Christianizing Africa or Africanizing Christianity; an Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue in Afro-Christianity

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Abstract

The mission of the Gospel and Christianity to the whole world is to make disciples of all nations following the injunction of Christ to his disciples. This mandate is for the entire world and not to a particular group of people. They were charged to use every means available to them to carry out this task. In carrying out this task, there have been cross-cultural encounters between the place of origin of the gospel and other parts of the world. They have contacts with people from Asia, Europe, America, Africa, and the whole world. While the content of the message has been the same, the medium for dissemination of the message has been transformed. In the African context, the cultural setting of the people allows them to accept Christian faith. But the challenging factor then is the inability to merge the culture of the people and the Christian faith. It is against this background that many of the cultural practices of the people have been termed alien, superstitious and even barbaric. Many individuals in the past have written to address and salvage this negative appellation. While many have succeeded in many aspects, there are areas that are left unexplored. This is why this research paper sets out to address if one can be truly African and truly Christian as well. To establish authentic understanding of the context, there is the existence of the African man before the reception of Christianity. A clear understanding of this will pave way for the ongoing inculturation and hybridization of the Christian faith and African culture.

Introducing the Problematics

A generalization drawn from Andrew Walls *Christianity Across Twenty Centuries* highlights that Christianity lives by crossing cultural frontiers.[1] Specifically, the author claims that the survival of Christianity depends on its ability to cross the

[1] Andrew Walls, "Christianity Across Twenty Centuries," in *Atlas of World Christianity* edited by Johnson Todd, Kenneth Ross and Sandra Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 48.

boundaries of ethnicity, language and culture, and without this ability, Christianity will wither and die.[2] Walls agrees that there has been a trans-Global North and Global South crossing of frontier and this is one of the reasons why Christianity has subsisted through generations. The extent and specification of this crossing of cultural frontiers was not explored by Walls especially as it relates to Africa. However, Walls acknowledged that over the last century and the recent one, there has been more of North to South crossing of frontiers. This represents the Christianization of the South from the North and he proposed a futuristic possibility of South to North crossing of boundaries by the "representatives Christians of Africa and Asia that will need to cross the cultural boundaries to share their faith."[3] In rethinking the crossing of frontier between Africa and the global North, the complete picture has not always been in the fore. The question of Christianization of Africa or the Africanization of Christianity swings in a multidisciplinary pendulum– History, Missiology, Theology, Process and Cultural Anthropology, Cultural studies, and History of Religion. A mono-disciplinary excursus will be insufficient to reimagine the encounter of Africa with Christianity and the encounter of Christianity with Africa. This has been seen to be a two-dimensional encounter although not linear in progression; and an attempt to place it in a particular time will evoke a recourse to the entire history of Christianity which is far broader than the context of this present discourse.

Prominent scholars in the field of missiology, anthropology, history, sociology, philosophy, and theology have always argued about the relationship between Africa and Christianity.[4] These discussions have been quite dynamic both in approach and content as the varying issues affect each other. The discussion about the relationship between Africa and Christianity includes but not limited to discussions of translation, accommodation, indigenization, adaptation, localization, contextualization, inculturation, acculturation, Africanization and in the recent past Christianization.[5] These terms in recent literature has come to

[2] Walls, "Christianity Across Twenty Centuries", 49.

[3] Walls, "Christianity Across Twenty Centuries", 49.

[4] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shift in Theology of Mission* (New York: Corbis Books, 2001), 19.

[5] Ndidi Justice Gbule, "Contextualization of Christianity in Africa: A Dialectics," *Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities*, Vol.18. No.4 December, 2020, accessed from www.ichekejournal.com

represent the major themes of discourse while discussing the relation or the extent of dialogue between Africa and Christianity. However, these terms are fluid in usage and adoption. Africanization and Christianization are the themes that reflect the core of this research work. The encounter of Christianity with Africa especially in the centuries preceding the 14thcentury, which is tagged the missionary encounter, a period marked by the visit of European merchants cum missionaries to the heart of Africa[6] has been the era associated with the discussion of Africanization and Christianization. The previous era between the 2nd century to the 5th century in North Africa which produced the likes of Augustine, Tertulian, Origen and so on are mostly not characterized by these themes because this era was strictly about universal Christianity and not African Christianity.[7]However, the relationship between the gospel of Christ and the Africans, the extent of acceptance of the Gospel and the degree of assimilation of the culture into the gospel forms the core of this research work.

African Theology? African Christianity?

The discussion bothering on the Africanization of Christianity, or the Christianization of Africa owes its groundwork to the establishment of the substance and project of African Theology and African Christianity. The attempt to lay this groundwork raises the questions of the existence and the possibility of an African Theology and an African Christianity. Do they exist in reality? What is African Theology and how is it differentiated from Theology in general? What is African Christianity and how is it differentiated with Christianity in general? There are ongoing scholarly discourses that the two terms are related in context and can be used interchangeably.[8]However, this point of view is contestable from the perspective that there are other theology and pseudo-theology that are not particularly Christian in content and form. This view also brings another interrogative: Can those theology and pseudo-theology that are not Christian in content be classified as theology as well? This interrogative has a farreaching

[6] Opoku Onyinah, "African Christianity in the 21st Century," *Word and World* 27, 3 (2007): 306.
[7] John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi: Pauline Press, 1994) 17.
[8] Sam Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," In *African Christianity: An African Story. Perspectives on Christianity Series* 5, vol. 3 edited by Kalu Ogbu, 485-493 (University of Pretoria. 2005), 471.

implication for 'theologizing' of African Traditional Religion. Is it therefore safe to talk about African Christian theology and not African theology since it has been argued that African culture and African Traditional Religion are the *praeparatio evangelica*?[9] Recognizing African Traditional Religions as linchpin for the offshoot of Christianity creates a case for ATR to be recognized as a theology as well. This argument is supported by the position that most traditional beliefs system in Africa have an image of God as part of their belief.[1011] Chukwu for the Igbos, Olodumare for the Yoruba, Abasi for the Ibibios and many more. It can be said that there are theologies, and there is Christian theology and an African Christian theology(ies).[12] The existence of African Christian theologies logically infers the existence of African Christianities because one cannot exist without each other and vice versa. The truest expression of African Christianities is through African theologies. The conceptualization and construction of this African theologies by African theologians have been steady, deliberate, and progressive prior to the 1950s and have continued progressively albeit more organized and has been taking formal shape documented in writings.[13]

The existence of an African Christian theology(ies) is dependent on the existence of an African Christianity just as terms like African philosophy, African literature, African art exists. The addition of the Africa to these terms found its origin in post-colonial reactions and movements backed by desire, and political transformations.[14]Most authors try to differentiate between the hyphenated(post-colonial) and the unhyphenated (postcolonial) terms. Such authors like Quayson agree that the 'post-colonial' term was adopted by political scientists and

[9] Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011),

[10] Mercy Oduyoye, "Christianity and African Culture" *International Review of Mission* 84 (2011):79. Doi:

[11] .1111/j.1758-6631.1995.tb02690.x.

[12] Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the TwentyFirst Century", 471.

[13] Josiah Young, African Theology: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 6-7.

[14] Newell, Stephen,"West African Literatures: Ways of Reading" in Boehmer, E (ed.) *Oxford Studies in postcolonial Literatures in English (*London, Oxford Uni. Press, 2006), 3.

economists to denote the period after colonialism.[15]This is differentiated from 'postcolonial' which is used in ideology and discourse of colonialism as it relates the material effects of subjugation under colonialism and after.[15] This difference offered above is based on content but does not capture the difference based on scope and structure. Recent use of the hyphenated term was adopted to signify the historical period following the end of colonialism while the unhyphenated term covers broader issues like discourses, ideologies, intellectual formations that sprung up after the colonial encounter.[16]It has now come to stand as a subject matter and a theoretical framework,[16] an academic framework that was non-existent in the 1970s but only came to the fore in the 1980s.[17] The postcolonial addition of Africa to certain terms was a conceptual reductionist approach for African scholars like Appiah and Mudimbe.[18] For some scholars, it is merely an intellectual discussion that adds nothing to the reality on ground.[19]It is important to note that before the postcolonial derivations and as early as 1854, African Christians have already started indigenizing their Christian faith[20] although it has not been given epistemological and systematic foundation as African indigenous theology.[21]Highlighting the important characteristics of this narrative reflects the

[15] Quayson Ato,*Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?*(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 1. [15] Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?*2. [16] Newell, "West African Literatures: Ways of Reading", 3.

[16] Sadeghi, Zahra,"Role of Colonial Subjects in Making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart"*Advances in Language and Literary Studies*5, 6 (2014): 1. Australia: Australian International Academic Centre.

[17] Sadeghi,"Role of Colonial Subjects in Making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart", 1.

[18] Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the TwentyFirst Century", 472.

[19] Oduyoye, "Christianity and African Culture", 8.

[20] Harry Sawyerr, The Practice of Presence: Shorter Writings of Harry Sawyerr edited by John Parratt
(Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1996), 87

[21] Edward Fashole-Luke, An African Indigenous Theology: Fact or Fiction? (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen Press, 1970), 13.

two particularly important expressions of local African narrative of Theology – African Christian Theology and Theology of Inculturation.[2223]

African indigenous theology for Mbiti is the totality of the theological reflections and expressions of Africans[24] and for Idowu, it is the establishment of indigenous African churches with their own theology.[24] However, African theology and African Christianity as terms has found acceptance in general. Just like all post-colonial discourses, there has always been the issue of content and criteria acceptance, just as the Odera Oruka's essay of 1990 tackled such issues being raised after the acceptance of African philosophy as a branch and framework of philosophy. It is however problematic to define and contextualize the extent and means of equipping the local African theologies without properly defining the possible forms of theological expressions – this will trigger an inquiry into sociology of Theology.[25] Perceptively, it is important to highlight that the grounds of this encounter as will be the task of this research will be dialogical and not dialectical. The four theological trends in Africa highlighted by Martey which are consequent of four interrelated issues – culture (inculturation theology); poverty (African liberation Theology); gender (African women's theology); race (Black theology)[26] were basically taking a dialectical approach in their encounter. These four trends represented in exclusivism, dialectics, inclusivism, and independence were the hopes for the identity of African theology if there is a dialectical

[22] Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (New York: Maryknoll, 1996), 20. [24]John Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology,"In Kofi Appiah and Sergio Torres, *African Theology en Route: Papers from the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians. Accra, Dec.*

[23] *-23, 1977* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977), 90.

[24] Bolaji Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 33.

[25] Cf. Robert Schreiter, 1999 especially pp 80-81. Schreiter argues that discussion relating and surrounding equipping of a particular theology evokes discussions of inferior and superior theology. Such task might lead to the categorization of one group of theology as not being real or being less sophisticated. The 'less and unsophisticated theology' that needs equipping leads to comparisons which are mostly odious and a categorical misplacement because the entities being compared are qualitatively and categorically different. Furthermore, an investigation with sociology of theology will facilitate a clearer understanding of the differences offered by the different theologies in a bid to highlight their strengths and limitations.

[26] Emmanuel Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 69.

encounter between them.[27] These approaches, although conflicting is not contradictory but complementary if theologians can develop a synthesis between them; a synthesis being attempted by this paper.[28]

The content and sources of African theology are spontaneous, seen in people's homes, day to day activities and prayers made in their homes – talking, singing, gestures, praying etc.[29] Most of these are undocumented and unwritten, orality and learning of acts play important roles in proliferation of these theological indices. Orality which encompasses epistemic and pedagogical methods of oral tradition[30] has been legitimized as a historiographical method.[31] This has been defined as the transmission of ideas from one generation to the other using the words of the mouth and other means besides writing.[32] The legitimacy and reliance on orality as a way of expressing and transmitting knowledge is based on principles of epistemic trust, epistemic communalism and epistemic dependence which are African's surest way of retaining and justifying knowledge which have been passed down from the older generation without proof of written documentation.[33] The import of the discussion in orality hinges on the age long debate of the unwritten, hence unreliable nature of African literature as opposed to western literature which has always been documented. African Christian theology has also been classified into written theology, oral theology, and symbolic theology.[34] Written theology has been acknowledged in the half of the last century and the present century more than oral theology and symbolic theology, albeit the transfer of the latter two into the former is happening in the

[27] Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation*, 69.
[28] For further readings, see: Gwinyai Muzorewa, 1985; Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, 1993; Emmanuel Martey, 1993; Joseph Healy and Donald Sybertz, 1996.
[29] Henry Okulu, *Church and Politics in East Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1974) 64.
[30] Polycarp Ikuenobe, "Oral Tradition, Epistemic Dependence, and Knowledge in African Cultures," *Synthesis Philosophica* 65, 1 (2018): 23. Doi: 10.21464/sp33102
[31] Faseke Modupeolu, "Oral History in Nigeria: Issues, Problems, and Prospects," *Oral History Review* 18 (1990):1. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/18.1.77
[32] Kwasi Wiredu, "An Oral Philosophy of Personhood: Comments on Philosophy and Orality," *Research in African Literature* 40 (2009):10 Doi: https://doi. org/10.2979/ral.2009.40.1.8.

[33] Ikuenobe, "Oral Tradition, Epistemic Dependence, and Knowledge in African Cultures," 24.
[34] Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 22.

present day.[35] Oral theology as a reposition of the many bulks of resources to be used in this research is the "most articulate expression of theological creativity in Africa".[36] This oral theology is produced in the fields by ordinary people songs, preaching, sermons, prayers, and conversations.[37] The bulk of it is unrecorded and often lost to documentations in library and seminars but possibly heard by a group of people/initiates.[38]

Oral theology is characterized mostly by non-literate and semi-literate repositories embedded in folk tales, proverbs, myths, visions, trances, dreams and so on.[39] These media of expressing oral theology represents for the African a living reality[41] or an avenue into ultimate reality.[40] The sort of conversations being held in theological circles by generations of individuals give the surest source of information to written and documented theology in preceding centuries. These conversations in oral theology have come to represent a bourgeoning perspective to a new African hermeneutics of the Bible and an entire new African approach to doing contextual theology.[43] The recent documentations of oral theology and the new perspective it offers presents a degree of "theological selfhood and independence"[41] to African Christian Theology. Therefore, oral theology as well as symbolic theology wish to be acknowledged for their role in African contextual theology. Symbolic theology as a communicative and practical form of theology

[35] John Pobee, "Oral Theology and Christian Oral Tradition: Challenge to Traditional Archival Concept," *Communicatio Socialis Yearbook*, 8 (1989): 87.

[36] John Mbiti, "Cattle are Born with Ears, Their Thorns Grow Later: Towards an Appreciation of African Oral Theology," *in All African Lutheran Consultation on Christian Theology and Christian Education for the African Context* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1978), pp 49-50.

[37] Cf. John Mbiti, 1979, 2 and John Pobee, 1989,83

[38] Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis in Present Trends of African Theology," 12.

[39] Pobee, "Oral Theology and Christian Oral Tradition: Challenge to Traditional Archival Concept," 86. [41] Mbiti, "Cattle are Born with Ears, Their Thorns Grow Later: Towards an Appreciation of African Oral Theology," 50.

[40] Pobee, "Oral Theology and Christian Oral Tradition: Challenge to Traditional Archival Concept," 86. [43]Anthony Musopole, "Witchcraft Terminology, the Bible and African Christian Theology: An Exercise in Hermeneutics," *African Christian Studies* 8, 4 (1993): 33.

[41] Mbiti, "Cattle are Born with Ears, Their Thorns Grow Later: Towards an Appreciation of African Oral Theology," 50.

when combined with the theory-laden oral theology presents a distinct and whole body of theology- a perfect interweaving of theory and praxis, and clearly incorporating spirituality and catechetic.

The Dialogue of Christianization and Africanization

The conversations in African Theology in the last two decades has been centered on Christology, this view is supported by Mokhoathi who equated Christology as the center of African Theology in the recent times.[42] This is justified because most of what can be classified as doctrinal theology in African theology writings is majorly Christology and Ecclesiology.[43] While the basic principle of theological reflection has remained the same, the response to the gospel and the circumstances of the responses has pushed for discussions surrounding localization, indigenization, inculturation and contextualization.[44] These terms although having overlapping influences and tendencies – making the response to the Gospel concrete and lively;[45] seem to have little nuances to their meaning. There is also a very pressing need to make the gospel more relatable to the people over and above making it concrete and lively. This movement was a huge blow after the Liberation theology of the preceding century. More than ever, there has become a need to localize the understanding of the nature, functions, and manifestations of Jesus to the local people. The work of theology as a continuous search for the truth of the revelation of God made known in Christ[46] is made more authentic when the people identify that the truth is concretized in realities that the people have always related to as truth. The nature of Jesus has remained a mystery, an inexhaustible mystery[47] that transcends all that humans can relate to in their worldview. However, the functions and manifestations of Jesus can be highlighted in the

[42] Joel Mokhoathi, "Jesus Christ as an Ancestor: A critique of Ancestor Christology in Bantu Communities," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 99 (2018): 5.

[43] Mokhoathi, "Jesus Christ as an Ancestor: A critique of Ancestor Christology in Bantu Communities," 6.

[44] Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999) 1.

[45] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 1.

[46] Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding, An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 2004), 1.

[47] Marcel Gabriel, *The Mystery of Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), 260 – 261.

consciousness of people by the association and pointers to things already in existence within the cultural/religious framework of the people; things the people can relate to in their worldview.

The goal of this exercise in Africanization is to bring various aspects of our indigenous culture into the Christian context to live a more authentic Christian life.[48]With the advent of Christianity to Africa, many of the traditional beliefs of the African man have been Christianized when they encounter the Christian faith. However, there remain many of the African beliefs that seem to be inimical to the authentic practice of Christianity. This is the goal of dialogue and inculturation. As a way of conceptual clarification, Inculturation, in the context of Christianity, implies the presentation and re-expression of the Christian Gospel in forms and terms proper to human culture.[52] This gospel is supposed to be constantly renewing the life and culture of the people it encounters.[49] It is relatively a new terminology but with old meaning. It is associated with such terms as adaptation, contextualization, indigenization, enculturation and so on. It is the project of finding Christ in the situation, rather than bringing Christ into the situation.[50]

Inculturation entails relieving the Gospel message in the cultural milieu of a given people. For Crollius, inculturation involves the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.[51] This may include; use of local instruments, use of local songs and dances, the use of local materials and items, embracing some of the

[48] Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation (Transforming the Church in Africa)*, 23. [52]Peter Ottuh, "Inculturating the Christian Eucharist in the Nigerian Context," Abraka Humanities Review: A Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka 7 (1), 2016: 242.

[49] Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World, 7-2-1965 in AAS 58, 1996, p. 876.

[50] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 39.

[51] Roest Crollius, *Inculturation: Newness and Ongoing Process* in *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*
(Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications Africa, 1986), 43.

beliefs and culture of the recipient of the gospel and so on. This is in a bid not to let the African church to inherit the burdens of foreign rites, practices, and use of foreign elements.[52] There have been numerous successes in this aspect but there remain areas that have not been touched. Kurgat as cited by Ottuh affirms that "although practical inculturation has taken place in Christian worship in the past thirty-eight years, it has not covered all aspects of Christianity, especially its rites.[53]"

The arguments have been on the various elements that need to be Africanized. This project requires the presentation and advocating of a Christology that resonates some of the deepest beliefs and convictions of Africans who were first Africans before becoming Christians. This is possible by using already established elements to offer a truly African Christology- a Christology that is accepted by Africans according to their own religious experience and prevalent worldviews.[54] This strategy involves using African worldview and backgrounds to develop African Christologies by exploring Christology from the general perspective of African belief or from a particular theme of the African view[55]- themes such as African food and material element of their culture. There are many more and varying discourses in Christianity that can be predicated on strictly African categories that will help the promulgation of faith and ease understanding of the salvific mission of Christ on earth. This has become important because of the need to focus on concrete Christological attributes found within the worldview of the people than abstract notions of God, salvation, and Spirit. It is also important to inculturate and enculturate the remotest ideas of the person and characters of Christ into categories that are relatable to the people. Scholars[56] have also shown that terminologies derived from African everyday life are more helpful and impactful to the spreading of the message of Christ.

[52] Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation (Transforming the Church in Africa)*, 190.
[53] Ottuh, "Inculturating the Christian Eucharist in the Nigerian Context," 246.
[54] Benézét Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 49.
[55] Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*(Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984),18.
[56] Chrys, Saldhanha, *Divine Pedagogy, A Patristic views of Non-Christian Religions* (Rome, 1984), 33-36.

Towards a Sythesis; Hybridity or Syncretism

This merging of 'authentic' Christian faith with some unorthodox African culture is what one might call syncretism.[57]This begs the question of what is authentic and who defines what is authentic. Is authentic then strictly what is western and inauthentic as the effort Africans are making to Africanize Christianity? Originally, the earliest use of the concept is found in Greek culture to designate assimilation of diverse groups as a united cluster, and soon it became the notion of the unity or re-conciliation of differing schools of thought, cultures and religions.[62] The concept was used in a positive way to refer to the successful combination of differing ideas and cultural practices.[58] The continuous use of syncretism to denote cross-cultural boding of religion continued till the contact of Christianity to the African soil. It however turned negative when it encountered African Christianity and when Africans decided to practice such. This negative appellation associated with this idea is evidential in many African societies. It is used to imply inauthenticity or contamination, the insidious infiltration of a putatively 'pure' religious tradition by meanings, symbols, and ritual practices borrowed from an alien, impure religious tradition.[59]

Missionary activities in Africa by the colonial masters and the merging of Christian faith with African culture have proven to be a fertile ground for various forms of syncretism. The consequences of these missionary actions have often been judged to be syncretic in the sense that the mixing of Christianity with African forms of indigenous belief has resulted in ideas and institutional Christian off-springs that are looked upon as degenerations of the pure

[57] Gerrit Brand, Speaking of a *Fabulous Ghost*, *In Search of Theological Criteria*, *with Special Reference to the Debate on Salvation in African Christian Theology*, *Vol. 7*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GMBH, 2002), 116. [62]Philip Nel, "Syncretism, Hybridity and Ambivalence: Probing the Concepts in Religious Discourse with Reference to Sacred Site Dynamics in South Africa,"*Scriptura* 116, 2017:2.

[58] Nel, "Syncretism, Hybridity and Ambivalence: Probing the Concepts in Religious Discourse with Reference to Sacred Site Dynamics in South Africa," 3.

[59] Meredith McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Virginia*:* Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), 107. [65] Nel, "Syncretism, Hybridity and Ambivalence: Probing the Concepts in Religious Discourse with Reference to Sacred Site Dynamics in South Africa," 3.

Christian religion."[65] The antecedent of the missionary activities in Africa is complete denigration of African culture and tradition. This is seen in many contexts where African ideas are treated with contempt and impunity whereas those from the western counterparts are seen as superior.[60] Over the years, many contemporary theologians from the African side have rejected the idea of syncretism. They often project views against it in debates where western ideologies are being championed. They sought to replace the word with more befitting term called hybrid. In its natural use, hybridity refers to a cross between entities in the natural world, and has only subsequently been employed in racial, religious, and linguistic theory.[61] It entails the merging of ideas, thoughts, crops or even animals to yield a superior result.[62]

In religious discourse, hybridity is adopted as a strategic and less-biased measurement to address the confluence of progressive religious ideas and practices towards the formation of a new or transformed religious or spiritual mutation. The concept was intended to define the mutant religious form, irrespective of the causes of enforcement, rejection of old ideas or the natural adoption of productive ideas and practices. In this way one may look at mixed forms of Shiah and Sunni Islam, Christian and indigenous African religions, Christian and Jewish, New Age and Christianity, and so on.[63] Since there is increasing cultural encounters, elements of each culture should be counted as valid whether in the form of homogenization or heterogenization.[70] Instead of a campaign for Africanization of Christianity or Christianization of Africa, there should be a campaign for mutual exchange concretized in Hybridity.

Conclusion

An interreligious and intercultural discussion of Africanization of Christianity and Christianization of Africa represents an encounter between faith and culture – an

[60] Saheed Fagrutheen, "Downfall of Traditionalism in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God,"*The English Literature Journal* 1, 1 (2014): 23.

[61] Nel, "Syncretism, Hybridity and Ambivalence: Probing the Concepts in Religious Discourse with Reference to Sacred Site Dynamics in South Africa," 4.

[62] Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*,(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009)2.

[63] Nel, "Syncretism, Hybridity and Ambivalence: Probing the Concepts in Religious Discourse with Reference to Sacred Site Dynamics in South Africa," 5. [70] Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*, 2.

encounter that should be grounded in mutual enrichment and ongoing dialogue.[64] Further, an encounter that is mutually beneficial to the local African Christianity and world Christianity. This symbiotic encounter projects a bilateral and constructive exchange of experience where the "cultural values and grass-root experience of the local African Christianity expression"[65] will be well equipped to enrich the world Christianity while the circumstances and significant discernment of the world Christianity will confront and complement the existing schemes of the local African Christianity.[73] This mutual enrichment became the theme of the second issues of the *Concilium* (1994): *Christianity and Cultures: A Mutual Enrichment* which explored the bilateral enrichment in the encounter of Christianity and other cultures.[66]The goal of Christianity is salvation of souls, and African Christians in general must work towards incorporating objects of their culture that promote togetherness, communality, peaceful coexistence, and solidarity into the Christian faith.

The languages of the Scriptures and ancient manuscripts are complicated for the unlettered Christians and local people of God, hence, the need to indigenize languages used by the people. The quest for Africanization of Christianity brings to the fore the idea that contextual theology is still needed in many parts, and that Christology being rooted in Africa is contextual theology. Inculturation in a way of assimilation and not borrowing will be one of the major roots of Africanization of Christianity. This entails the assimilation of the categories of the worldview of the people by Christianity to enable it to shade some of its colonial and elitist contents and adopt the spirit and ethos of the indigenous people. If there should be an image of an African Christ, the Christ will have qualities deduced from the framework of the African people. However, the challenges being faced by the construction of indigenous Christology all over the world is also part of the challenges being faced by the proponents of Africanization. These issues range from the reductionism of the person of Christ to fit Christ into the worldview of

[64] Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation (Transforming the Church in Africa)*, 189.
[65] Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation (Transforming the Church in Africa)*, 189. [73]Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation (Transforming the Church in Africa)*, 189.
[66] Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette eds., *Christianity, and Cultures: A Mutual Enrichment* (New York: Maryknolls, *Concilium* No 2, 1994), 47.

the proponents, elevation of hitherto basic elements into prominence because a semblance with Christ has been identified. Not regarding these challenges, indigenous Christological formulations has gone a long to demystify so many things the local people do not understand or relate to in the character and Image of Christ. Nevertheless, the project of de-branding African ritual practices as alien and impure must be strengthened to reinforce the view that no culture or cultural indexes are more superior than the other.[67]

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