open to all men of goodwill and those who do His will as known through the dictates of their consciences. Faith is essentially a response to this divine initiative.





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# RELIGION AND CULTURE

## INTRODUCTION

Man is a social being, and for this reason he lives and expresses himself in the community in which he finds himself. In his desire and search for God, man discovers means of expressing his way of being and a way to relate to God. Man's social nature requires external expression of these internal acts of religion that he communicates with others on religious matters and professes his religion in the community. Man does not live and act in a vacuum. His way of thinking and acting is patterned by a particular society or culture to which he belongs. Culture and Religion down the ages have portrayed some connections with each other.

## 1. AN UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

### 1.1. DEFINITIONS

#### 1.1.1. Culture

Culture encompasses the

beliefs, customs, arts, and social institutions of a particular group. Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Geoffrey Chapman, Great Britain, 1988, 4.) In our context, it would imply adapting religious practices, symbols, and expressions to align with cultural norms and values. For example, local music, art, and language might be used in worship to make the faith more accessible and meaningful to the community.

#### 1.1.2. Religion

Religion provides the foundational beliefs and practices that are being inculturated. The core tenets of the Christian faith remain unchanged, but the way they are expressed can vary. This ensures that the faith is not seen as foreign or imposed but as something that can be fully

integrated into the local way of life.

### 1.2. LEVELS OF CULTURE

Aylward Shorter talks of the phenomenological level which for him is the usual point to distinguish practical from symbolical dimension of culture. (Cfr AYLWARD SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 35.) The practical or material aspect of culture includes all that has to do with material life, technology and behavior, the symbolical relates to the realm of ideas and it is the realm that governs the practical order and orientates human behavior. Making reference to Bishop Jacob of the Mennonite church, four Levels of culture are outlined which are divided into external superficial and inner symbolical levels. They are: superficial level, the domestic technical, values level and finally what he termed the 'world view'. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 36.) 'World' as used by Shorter here is understood as the whole range of human experience,

the experience of the other human beings in one's own society and other societies, experience of the physical environment and religious experience. (Cfr *Ibid.*) A keen view of the fourth level of culture reveals that culture is very rich and diverse. It is from this diversification that we can talk about inculturation.

### 1.3. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

It is the encounter with ultimate reality, the intuition of a truth or power that transcends the evidence of one's senses. While culture renders faith that provides a psycho-social environment for an incredible encounter, religious faith endows all experience with a new dimension. We can therefore see from here that the goal of inculturation is to create a dialogue between faith and culture, allowing the Gospel to take root in diverse cultural settings while respecting and valuing those cultures. This process can lead to a richer, more vibrant expression of faith that is both authentically Christian and deeply connected to the local context. What aspect of culture can be employed by religion?

## 2. HOW DOES CULTURE AND RELIGION RELATE

Just as events cannot unfold in a vacuum but need a medium, so too religion needs culture as a medium to easily and clearly unfold. This is evident from the fact that God does not communicate to man in a vacuum, but often he uses the tools found in his culture such as: language, symbols, signs, values, music and art.

### 2.1. LANGUAGE

This is the identity of a culture. The Language of a people speaks into their hearts to a deeper understanding of the message. In our local Church and in other communities, many tribal groups have the word of God translated into their local languages in order to easily facilitate the spread of the Gospel. This is not new because it is not only in our times that this is used. The Christian faith has from its beginnings shown great desire for inculturation. It is in a language that culture develops and seeks better ways to communicate its values that shape the excesses of man's fallen nature. Language therefore is an essential meeting point for culture and Religion thus the beginning of inculturation.

### 2.2. VALUES

Both culture and Religion have values that they hand down from one generation to the next. In the dialogue between faith and culture, there is bound to be mutual enrichment in the sense that the Gospel brings something new to the culture and the culture facilitates the spread of the Gospel. Every culture has sets of values and traditions that need to be studied and purified as the case maybe in the light

of the Gospel. (Cfr CHIANAIN EUGENE, *Inculturation: A Conditio Sine Qua Non for Effective Evangelization in Cameroon in the Light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, 2018, 39.) Some of these values include: human dignity, life, and integrity. The primary constituent of culture is the human person, considered in all aspects of his being. Culture also provides the milieu in which the persons may grow. The Christian faith in a similar manner insists on the respect of human dignity and life because man is made in the image of God.

### 2.3. MUSIC AND ART

Most of our Liturgical Music today come from various cultures. They transmit particular messages to the local community and help them to make more meaning in the Liturgy. This provides the means through which culture can be transformed and enlightened by religion. Pope John Paul II noted that, "the synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith, because a faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived." (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 78.) Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces people, together with their cultures, into her own culture that is the culture of the Church which is contained in the Gospel. (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52.)

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to emphasize on the mutual, cordial and substantial relationship between culture and religion. Culture is open to the higher values common to all. Religion purifies culture such that culture does not withdraw into itself but through the influence of religion seek to contribute to the richness which is the good to all. Religion and culture have a mutual relationship. Religion perfects and enlightens culture and culture facilitates and enables the penetration of religion in the life of the People. In accordance with the ideas of Vatican II, the enrichment of the subject's faith should be conceived and understood as the development of the religious attitude, conscious of both its inner content and transcendent significance as well as its exterior social character. Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae* affirms this assertion when it teaches that, "the private and public acts of religion by which men direct themselves to God according to their convictions transcend their very nature the earthly and temporal order of things".

# THE CHALLENGES OF INCULTURATION IN OUR LOCAL CHURCH



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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, inculturation has been a critical task in the Church's mission. However, within the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda, inculturation remains unfamiliar to many people due to its complexities. This unfamiliarity often leads to reluctance and resistance, as some perceive it as interference into their cultural heritage. Yet, inculturation has played a transformative role to the different cultures, facilitating the spread of the Gospel and enabling local communities to embrace the faith more deeply. Despite these, significant challenges remain.

Understanding the depth of these challenges requires recognizing that inculturation is not merely about translating the Gospel or adapting rituals to local styles. Instead, it is a reality that should permeate the very fabric of the Christian life and doctrine, using culture as fertile ground for growth in faith. This article will examine the obstacles faced in the practice of inculturation within the ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda, considering its history, challenges from local traditions, and ongoing tensions between faith and cultural identity. (Cfr IMBISA, *Study Document: Inculturation*, Mambo Press, Zimbabwe 1993, 47.).

## 1. CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE FIRST MISSIONARIES: MISUNDERSTANDING OF OUR LOCAL CULTURES AND PRACTICES

The challenges of inculturation in our Church

Province do not only come from the indigenous people to whom the Message of Christ was brought, but also from the first missionaries who unfortunately failed to take into consideration some cultural values of our people which are going to be pointed out below.

The challenges of inculturation in Bamenda partly originate from the first missionaries' limited understanding of local cultures. Missionaries often dismissed indigenous beliefs as superstitious and incompatible with the Gospel, rather than regarding them as potential foundations for faith. Bishop Dieudonné Watio highlights that no culture is incompatible with Christian Revelation. Yet, some of the early missionaries failed to recognize existing spiritual beliefs, and proceeded to impose a Western worldview that alienated people from their cultural roots. A more effective method would have built upon indigenous beliefs in God and the afterlife, allowing these as frameworks for the Gospel's message. (Cfr SIDBE SEMPORE, "Les Eglises d'Afrique entre leur passé et leur avenir", in *Concilium* 126, 1977, 14-15.)

## 2. CHALLENGES FROM ETHNIC HERITAGE

Inculturation requires the evangelization of cultures, which involves discerning and uplifting the values that a culture can offer to Christianity. However, people often resist when they feel their cultural heritage might be compromised. In our church province, this resistance is compounded by various factors, such as tribal tensions, family differences, and beliefs in witchcraft.

Tribal and family divisions, along with beliefs rooted in superstition, pose significant obstacles to inculturation. For instance, lingering tensions between tribes can create deep-seated animosities that hinder true Christian unity. Similarly, practices like witchcraft remain entrenched in some areas, creating a formidable challenge to the Gospel's message of liberation and reconciliation. For inculturation to succeed, the faithful must embrace their unity in Christ and abandon practices that divide, recognizing each other as brothers and sisters in the family of God. (Cfr IMBISA, *Study Document:*

*Inculturation, 22-28.)*

### 3. THE CHALLENGE FROM FAMILY LOVE AND EQUALITY

Inculturation is not limited to Christianising cultures, but also extends to family love and equality. Given the fact that the Church is a Family, we must cherish each other before we can carry out anything in communion. Our Church must be a Family, practicing love without bounds. Family love is as delicate as it is delightful. We see cracks along break lines of cultural and tribal adherence, of social standing, economic strength, and different levels of education. Have we minds and hearts that know of no boundaries other than boundaries that must be broken down? Are there no walls inside our hearts that divide us? A traditional African family was never hampered by a layered structure. It knew position of seniority and authority. These positions stand constantly challenged by the Gospel. Jesus has a simple programme to cement the whole family together. The last must be first, and the first must be the last. (Cfr Mt 20:16) If that stand out in our family life, we will be truly one, holy, catholic and apostolic people with a mission. (*Report of the Provincial Evaluation of the Tenth Anniversary of Ecclesiae in Africa, Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005, 14.*)

### 4. THE CHALLENGE FROM MARRIAGE

Marriage presents a complex challenge for inculturation, particularly regarding polygamy, which remains a common practice in some areas. The Church's sacramental view of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman contrasts with traditional views that support polygamous unions.

In areas where polygamy is culturally accepted, the Church faces challenges in integrating individuals from polygamous households, as canon law restricts participation in the sacraments. While such households can often live harmoniously, the Gospel calls for a marriage covenant that reflects Christ's love for the Church—faithful and exclusive. Thus, marriage becomes a sacrament that upholds the equality and dignity of both spouses, challenging cultural norms that may objectify women or view them solely as bearers of children. (Cfr IMBISA, *Study Document: Inculturation, 31-32.*) This Gospel message has met a great challenge with inculturation within our Church Province.

### 5. THE CHALLENGE FROM THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

Local traditions used to restrict women's roles within society, denying them educational and leadership opportunities. However, the Gospel affirms the dignity of all human beings as created in the image and likeness of God.

Inculturation in this context means elevating the status of women within both the Church and society. While the Church respects cultural traditions, it also advocates for the inherent dignity of women, encouraging communities to embrace roles for women that reflect their value as daughters of God. This vision calls for a transformation in attitudes and customs that overlook women's contributions and potential in both secular and ecclesial roles. (Cfr IMBISA, *Study Document: Inculturation, 32-33.*)

### 6. RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

A final challenge to inculturation is religious syncretism—the blending of Christian and traditional practices. While many Christians in Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province have embraced Christianity, they continue to observe traditional customs that may conflict with Christian teachings. Like the early Judaizers, some Christians maintain their cultural rituals alongside their faith in Christ, resulting in a faith practice that lacks full commitment to the Gospel. This syncretism often manifests itself in ancestral worship or sacrificial offerings made to local deities. To address this, the Church needs a robust catechetical programme that emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and the importance of a singular devotion to God. Only when the faithful understand that Christ's sacrifice is complete and final will they be able to move beyond cultural practices that dilute their commitment to the Gospel. (Cfr ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS, BAMENDA ARCHDIOCESE, *Symposium based on Ecclesia in Africa*, Sacred Heart College, Mankon 17th -21st December, 1995, 10.)

### CONCLUSION

The Church in the Bamenda Province has made remarkable progress in spreading the Gospel, as seen in the local Church's growth and the faith's deepening roots within the community. However, the process of inculturation remains ongoing, demanding a continual effort to integrate the Gospel authentically within cultural contexts. Genuine inculturation goes beyond liturgical adaptations and cultural displays; it involves a living, dynamic expression of faith that resonates with people's everyday lives while staying faithful to the Gospel's core teachings. Sometimes, this may even require the Church to take a countercultural stance, challenging practices that do not align with Christian values. Only when the message of Christ fully permeates the lives of our people can we consider the process of inculturation complete. (Cfr ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS, BAMENDA ARCHDIOCESE, *Symposium based on Ecclesia in Africa, 15.*)



# THE CELEBRATION OF "BORN HOUSE FOR JESUS" ON CHRISTMAS DAY AS AN INCULTURATION



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## INTRODUCTION

The celebration of Christmas is a very central event in the Christian Calendar which commemorates the Incarnation of the Word. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that "The Word became flesh to make us partakers of the divine nature." (CCC, 460.) This passage emphasizes the significance of Jesus' birth, as it bridges the gap between the divine and the human, necessitating a response from various cultures. In this light, we think of inculturation which Pope John Paul II referred to as the incarnation of the Gospel within autonomous cultures and the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church. (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, n. 21.)

Most often than not in the past, inculturation was generally linked solely to the lectionary procession in our local Church. But today, we realise that one of the fast growing practices of inculturation in the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda and beyond is the celebration of the "born house for Jesus" amongst others.

## 1. UNDERSTANDING OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation is a move towards the harmonisation of Christianity and every other culture that has received the Gospel message, enabling the Gospel to take root in various cultures while remaining faithful to its core message. (CCC, 856.) It signifies an intimate transformation of authentic cultural values by integrating them into Christianity. (Cfr

JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 52.) During the Synod of Bishops for Africa, the Fathers of the synod recognized the existence of both positive and negative cultural aspects, affirming Africa's wealth of cultures and values. They noted that, "The great task of the African Churches is to encourage members to express their African and Christian values in a fully African way-hence inculturation." (JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 59.) They viewed inculturation as vital and as a pathway toward complete evangelization, emphasizing that catechesis must take flesh within various cultures. (Cfr *Ibid.*) This process has fostered the development of Christian celebrations and allowed the Good News to be proclaimed in ways that resonate with local conditions.

## 2. CASE STUDY OF INCULTURATION: "BORN HOUSE FOR JESUS"

In celebrating the "born house for Jesus," many cultures have adapted aspects of birth celebrations and integrated them into the Christmas liturgy.

### 2.1. Source of inspiration

To discuss the "born house for Jesus," it is necessary to look closely at the two phenomena in which this event takes effect. That is: the Nativity Scene and how the celebration of "born house" itself unfolds.

#### 2.1.2. Insights from the Nativity Scene

The nativity scene, the crib and historical development of these two concepts are very central in our discussion here. In the Christian celebration of Christmas, there is a common tradition of establishing or building cribs which represent the nativity scene. "This may have originated from the idea of a manger or feeding trough which is a central element in many nativity scenes." (RODRIGUES CHRISTOPHER, *Know about the Origins and Significance of Cribs in*

*Christianity*, 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023, accessed on Saturday 16/11/24.) This tradition was started by St. Francis of Assisi in the early thirteenth century in Greccio, Italy. It aimed at emphasising the circumstances of Jesus' birth. Throughout history, this scene of the Incarnation has grown through presentations in live re-enactments by people in the Medieval and Renaissance period during Christmas times, to static presentations by artists in Churches and homes and has as well spread to various cultures. (Cfr *Ibid.*)

### **2.1.3. The celebration of "Born House"**

The celebration of "born house" unfolds thus: when a baby is born, the umbilical cord is buried under a plantain sucker and when this tree grows and bears fruit, they harvest the plantain and then invite all people (mostly women) to come and eat. The reason behind this is to prove that the child is growing and is fruitful. Within this ceremony, the baby is first passed around for everyone to place a hand as a sign of blessing, and to have a close look at the baby. Then salt and oil is passed around for everyone to have a taste while wishing love, peace and prosperity to the baby's family. Thereafter, there will be singing and dancing in jubilation of the child's life, in thanksgiving for the child's parents and in hope for an outstanding future. After this, the well prepared pot of plantain is then shared to everyone present; every single person present must taste of the food as a sign of a prosperous life for the baby. (KELEN NDZELEN, "Born House" in *Cameroon Tradition*, Monday July 25 2011, accessed on Saturday 16/11/24.)

### **2.2. "Born House for Jesus"**

Rodrigues Christopher talks about the significant importance of the crib and or nativity scene. Amongst other points, he refers to it as a representation of the incarnation, a celebration of God's

gift, a cultural and spiritual tradition, and it serves as a visual and symbolic expression of faith. It is equally a teaching tool for unity and commemoration as it unites Christians all around the world to share in the celebration of Christ's birth which is a very central event in Christian history. (Cfr RODRIGUES CHRISTOPHER, *Know about the Origins and Significance of Cribs in Christianity*.)

With the above background, we can see that the Christmas crib which is drawn from the scene of the visit of the Magi has cultural roots in itself and has as well assumed the character of "born house" in our local custom. We recall here that the Magi visited Christ at the manger with gifts of frank Incense, myrrh and gold (Cfr Mathew 2:1-12). In the same light, in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province, the arrival of a new-born is always celebrated with visits to the mother and child, symbolizing the child's welcome into the community and appreciation for the mother's endurance, thus, "born house."

Many Christians have adopted this "born house" celebration into the celebration of the Christmas Eve festivities and the Christmas Day, visiting the crib where the baby Jesus lies in the manger. Traditional drums and songs accompany the visitation, and the attendees are encouraged to bring gifts for the Baby Jesus. Some churches pour white powder on those visiting the crib, echoing the traditions of the "born house." Proceeds from these visitations often support humanitarian works, particularly focusing on children's welfare. This form of inculturation highlights our faith in the incarnation and reinforces the Gospel message of charity, reminding us that life is a gift for both the family and the wider community. Thus so many values such as Life itself, love and generosity are upheld by this celebration.

## **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "BORN HOUSE" AND BABY SHOWER.**

Baby Showers which are of western culture are traditionally done for first born children including gift-giving as the primary activity and playing games ('Baby shower' in *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, last edited on 28 June 2024, at 20:39 (UTC), accessed on Saturday 16/11/24) Thus, it is more or less the same thing as "born house" except for few disparities. That is, unlike the "born house" where the focus is typically celebrating the gift of a new life, the baby shower is a family's first opportunity to gather people together to help play a part in their child's life. The new parents may wish to call on people to assist in the upbringing of their child, and help educate the child over time. (Cfr *Ibid.*) Also, the baby shower is typically arranged and hosted by a close friend rather than a member of the family, since it is considered improper for families to beg for gifts on behalf of their members. Also, it differs in that it considers the celebration of either the delivery or expected birth of a child as the case may be. (Cfr *Ibid.*) Notwithstanding, the most important thing here is the fact that this activity upholds and celebrate life just as does the "born house."

## **CONCLUSION**

The celebration of the "born house for Jesus" on Christmas Day illustrates the profound impact of inculturation within the Christian faith. By blending local cultural traditions with the central message of the incarnation, communities worldwide can express their faith in ways that resonate deeply with their cultural heritage. This integration not only enriches the celebration of Christmas but also fosters a greater understanding of the universal message of the Gospel.





# MUSIC ARTICLE

## SOME PRINCIPLES TO BE CONSIDERED IN CHOOSING SONGS FOR SUNDAY MASSES

### INTRODUCTION

A song may be very beautiful in relation to its composition, harmony and genre but fails to meet up with the needs of a Eucharistic celebration, thus making it unsuitable. We established in the previous edition the criteria to be used in the judgment of the suitability of songs for the Sunday liturgical celebrations. In this edition we shall be considering some principles for judging songs that are suitable for use within the liturgy.

#### 1. PLACE FOR THE CHOIR

Musicians and instrumentalists should be located within a section of the congregation (*General Introduction of the Roman Missal*, n. 312). This is to enhance their active participation and enable them to lead the assembly in the singing.

#### 2. THE HUMAN VOICE

It is the human person present for the celebration who also prays through songs. As such, the human voice should be considered as the fundamental musical instrument. It should never be replaced by recorded music.

#### 3. SING THE ENTIRE SONG

Let personal sentiments not come in as far as the liturgy is concerned. Very often, choir directors conduct the choir to sing only a verse of a song in order to go to another which they like. Instead, they should consider singing all the verses given that they are prayers written down sequentially. (Cfr CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS, *Guidelines on Liturgical Music*, 21.) Thus, we would disrupt the spirit of prayer in the faithful if we do otherwise. This appears to be very common in our local Church especially with the Communion and Post Communion songs. We also should consider the fact that the entire song must not always be taken. If it meant to accompany a certain liturgical action, it should be stopped when the action is completed.

#### 4. SOLO SINGING

This is highly discouraged in the liturgy which is defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "public work" or a "service in the name of/on behalf of the people." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n.

1069.) For it does not promote the participation of the faithful. However, sacred ministers are permitted especially in cases which involve a dialogue with the community such as in acclamations and responses.

#### 5. TEXTS

The texts sung during liturgical celebrations should be approved by competent authorities such as the Bishop or the Liturgy Committee. Such texts should be in accord with the scriptures and with reliable liturgical sources in order to ensure orthodoxy of doctrine.

#### 6. SECULAR MUSIC

Secular music and all other religious music which do not express the Catholic faith should be eliminated from the liturgy. Music directors should be careful in this regard not to be seduced by the beautiful music which has been woven into such songs.

#### 7. INSTRUMENTS FOR THE LITURGY

The Organ is the most appropriate musical instrument during Catholic liturgy which moves people into joyful and active singing. Its use therefore encouraged where it is possible. (VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 120.) The careful use of instruments can support the song of the assembly, accompany some ritual actions and foster a spirit of prayer within the assembly. This should be done considering the liturgical season or the particular celebration.

#### 8. THE INSTRUMENTALS

These are servants and not a masters, thus should not dominate the singing. They are to serve the Church's prayer leading the people to encounter the risen Lord. In doing so, it should support the singing and not obscure the words being sung.

### CONCLUSION

Summarily, the beauty of liturgical singing depends on some well-established criteria such as the careful use of instruments and the use of the human voice. However, instruments shall never replace human voices which are the music instruments par excellence.

# THE SAINT OF THE ISSUE:

VENERABLE BABA SIMON

**B**est known as “Baba Simon”, Mpecke was born in 1906 in Batombé into a family of pagan peasants of the Bakoko ethnic group. He did his primary education at the Catholic mission of Edéa. Fascinated by Christianity in his youth, he was baptized at the age of 12 by Father Louis Chevrat, a Spiritan missionary, with Simon as his baptismal name. He would henceforth be called Simon Mpecke. The day after his Baptism, he made his First Communion. Simon Mpecke was first a teacher, then entered the minor Seminary of Yaoundé on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1924. From 1927 until 1935, he studied philosophy for two years and theology for four years. He was ordained on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1935, among the first eight Cameroonians priests. He was first vicar in Ngovayang, then parish priest of the New Bell district in Douala. (Cfr GRÉGOIRE CADOR, *They called him Baba Simon*, Presses de l’UCAC, Yaoundé 2000, 254.)

Simon Mpecke began his ministry with an unwavering zeal. He opposed traditional religions. Furthermore, in 1947, he read an article which deeply marked his life. Through that article, he learned of the existence of pagan populations in North Cameroon. From then on, he felt a great and growing sympathy for these populations. Two encounters made him evolve: his meeting with Sister Magdeleine, founder of the Little Sisters of Jesus, and with Father René Voillaume, founder of the Little Brothers of Jesus and the Little Sisters of the Gospel. He felt that he had then found “the path he had been looking for a long time.” Simon Mpecke joined the Secular Institute of the Brothers of Jesus in 1953. He was one of the co-founders of Jesus Caritas Internationale, and was its first leader in Africa. In February 1959, at the request of Bishop Yves Plumey, Father Simon went to Tokombéré, in the north of Cameroon, in the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo, among the Kirdis, as a *fidei donum* priest. He shared their life of poverty, and fought against misery. His work of evangelization was marked by prayer and charity. Respecting their traditions, and seeing in them the mark of God’s presence, “Baba Simon” became the “singer of Kirditude.” (Cfr JEAN-BAPTISTE BASKOUDA - HYACINTHE VULLIEZ, *Baba Simon: the Father of the Kirdis*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1988, 178.)

From the beginning, the schooling of the Kirdis became his daily concern. He would spend his life fighting poverty. His legendary kindness quickly led to his being called “Baba” (papa). A deep apostolic concern inhabited him. He was attentive to everything that made up the life of the Kirdis. His intense prayer life and his legendary smile made him a living witness to God’s love. For Simon Mpecke, “school is life; it brings hope of human development.” Moved by this conviction, he decided to bring education to the parents of the children at home by giving them the opportunity to attend “school under the tree.” He subsequently built the Saint-Joseph school in Tokombéré and was authorized to open other schools in Bzeskawé, Rindrimé and Baka. In addition, he created a boarding school for boys and another for girls, run by the “Servants of Mary”. Through schools, health structures, commitment against injustice, supervision of young people and the call for universal brotherhood, he assured the real promotion of the Kirdis who had been left behind for too long by the rest of the country. His concern for ongoing dialogue with the leaders of traditional religions made him a prophetic precursor of the interreligious dialogue brought back into the spotlight by Vatican II. He loved to travel; his first reason was to find the necessary help for his works in favour of the Kirdis, especially for the students and boarders. He shared the life of the Kirdis, their poverty and fought against misery. Exhausted, he died on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1975 in Edéa. (Cfr GREGORY CADOR, *The legacy of Simon Mpecke: priest of Jesus and universal brother*, Lethielleux-Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 2009, 154.)

The diocesan cause for his beatification was opened around 1985 by the bishop of the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo, and ended in May 2012. The file was sent to Rome, where the procedure leading to his beatification continued. Following the Roman investigation, Pope Francis authorized, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2023, the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to publish the decree recognizing the heroic virtues of Baba Simon Mpecke, thus giving him the title of venerable. His feast day is on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August.

