
Evangelization among the Chagga of Rombo: a dialectical process

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Abstract: The historical encounter between Christian faith and African Traditional Religion has given birth to different attitudes, beginning with that of rejection on the part of the first bearers of Christianity and their allies to the attitude of tolerance and acceptance that led to the need for a thorough and deeper understanding of both African Traditional Religions and Christian faith. When one talks of African culture and religion there is consensus that the two are inseparable. With a broad understanding of culture as a complex whole including the whole way of life including religion, it is possible to see that even the Good News is carried within a cultural matrix, that must uncloak itself in order to enable those who accept it, live it in their culture. In this encounter, through a continuous dialogue, the Gospel message received through a particular Christian tradition is

assessed in order to be assimilated to the African religion-culture, and in turn this African religion-culture is exposed to biblical criticism, being challenged in order to render it conform to the Gospel. Conversion was a dialectical process involving the dynamic interaction between potential converts and missionaries with discontinuity and continuity of some elements of their beliefs and practices. If conversion is taken to involve a dialectical process, it is possible that many Chagga would have accepted Christianity after a period of experiencing its requirements and conditions and especially after tasting the spiritual aspects which touched their inner self and their reason of being, no matter their initial motives. This can be the reason for the strength acquired by Christianity in the Chaggaland.

Key words: Evangelization, African Traditional Religion, Ancestors, living-dead, Eschatology, Inculturation, Diviners, open Predicament, closed Predicament, African Christology.

La evangelización entre los Chagga de Rombo: un proceso dialéctico

Resumen: El encuentro histórico entre la fe cristiana y la religión tradicional africana ha dado lugar a diferentes actitudes, empezando por la de rechazo por parte de los primeros portadores del cristianismo y sus aliados hasta la actitud de tolerancia y aceptación que llevó a la necesidad de un conocimiento más profundo y exhaustivo tanto de las religiones tradicionales africanas como de la fe cristiana. Cuando se habla de cultura y religión africanas hay consenso en que ambas son inseparables. Con una comprensión amplia de la cultura como un todo complejo que incluye toda la forma de vida, incluida la religión, es posible ver que incluso la Buena Nueva es llevada dentro de una matriz cultural, que debe desvelarse para permitir a quienes la aceptan, vivirla en su cultura. En este encuentro, a través de un diálogo continuo, el mensaje del Evangelio recibido a través de una tradición cristiana particular es evaluado para ser asimilado a la religión y cultura africana, y a su vez esta religión y cultura africana es expuesta a la

crítica bíblica, siendo desafiada para hacerla conforme al Evangelio. La conversión era un proceso dialéctico que implicaba la interacción dinámica entre los conversos potenciales y los misioneros, con discontinuidad y continuidad de algunos elementos de sus creencias y prácticas. Si se considera que la conversión implica un proceso dialéctico, es posible que muchos Chagga hubieran aceptado el cristianismo tras un periodo de experimentar sus requisitos y condiciones, y sobre todo, después de saborear los aspectos espirituales que tocaban su interior y su razón de ser, sin importar sus motivos iniciales. Esta puede ser la razón de la fuerza adquirida por el cristianismo en la tierra de los Chagga.

Palabras clave: Evangelización, Religión tradicional africana, antepasados, muertos vivos, escatología, adivinos, predicamento abierto, predicamento cerrado, cristología africana.

Introduction

This paper examines how some Africans have been able to be Christians and at the same time maintaining some important elements of

their traditional religion especially the belief on afterlife or life-after-death concreted on their ancestors and the living-dead¹. How could they maintain the Christian eschatology and that of the African Traditional Religion? The term eschatology is used here to refer to the situation of the human being after this earthly life while at the same time aware that the term has a long tradition in Christian theology with different conceptions and contents from what is found in African Traditional Religion. So when applied to the context of African religion or African Traditional Religion it refers to the common situation believed by both, that of existence after death or after this life or the hereafter or the belief that after this earthly life there is another kind of life.

In the course of the discussion, a brief exposition on the African religious perspectives will be given. The evangelization of Africa will be examined in relation to the other social factors and thus examining it as a continuous and dialectical process. The incarnation belief would be a help in the argument regarding the place of Jesus within the African universe in relation to the ancestors and finally the evangelization among the African people would be examined and evaluated as a continuous process of self-opening religiously in her encounter with Christianity and so being still in the process of growing, transformation and self-purification. I will take the Chagga ethnical group as an immediate point of reference in this discussion to avoid unhealthy generalizations.

1. The African Religion Perspectives

The African traditional religion must have been able to answer their fundamental enquires regarding their origin, present life and their destiny. Any religious system has to respond to these questions though the

¹ For Mbiti not all who have died are ancestors, that is why he preferred the term living-dead. He distinguishes different stages in the process of integration in the hereafter into the living dead and then the collective dead. The death of the person does not imply immediate disappearance into the oblivion. He is a living dead in the sense that the surviving relatives continue to hold him, remember him and retain him in state of immortality personally. The dead family member is kept in the life of the family daily. They want to be with him always. Mbiti claimed that the cult of the ancestor has its origin in this belief and practice.

approach and the answers may not necessarily be the same². The Chagga people are not interested in search for the exact moment in which human beings were created because they take it for granted that they are from God³. This can be seen especially in the moment of death when they affirm that “God has taken what is his” (*Ruwa aira kyake*) which means that human beings are property of God and so He has taken what belongs to Him. This is due to the integral conception of man within his cultural milieu imbued with the belief that at the end it is God (Ruwa) who controls everything⁴. “Ruwa has power to do all things. Ruwa does not change, as Ruwa was of old so he is now. Nor does he lie, as he says so he will do. If a man does evil, though it be at night, Ruwa sees him. If the chief and his warriors surround a man, they cannot kill him if Ruwa does not permit it. When a man sickens and goes to the diviners and slaughters many goats and oxen (for sacrifice), he will not be cured if Ruwa does not wish it”⁵.

So when it is said that the African religion caters for their spiritual needs, this does not mean that it is the best one in the world though for them it must have been the best because they did not have another one and also it is true that it has provided for their religious thirst in the important moments of their life, from the pre-natal period till death and even after death in their integration with the ancestors and their living-dead⁶.

The African people have their myths though few people bother to think or read them. It may be due the fact that the common tradition of narrating stories and myth has been lost or they have been left in the writings of the foreigners who had interest to put them down. These helps

² Cf. BARTOLUCCI, E., *La iglesia en África* (Madrid 1963), 74; J.-M. ELA, *Fe y liberación en África* (Madrid 1990) 46-49.

³ Cf. LEMA, A. A., “Chagga Religion and Missionary Christianity on Kilimanjaro: The Initial Phase 189-1916”, in: T. SPEAR – I. N. KIMAMBO (eds.), *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford 1999) 41.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 42.

⁵ DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro and its People. A History of the Wachagga, their Laws, Customs and Legends, together with some Accounts of the Highest Mountain in Africa* (London 2nd 1968) 121-122.

⁶ Cf. MUSHY, “Are we Christians? An Inquiry into the Unresolved Tensions between Christianity and Chagga Cultural Practices”, in: *HekJ* 48 48(2013) 66-69.

one to note that African religion among the Chagga people was well equipped with sufficient means to fulfil their religious thirst enabling them live in the world amid the various challenges facing them⁷.

From what can be seen in the various ceremonies and the sacrificial rituals in their life can make its observer conclude that their religious life was well built with the necessary structures and ceremonies for their relationship with God taking into consideration that the Chagga religion, as the other African religions, imagines and believes that God being all and possessing all, has no need of anything from man: our sacrifices, gifts, prayers and thanksgiving would be of no use if they are not for the good of man himself⁸. The challenge which the observer of these practices is faced with is that these ceremonies and rituals are performed by Christians or better those who claim to be Christians⁹.

The ceremonies and the related sacrifices are connected with the hereafter in such a way that the belief on the ancestors and the living-dead is the one that makes them develop such ceremonies and sacrifices¹⁰. They had to fulfil the traditions of their ancestors if they have to live happily in this world and join the world of the ancestors after their death¹¹. The Chagga people believe that God is good and does not harm human beings. He is not busy with creatures for he has entrusted the direction to the ancestors and the living-dead as his messengers¹². Dundas gives a pictorial elaboration from the daily life experience of the Chagga and his relationship with God and the ancestral spirits. "Thus the Wachagga praise Ruwa. And if you ask them why they fear and obey the spirits more than they do to Ruwa, they will answer this: 'When the Chief sends to demand something that is his due, and on that day you have naught not give, whom will you try to appease, the chief or his messenger that he may speak well of you to the Chief and the Chief may have mercy on you? And if you

⁷ Dundas compiled mythological stories about the origin of man, destruction of the universe and many other legends which may help in understanding the religion of the Chagga people. Cf. DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 108-123; 300-340.

⁸ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God of the Ancestors. An African Approach to the Incarnation* (Nairobi 1998) 51.

⁹ Cf. MUSHY, "Are we Christians?", 65.

¹⁰ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 49.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 49.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 47.

give bad words to the spirit who is sent to you, or refuse him that which the diviner has counselled you to give (i.e. sacrifice), that spirit will go to Ruwa and accuse you, and Ruwa will be angered and will send another spirit, a foreign spirit who is not of your ancestry, to afflict you greatly and to kill you. For this reason we honor the spirits more”¹³.

So the Chagga people would not think of invoking God or honouring him by offering sacrifices in order to obtain help and his protection¹⁴. God is good and since he is good it is advisable to leave him alone and deal with his messengers¹⁵. They do not have a direct relationship with God except when all their possibilities have been exhausted¹⁶. The cult of the ancestors for them is not an obstacle in their journey towards God because they believe as it is for the African religion generally that God himself agrees to supplications and sacrifices being offered to the ancestors¹⁷.

The pre-eminence of the ancestors and the living-dead in the Chagga religion does not eliminate the belief that they cannot receive anything or any favour from the ancestors if it is not from God for they regard God as “fundamentally the originator of all the good in the world. Could he also send suffering and misfortune to people? Yet ultimately, they believed that life could end only if Ruwa decreed it”¹⁸. Here it is in line with the belief that God has given all the goods to man and now it is his duty to live according to them under the guidance of the ancestors and the living-dead¹⁹.

Boulaga sees in the belief on the ancestors, and all its related features, to be fundamental in the religious perspective of an African. Thus he made a serious call regarding those who may not have conceived rightly this belief to review their thought and insisted that even the studies about the ancestors are to be put into practice in order to help in the process of evangelization independently without unnecessary interference²⁰. African

¹³ DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 123.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵ Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 49.

¹⁶ Cf. DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 123; LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 49.

¹⁷ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 53.

¹⁸ LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 43.

¹⁹ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 55.

²⁰ Cf. F. EBOUSSI-BOULAGA, *Dieu en Afrique* (Tchad 1977) 79.

Traditional Religion with the important belief on the ancestors should be used in a practical way in the evangelizing task because it forms the base of the African culture that it should be allowed to be read just as an old testament for the people of Africa on which the Gospel would correct the deficiencies in the course of time. “We want to use them in practical ways, in evangelization. We consider our traditional religion as our Old Testament, and we know that the Old Testament always exists together with the New Testament. More to the point, they are not concurrent, however one reads the two. So, we want to be allowed to read our Old Testament, our religious concepts. There will be clarification in the course of time; and ideas will be corrected by the gospel itself”²¹.

This call of Boulaga is challenging but it can be the best way for the Chagga and other African people to maintain their religious heritage which are believed to be the foundation on which all the other religions are built with the hope of improving them always²². Those who pretended to destroy such realities were not aware of the dangers of what they were thinking to do because natural religion must not be considered as contrary to spiritual religion because all have origin in God²³. If the Chagga religious traditions are not digested and assimilated by the Christian theology they run the risk of disappearing and this would create a vacuum which may have negative repercussion on the African person than it is thought²⁴.

The suggestion of Lema seems to be valid even today for those working in any traditional religion environment and not only for the Chagga that “instead of destroying traditional religion could use it as a meaningful and effective basis for preaching Christianity. Had such an approach been adopted, Christianity might have quickly become a more meaningful and creative force in Chagga society. The message of the Christian Gospel would not then have been presented to Chagga in a completely foreign idiom. Had it been possible for missionaries to see that at the heart of every culture there was a religious or world view that

²¹ F. EBOUSSI-BOULAGA, *Dieu en Afrique*, 79; See also MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 56.

²² Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 55.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 55.

²⁴ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 56-57.

presented a general understanding of the nature of the universe and the place of human beings in it, the task of relating to non-Christians might have been more rewarding”²⁵.

The question is that observing their religious life, one would ask why should they accept another religion if their religion caters for all their religious needs? How could they maintain two religions at the same time? How can they maintain two eschatological beliefs at the same time which seem to be incompatible, the Christian eschatology and Chagga belief on ancestors?²⁶ More concretely if they believe that after this life they will join their ancestors who are the intermediaries between them and God, what about the Christian faith which affirms that our death is conquered through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is all in all? What is the place of Christ in the religious life of the African people? Where to place Jesus in the African Christians if the major role of the mediation has been or is given to the ancestors and the living-dead?²⁷ The following section will be an attempt to answer these questions.

2. Evangelizing method among the Chagga

The advent of the missionaries introduced education as the best tool to communicate the message of Christ as well as health centers. The formal education was necessary to enable the Africans integrate easily in the new system introduced by colonialism and the world order in general. The Chagga people at the beginning were busy fighting among themselves in control of the trade around the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro²⁸.

The introduction of modern education was an element which makes the majority of the Chagga to approach the missionaries no matter their attitude and attack on their culture. This does not mean that all who became Christians passed through the missionary schools. Many might have passed through the schools for the sake education and had nothing to do with the missionaries later, but also many had to adhere to the Christian principles in order to benefit the services offered by the

²⁵ LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 55.

²⁶ Cf. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation* (Nairobi 1990) 78.

²⁷ Cf. BUJO, *African Theology in its Social Context* (Nairobi 1992) 9.

²⁸ Cf. MOORE, *Social Facts*, 20.

missionaries. Through this, the missionaries were able to make sure that their teachings and the Christian doctrine were followed²⁹.

The Chagga recognized the good side of the missionaries and adhere to them. They had to abandon some customs and adopt new ones. “Slowly and imperceptibly, they responded by accepting some Christian aspects, rejecting others, and modifying or adapting others to their environment and way of life. Chagga were able to find meaningful relationships between their own and the Old Testament attitudes to life, although these were in no way highlighted by the missionaries”³⁰.

One of the elements that seems to be an object of discussion in many areas of Africa and among the Chagga was the institution of marriage and especially the practice of polygamy and other types of unions considered valid in the Chagga culture. In principle the question of polygamy was not a serious issue for the Chagga people and it was not absolutized as such because it was even disappearing at the time of the missionary’s advent for very few people could afford it except the chiefs who used it for various motives³¹. Due to historical circumstances, the more the Chagga people integrated into the world affairs, polygamy and many associated customs were disappearing and monogamy was more favored because with time even very few women would opt for a second wife marriage status³².

In the Chaggaland, the mission schools contributed greatly to the awareness of the people in understanding themselves, their traditional religion and Christian faith³³. Today they form an important part of the education institutions³⁴. These benefits, these services cannot be overlooked by a sincere and honest person no matter how evil could have been some of the agents of Christianity that is why today in many centenary celebrations even the intellectuals who tend to criticize the missionaries for colluding with the colonial power, would not deny this reality because behind all the adverse cases, Christianity still continues to exist as faith which transcends all the other institutions associated with it³⁵.

²⁹ Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 58-60.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

³¹ Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 60; BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity*, 226-228.

³² Cf. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity*, 227.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, 491.

³⁴ Cf. CCB, *The Catholic Church in Moshi*, 74-77.

³⁵ Cf. SPEAR, “Toward the History”, 5; CCB, *The Catholic Church in Moshi*, 38-61.

The Chagga people saw a blessing in disguise in the missionary works of evangelization in their country because they introduce different skills among the Chagga people in comparison to the colonialists³⁶. The missionaries had completely different intentions and motives and this could be discerned by the Chagga themselves for they could differentiate between the missionary and a colonist³⁷. Consequently, the Chagga did not bother themselves much about the missionary's attitude for they believe that it was they themselves who must interpret and understand the message according to their culture. They knew that the white men did not know their culture, though they taught them some truths, which they could see in their services, dedication and in the moment the missionaries had to face their fellow European colonists as in the case of Carl Peters who seemed to have planned to depopulate the mountain and populate it with people from other areas such as China and India. The missionaries had to warn him of this intention that did not materialize for it would have brought a disaster on the Chaggaland in terms of wars³⁸. There are very few cases or not at all, in which missionaries were attacked or killed in the Chaggaland no matter how strict they have been, as it can be seen in the evangelization of the southern part of Tanzania³⁹.

2.1. Why did they accept Christianity if they had their religion?

To some extent the preceding explanations have given some clue to this question, that of mutual complementarity. Can one claim that

³⁶ Cf. MADDUX, "African Theology", in: *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford 1999) 26.

³⁷ Very few Chagga people would fail to distinguish a missionary with Karl Peters with his Nubian guards moving around the slopes of the mountain terrifying and even killing some people who opposed him or that the people of Rombo could not distinguish the actions of the Germans who attacked them accusing them of killing two German messengers or the people of Marangu could not distinguish Karl Peters who ordered to kill a young man who slept with his concubine and finally also killing the girl. The Chagga could distinguish clearly between the two and that is why they accepted the message of the missionaries and in principle did not create problems with the missionaries as it can be seen in the other areas of Tanzania where the missionaries at the end were considered as dangerous as the colonists especially when they physically attacked the important shrines of the traditional religion. Cf. PERRAS, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, 194-199; Cf. DOERR, *Peramiho I*, 39-40, 45-46.

³⁸ Cf. PERRAS, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, 191-192.

³⁹ Cf. DOERR, *Peramiho I*, 39-40, 45-46.

Christianity as “religion” was better than African Religion at the moment of the encounter? One cannot easily find an answer to this question but the carriers of Christianity and the way they treated African Religion would imply that Christianity was better than African religion, but history may help to prove it to be not so absolutely⁴⁰. The difficult here is whether one can talk of better or bad religion⁴¹. One can talk of bad religious practices of a certain religion because what is internal in a certain religion is expected to be manifested in their praxis and even here certain practices may seem to be bad for those who are not the followers of such religion while such practices for its followers may be considered good⁴².

Religion is not only a matter of intelligence and speculation. Feelings and emotions enter there and it can be said that sometimes such aspects are predominant: “Belief or acceptance by the mind that something is true or real, often underpinned by an emotional or spiritual sense of certainty, is the extremely important aspect of religion”⁴³. This can be seen in their practices on how they may differ from one place to another, from one religion to another⁴⁴. For example what is considered and seen by one religion as the fundamental and important elements, for other religions such elements may be abominable and even blasphemy and sometimes

⁴⁰ The pluralistic hypothesis of John Hick has attempted to show that all religions are equally good because none of the religions can claim to know God as He is, for He is a mystery. Each one captures God according to his cultural background and experience of the ultimate, which he cannot claim to be the whole truth. Cf. HICK, J., *An Interpretation of Religion. Human Response to the Transcendence* (New Haven 1989) 233-252.

⁴¹ Hick would say that they are all an interpretation of the same Ultimate Reality and so no one should claim to be better or bad. Cf. J. HICK, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 235.

⁴² Chagga religion was the only way the Chagga people were relating with God and it seems to fulfill their religious needs till the advent of Christianity. It had sustained them all throughout and so one cannot claim it to be false and discard it easily without causing some effects on the Chagga life. Here one has to distinguish what is religious and the cultural elements associated with it for one cannot claim to be religious and at the same time to have no culture. The two are inseparable and an attempt to separate the two, an imminent crisis can be the result.

⁴³ B. CHIDILI, “Is African Religion a Religion?”: *African Journal of Theology* 21/II (2007)332.

⁴⁴ Cf. BOUYER, *Diccionario de teología*, 369-370; A. AYA, “Islam”, in: X. PIKAZA – A. AYA (eds.), *Diccionario de las tres religiones. Judaísmo, Cristianismo, Islam* (Estella 2009) 1025-1026.

not only among different religions even within the same religion differences may exist⁴⁵. We find different religions presenting contradicting divinities in the sense that one presents a God of anger and revenge who is believed to be calmed and satisfied by the blood of innocent people while others would advocate for a God of mercy and love without absurd promises in the afterlife. The very important elements or teaching in one religion can absolutely be denied or misunderstood by the other⁴⁶. Even the believe in God as expressed in their propositions may be equal and the same but the practices and the kind of God believed may differ enormously. Even within the same religion one may find discrimination among the different denominations, each claiming to be better than the other⁴⁷.

Thus to affirm that a certain religion is the best of all, one must absolutely cross the threshold of this world of human beings into the world of God so that God may show how each or such religion has fulfilled the teachings claimed to be revealed and here I am referring to the religions which claims to be revealed⁴⁸. One can claim to believe that his religion is the best of all because it is the one which fulfills his spiritual thirst. Even with these complications we can say that a religion that dehumanizes the other, which tends to destroy human beings making them suffer should neither be encouraged in the past nor in today's world⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ Cf. AYA, "Islam", 1025-1026; BOUYER, *Diccionario de teología*, 369-370.

⁴⁶ Cf. BOUYER, *Diccionario de teología*, 369-370; AYA, "Islam", 1025-1026.

⁴⁷ Here it is from the rule of logic that a reality cannot be and the same time not to be. It cannot be allowed logically that the same God would accept the same practices for a certain group of people to be good and for others to consider the same practices bad. The same God cannot be good and bad at the same time and this goes against the perfection of God. The law of excluded middle would be failed here. The Chagga are aware of this belief that nothing bad comes from God except from his messengers and the intermediaries. Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 49; DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 128.

⁴⁸ The revealed religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These religions especially Christianity and Islam are not only revealed but are missionary religions which search for converting others to join these religions and the history of religion shows that they are the most violent religions in their encounter with the other religions. Violent here refers not only on physical confrontations but also spiritually for their lack of dialogue with the others. Cf. THOMAS, *African Traditional Religion*, 28.

⁴⁹ Cf. MAGHIMBI, S., "Secularism and the Rise of Fundamentalism in Tanzania", in: T. NDALUKA – F. WIJSEN (eds.), *Religion and State in Tanzania Revisited. Reflections from 50 Years of Independence* (Berlin 2014) 181-196.

A religion which absolutizes and uses the divinity as the tool of oppression and terror for the self-interests of few, must not be allowed no matter how divine it may claim to be its revelation. A religion that does not respect human dignity and freedom and at the same time maintaining the truth, today should always be put into question⁵⁰. Saying this does not mean that religion is identified with the ethics though they are indissolubly united⁵¹ rather the way the followers of certain religion practice their religious tenets can help identify the kind of God they believe in because witness of life is the best indication of the God who is believed⁵².

Religion must be ready to be challenged by new realities and from there, it may emerge renewed and purified because it would abdicate the elements that could not survive the external challenges as Mbiti expresses it that “everyone is aware that rapid changes are taking place in Africa, so that traditional ideas are being abandoned, modified or coloured by the changing situation. At the same time it would be wrong to imagine that everything traditional has been changed or forgotten so much that no traces of it are to be found”⁵³.

The elements that cannot universalize themselves or not accepted because they go against the common good should be allowed to disappear and should not be fought for by the believers of the concerned religion⁵⁴. A good religion is the one which allows itself to be purified both internally and externally whereby the good elements would remain because they are good and the inadequate ones are purged and this especially when it comes into contact with other religions⁵⁵. In principle God does not need human beings to defend him. Any human being, who acts claiming to do

⁵⁰ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La iglesia, Israel y las demás religiones* (Madrid 1998) 91-92.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 85.

⁵² Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 21.

⁵³ MBITI, *African Religions*, xi.

⁵⁴ In today's world there are believers from the different religions who tend to become radical and defend their religious tenets or faith on the expense of others' life and peace. They do not have sufficient arguments and they use all means to make sure that their convictions are accepted or followed by all. Fundamentalism is an element of this religious syndrome tending to the destruction of religion itself rather than constructing it. Cf. Maghimbi, “Secularism”, 182-195.

⁵⁵ Cf. J. RATZINGER,- BENEDICTO XVI, *Europa. Raices identidad y misión* (Madrid 2005) 80.

it in the name of God, should be put in the principle of humanization⁵⁶. If such actions dehumanize the human being they are neither from God nor of God, rather are committed in the name of personal interests that may be political, economic or social⁵⁷.

African Religion had that peculiarity of accepting other religions without any serious implication on itself⁵⁸. It has that capacity of accommodating any religious system, making such new system one of its elements of improvement and purification, accepting the positive elements⁵⁹. Generally, the religious, political and social needs that might have compelled the Africans to accept Christianity were facilitated by the nature and the practices of African Religion itself. Without its nature of openness and being a religion founded in the life and not in books or definitions, the social political and economic needs could not have been sufficient reasons for accepting Christianity and in fact in some cases in Africa such elements failed or did not achieve the expectations⁶⁰.

Some authors claim that the initial attractions to Christianity arose from socio-political and materialistic needs affirming that “mission Christianity provided potential political alliances for ambitious young men, land for former slaves or those dispossessed by the white settlers, education and jobs for young people seeking to take of new economic opportunities or places of refuge for women fleeing unwanted marriages”⁶¹. “By becoming Christian the mission was opened to them especially the poor who besides material assistance they were also comforted with the Christian hope for better life after death. To some, however, especially the poor, the mission station provided a refuge and home. At first, it was not so much the theological doctrines of Christianity that proved to be particularly attractive to the common people, but what the missionaries did in practical ways to help improve the living conditions

⁵⁶ Cf. STARKLOFF, “Inculturation and Cultural Systems I”, 73-74.

⁵⁷ Cf. MAGHIMBI, “Secularism”, 182-195.

⁵⁸ Cf. CHIDILI, B., “Is African Religion a Religion?": *African Journal of Theology* 21/II (2007), 341.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 341.

⁶⁰ Cf. WALLER, “They do the Dictating”, in: *East African Expression of Christianity*, 83-128; KIMAMBO, “The Impact of Christianity”, 63-82.

⁶¹ SPEAR, “Toward the History”, 6.

of ordinary Chaga. The gifts of food and clothes that the missionaries offered to those who came empty-handed to settle around the mission station convinced them that they would be better off in the benevolent care of the missionaries. The poor found consolation, too, in the Christian hope of finding a better life beyond death in God's heavenly Kingdom"⁶².

The only or the main way of learning was in the mission school though it was looked with suspicious eye by some chiefs and those who did not become Christians though they continue to support the education projects because the importance of education was seen in the life of the colonialists who occupied the best positions and lead a good life. Even the servants working in the missions and in the colonial administration could be seen having a better life than those who have no opportunity. In fact becoming a Christian was taken to be the door to enjoy such privileges⁶³.

Women could have seen Christianity as a place of refuge in the cases of oppressive marriages for they thought by becoming Christian the oppressive customs could be avoided. One could join Christianity not because African religion was wholly bad for him or her, rather due to some elements which incur suffering on them especially those related with male dominated culture⁶⁴. After joining Christianity such an individual would continue practicing his original religion leaving aside the oppressive elements⁶⁵. Moderation must be included in these cases because there are some situations where Christianity could not win converts though it embarks on massive provision of services and fighting bad customs especially against women⁶⁶. Such factors contributed in the spread of Christianity in certain contexts only⁶⁷.

Some accepted Christianity for pure spiritual needs because it offered them new spiritual powers necessary to support them in time of diseases, disasters, infertility and even during social conflicts⁶⁸. It seems to offer

⁶² LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 56.

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁶ Cf. KIMAMBO, "The Impact of Christianity", 63-81.

⁶⁷ Cf. WALLER, "They do Dictating", 83-96; Kimambo, "The Impact of Christianity", 79.

⁶⁸ Cf. MADDOX, "African Theology", in; *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 26.

better tools for such cases than their original religion which was seen as a hindrance in their life especially when the inadequate cultural elements predominated⁶⁹. It is understandable that Christianity offered new religious practices which were seen by many Africans as novelty and for them it could improve their religious life. If they were comfortable in their religion, Christianity was seen to offer some elements that were missing and considered by them suitable in their life⁷⁰.

Positively, Christianity was accompanied by many factors which a follower of African Religion could not resist. It was accompanied by some elements that made life more comfortable and bearable than the elements accompanying the traditional African Religion⁷¹. The greatest element was the ability to control the environment or nature through formal education which enables them to read and write, and the cure of diseases that had been threatening the life of many Africans⁷².

Negatively some of the African Religion followers accepted Christianity due to the attack directed to their religion and on their culture as a whole, where it was branded paganism and primitive⁷³. In order to avoid such insults, they could have joined Christianity in order to enter into the class of civilized religion. Here the mentality would be that a Christian was a civilized one and the African religion follower uncivilized. These and many other factors made some followers of African religion to accept Christianity through baptism not for a religious purpose but as a way to survive in that situation. "The spread of Christianity has to be placed within the context of colonial domination of Africa and the racial justification that explained colonialism. Colonialism in practice mandated that most Africans could never become citizens but would always remain subjects in the colonial order. They were permanently marginalized as

⁶⁹ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 60.

⁷⁰ Cf. SPEAR, "Toward the History", 5-6.

⁷¹ The modern education, health facilities and especially in facing the dangers brought by the encounter with different non-African cultures and that the mentioned services were and continue to be key fields of evangelization in Africa. Cf. MKULIMA, *150 Years of Successful Evangelization*, 178-181; BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity*, 271-279.

⁷² Cf. MBITI, *African Religions*, 217.

⁷³ Cf. MADDUX, "African Theology", 27.

different from the civilized order, of which Christianity remained one of the implicit supports”⁷⁴.

The entrance of Christianity was closely connected with the colonial occupation of Africa. The missionaries had easy contact with the colonialists so being their member could facilitate the power of the local rulers, especially in maintaining their rule⁷⁵. We find some cases in the Chaggaland where the colonial administration was responsible in allocating the different Christian denominations areas for evangelization in order to avoid unnecessary conflict in the Chaggaland⁷⁶. Even some Christian missionaries aimed at converting the political leaders as a way of converting their subjects. “Locating and converting an African leader as a means of converting a large number of people was one of the ways they assured ‘the cohesion of the tribes, peace, justice and the continual suppression of slavery [...]’⁷⁷.

Sometimes the spiritual motives and the other needs intermingled together for one could have been attracted by Christianity because it offered some spiritual guidance beneficial to the Chagga, while at the same time seeing the importance of education for the children or the health services provided by the missionaries. In some cases it is possible also a kind of evolution whereby someone who accepted Christianity for socio-economic or socio-political motives may in the long run after experiencing and living it, becomes for him a source of spiritual life and guidance⁷⁸. The motives for accepting Christianity by the Africans intermingled among themselves in such a way that it is not easy to say absolutely that this group of people accepted Christianity for such and such motives or to affirm generally that all conversions were the result of

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁵ Cf. MUNSON, *The Nature of Christianity in Northern Tanzania. Environment and Social Change 1890–1916* (New York 2013) 38-39.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁷ K. R. SMYTHE., “The Creation of a Catholic Fipa Society’. Conversion in Nkasi District, Ufipa”, in: T. SPEAR – I. N. KIMAMBO (eds.), *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford 1999) 131.

⁷⁸ If conversion is taken to involve a dialectical process, it is possible that many Chagga would have accepted Christianity after a period of experiencing its requirements and conditions and especially after tasting the spiritual aspects that touched their inner self and their reason of being, no matter their initial motives. Cf. Lema, “Chaga Religion”, 60.

one factor. "Conversion was thus a complex and protracted process of individual social and religious change involving a wide range of possible shifts in religious affiliation and conviction as converts changed from 'traditional' to mixed beliefs, from nominal to fervent Christianity, from denomination to another, from Christianity to Islam or from a mission church to various forms of independency"⁷⁹.

The Chagga people discovered that the missionary with his new religion would cause things to change in their way of life but it seems that they were not afraid because even with side effects of being Christians, they knew that something good would result⁸⁰. If they noted signs of depreciation from the agents of Christianity, they believed in themselves and their cultural values because if something is good remains to be good and a bad thing will be bad no matter how well one may speak of it⁸¹.

They accepted the new faith dialectically by accepting the good of Christianity discarding what was not essential, while at the same time accepting their cultural values⁸². "If the Christianity was selectively transmitted by missionaries, it was also selectively received by the Africans as they listened to the Christian message, interpreted it, and imbued it with meaning within the context of their own values and experience. Conversion was a classic dialectical process, involving the dynamic interaction between potential converts and missionaries, with their different beliefs and practices. Whatever Europeans intended, they could not dictate the terms of African acceptance, especially as African converts gained increasing access to vernacular Bibles and could make their own scriptural interpretations independent of those of the missionaries"⁸³.

The Chagga people believed that to be converted to the Gospel did not necessarily mean to break their relationship with their ancestors, because this would mean to break and destroy their reason of being⁸⁴. The problem was that the missionaries did not concentrate on the Bible rather they give them interpretation of it and this was that which greatly was

⁷⁹ SPEAR, "Toward the History", 6-7.

⁸⁰ Cf. CCB, *Catholic Church in Moshi*, 57.

⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 57-58.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, 60.

⁸³ SPEAR, "Toward the History", 5-6.

⁸⁴ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 45-47.

transmitted to the African⁸⁵. Sometimes they were not concerned with their conception of the existence as a unified whole where the sacred and profane are intermingled in such a way that it is the subject who decides the sacred space and time and not the other way round. That is to say, it is not the place and time which are holy or profane rather it is the human beings who established these categories⁸⁶.

2.3 Jesus and the Chagga Religious Universe: Theoretical analysis

The same question was made by Ela when reflecting on the relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religion in the concrete life of an African who claims to be a follower of Christ: “Is there any place in our life in Jesus Christ for maintaining a relationship between living and the dead? Or must Africans break their relationship with their ancestors if they are to be converted to the Gospel?”⁸⁷ This question is fundamental for an African Christian but especially for the Chagga Christians who have a strong relationship with their dead so that they may lead a coherent life of faith in which the considered incompatible elements may not be seen as obstacle in their relationship with God through Christ⁸⁸.

The African Christians have to find a place for Jesus in their religious system. They have to give him a place in their relationship with the ancestors. In other words, if the Chagga are Christians that is, followers Christ, they have to be able to show how they can continue being Christians who is the way, truth and life and the one who died and rose from the dead and thus giving his followers an assurance that if they die in him they will rise with him (Cf. Acts 3:12, 16; Rm 6:8-9; 2Tim 2:8-13). After being raised they will be judged according to how they have lived

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 46-47.

⁸⁶ As already noted when interpreting the Chagga sacrificial ritual that the Chagga is capable of establishing –by separation and unifying (conjunction and disjunction)– of sacred places according to the needs, thus in his religious life he can establish those moments in his mind and thus enabling himself to place *Ruwa* throughout his activity without requiring a special place, hour or posture. That is why it has been claimed that African Religion has no special place of worship and timetables. Cf. MBITI, *Introduction*, 14-17.

⁸⁷ J. M. ELA, *My Faith as African*, 18.

⁸⁸ Cf. MUSHY, “Are we Christians?”, 66-67.

in this world, whereby the good would go to heaven and the evil to hell (Cf. Mt 25:31-46) and all these in relationship with the Chagga belief that after this life one joins the ancestors or the living-dead of their family forming a community in the hereafter⁸⁹. For them death is passing from the visible world to the invisible world where there is no judgment and joining with the ancestors is the ultimate desire⁹⁰. There is mutual relationship between the community of the living in the visible world and the other in the invisible world, whereby the visible community should live according to the norms established by the ancestors, praying and offering sacrifices to them and the ancestors would fulfil their task as guardian and their intermediaries with God.

The ordinary Chagga Christians are not concerned with these difficulties because already they are living the two realities: Christian and the Chagga (African) eschatologies⁹¹.

2.4. God's Transcendence and Jesus' place among the Chagga

The claim that in African Traditional Religion God is believed to be remotely and sometimes overshadowed by the ancestors must be understood in a proper way because the relationship between the divinity and the human beings has been predominantly associated by the role of mediators. If the Chagga were to be asked about this they might have answered that God has put us in this world but he does not belong to this world⁹². Though they do not use the term transcendence, the concept is there, that is why even though God is considered to be remotely, still they resort to him in moments of crisis⁹³.

We can formulate this belief more clearly saying that God is believed to be transcendent for them in the sense that everything in the world is from him but he does not form part of them just as it is affirmed that God created the world but does not form part of that creation, and that without abandoning it⁹⁴. This belief though seen doubtfully by many authors I

⁸⁹ Cf. LEMA, *Chaga Religion*, 60.

⁹⁰ Cf. MBITI, *African Religions*, 4-5.

⁹¹ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 60.

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 43-44.

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 44.

⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 41-42.

consider it an important aspect for the Chagga people because it may help in establishing a theory regarding the role of the intermediaries and especially the place of Jesus in their religious belief⁹⁵.

In Christianity Jesus Christ is true God and true man and this is due to the belief that God incarnated himself in Jesus Christ making this mystery relevant for understanding the human relationship with God. "The relevance of the mystery of incarnation of the Word of God of our ancestors emanates for the African precisely from the immeasurable capacity that Christ possesses for launching the African into a new kind of existence and relationships"⁹⁶. After his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus Christ is living with God his Father and at the same living among those who believe in him through His Word and the Sacraments.

The consideration that God is always far from human beings and his concern is through the intermediaries, the Chagga people find in this a point of departure in their relationship with Christ who is God and so away from them but close to them as a man who teaches them through his Word in the church. In this way Jesus introduces the human being into "a vast movement of divine-human African solidarity"⁹⁷. For the Chagga people Jesus is more than the ancestors because he possesses an extra quality which in reality is nothing else than God himself. So when they continue offering sacrifices they do it in order to fulfil the demands of their ancestors. Hence at the end even Christ would know what they have done or how they have lived according to the norms of the ancestors which were received from God⁹⁸.

I find it a scholarly problem the attempt to associate Jesus with the belief on the ancestors because of his divinity and the relation with the Father though it has been claimed it must be considered analogically. Mangany and Buitedag reflect this complexity: "In African theology it

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁶ MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 59.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁸ If Jesus is God and since God is the one who established the ancestors as his intermediaries, then it is Christ himself who establishes the role of the ancestors and their place and due to his incarnation he is the one who brings everything to his Father which comes from the human beings through the ancestors. Jesus is the one who will raise all including the ancestors. Cf. BUJO, *African Christian Morality*, 74-80.

seems that when Christ is in Africa, he becomes one of the ancestors. If Christ becomes an ancestor to the people, does the Father become an ancestor to the Son? If that is the case, then there is a question about the position of the Holy Spirit. Somewhere the boundaries of the Christian faith are tested”⁹⁹.

This critical reflection does not lack ground in the debate about Jesus in Africa because any implication on the Son would have implications on the other persons of the Holy Trinity, that is why such applications must also consider the broad catholic theological perspectives. It should also be open to the reflections done by the African theologians in their attempt to deepen and establish a healthy and authentic discourse on Jesus which fits their context¹⁰⁰.

For the Chagga, it would be very difficult to consider Jesus as an ancestor because the ancestors are neither taken to be gods nor divinities, nor believe in the great number of divinities as in the case of some Western African communities¹⁰¹. The Chagga can be accused of overemphasizing the divinity of Jesus than his humanity in this aspect but even this accusation may lack ground because they also accept his teachings and the resulting activities from his earthly life. They believe that he was a human being who lived in this earth and left his teaching for the coming generations of which they are part of it and they have accepted them and they are trying to live them. For them ancestors have a beginning while Jesus being God has no beginning, has existed from eternity with his Father¹⁰².

Beyers & Mphahlele reflects on the same problem regarding the affirmations of some scholars of considering Jesus an ancestor: “It is not so easy to merely equate Jesus with an ancestor as Africans understand

⁹⁹ MANGANYI & BUITENDAG, “A Critical analysis”, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. BONSU, N. O., “African Traditional Religion: An examination of Terminologies used for Describing the Indigenous Faith of African People, using an Afrocentric Paradigm”: *Journal of Pan African Studies* 9/IX (2016) 108-112118.

¹⁰¹ Cf. EKEKE, E. C – EKEOPARA, C. A., “God, Divinities and Spirits in African Traditional Religious Ontology”: *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 1/II (2010) 215.

¹⁰² Cf. BEYERS, J. – MPHAHLELE, D. N., “Jesus Christ as an Ancestor: An African Christian Understanding”: *HTS* 65/1 (2009) Art.(1).#132,5pages. DOI:10.4102/ hts.v65i1.132 (15 August 2017) 4-5.

it. There are several questions that make it difficult, almost impossible, to talk of Jesus as an ancestor in an African context”¹⁰³. What kind of questions that makes difficult the approach? For them there must be sufficient reasons for Jesus to be worshipped alone as an Ancestor taking into consideration that each family, clan and tribe has their ancestors and their living-dead. “According to the African cultural background, the question would also be whether Jesus then truly is an African and from which tribe would he be. This would immediately exclude some tribes from worshipping Jesus. Different tribes have different ancestors. If Jesus becomes an Ancestor, it would mean the complete system of ancestor veneration with all the implications associated is acknowledged”¹⁰⁴.

The complication in equating Jesus with the ancestor is aggravated by the divinity of Jesus because an ancestor cannot be at the same time God and human being¹⁰⁵. These difficulties are mentioned here to show that not only the Chagga people find it difficult to see Jesus as ancestor, but it can also be a scholarly problem though those who opt for this title have clearly affirmed that it is applied to Jesus analogically and this is the case of Bujo and many others¹⁰⁶.

Since God is believed to work in this system through the ancestors in his relation with the human beings, Jesus who is also God works through the ancestors because his power has been extended¹⁰⁷ and thus becomes the connection between the humanity and God¹⁰⁸. The mystery of incarnation enables the Chagga people to believe in Jesus as God and human being and since God is believed to be far away and leaving the approach to the mediators, Christ is also put in the same place as God and all the relationship with him are those of human beings with God¹⁰⁹. In

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Some scholars have raised an inquiry which can help in this aspect by making critical analysis of the employment of this title to Jesus. Cf. D. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 137-165; K. NÜRNBERGER, *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in Changing Africa* (Pietermaritzburg 2007) 30-100.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. BEYER – Mphahlele, “Jesus Christ as Ancestor”, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. D. STINTON., *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christologies* (Nairobi 2004) 140.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 107-108.

this structure Jesus cannot be restricted to the realm of ancestors because he overflows and assume it through his incarnation. The ancestors in this perspective do not remove or destroy the mediation of Christ; rather they are strengthened by Jesus mediation, which is both divine and human while theirs is only human mediation¹¹⁰.

The divinity of Christ must enable them to live their traditional religion and Christianity peacefully without experiencing serious conflicts. Just as God uses messengers who are the ancestors, Jesus is participating also in the work of his Father and now on the account of his incarnation, works also through the ancestors who would also fall under his rule and would be required to fulfil his norms established by him while living on the earth¹¹¹.

The Good News would have an effect on the Chagga whereby necessarily it would challenge their traditional religion beliefs forming part of his journey with the effects of the novelty brought through this encounter resulting into continuity and discontinuity of some features in both parts, beginning with the features that are believed not to form part of the Gospel message¹¹².

The dialectical operation is seen in the way how the Chagga, in order to live according to the norms of their ancestors have to practice the rules they believed to be given by God through the ancestors and in order to be accepted by Jesus they have to live according to the Gospel of Jesus, but since Jesus is God and they believe that the norms given to them are

¹¹⁰ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 61.

¹¹¹ In this aspect, the Chagga would believe that Jesus being God helps the ancestors who are only human beings to fulfil their role as intermediaries between them and God. In the long run the ancestors and the living-dead would be those who lived well their traditions and their Christian faith. In order to achieve this, the dialectical process would take its tolls in both parts. At the end, a common Chagga Christian morality would emerge but this would take some time. Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 59-61.

¹¹² In the history of evangelization one of the great debates has been to distinguish the message of Jesus from the cultural elements carrying it. May be some conflicts were the result of the elements considered to form part of the Gospel were cultural elements associated with the historical development of Christianity. It is difficult to find a pure Gospel of Jesus without any cultural association. However, effort must be done not to cover it too much with what has nothing to do with the Good news of Jesus that is why I prefer the commandment of love as the best measure in cases of conflicts. Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 52-61; RATZINGER, *Fe, verdard y tolerancia*, 53-64.

from God through the ancestors then there should not be conflict between the two¹¹³. The problem is when conflicts emerge on the norms (the Christian and the Chagga) to be followed and this has been common throughout the history of evangelization in Africa and is the same among the Chagga people. Such conflicts are to be solved by the application of the commandment of love: God and the neighbor¹¹⁴. In this world view then the norms of the ancestors and the Gospel would have to be fulfilled by the Chagga while in the process itself, the norms of both parts would consolidate themselves according to the way they fulfil their religious needs¹¹⁵. In this way again the superiority of the norms would depend on how they fulfil the needs of the Chagga people in conformity with commandment of love and not according to other criteria.

The sacramental life of the church in the mystical body of Christ is the one which a Chagga would have to face in his life as Christian because it is there where the norms and demands of Jesus Christ are made concrete¹¹⁶. Regarding this, the Chagga have to identify properly what is the teaching of Jesus regarding the sacraments and the liturgy because it is here where history has contributed many elements pertained to Western culture¹¹⁷.

In this theoretical reflection, the divinity of Jesus for the Chagga people has enabled them to enjoy the freedom in their religious belief especially in accepting Christianity because now they play safely by

¹¹³ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 60.

¹¹⁴ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Fe y Futuro* (Salamanca 1973) 25.

¹¹⁵ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 60.

¹¹⁶ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 55-60.

¹¹⁷ Practically after Vatican II Council, the church in Africa embarked on what has been known as inculturation, aiming at interpreting and understanding the Gospel from the context of African Culture. The theme of inculturation has been an object of discussion since the pontificate of Pope Paul VI in *Africae Terrarum* 7, 13-14 though he did not mention the term inculturation, the vocabulary had this intention, and with more energy during the pontificate of Pope Paul II which can be seen in all his messages during his visit in Africa beginning with his message during the opening of the C.H.I.E.A, now CUEA on the 18th of August 1985 and in a special way during the African Synod opened in 10th of April 1994 where the theme of inculturation was at the heart of the synod as it can be seen in the issued document *Ecclesia in Africa*. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *EAfr* 55-64; "The Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II": *African Christian Studies* 1/II (1985) 10; BENEDICT XVI, *Africae Munus*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 55-57.

fulfilling the traditions of their ancestors and those of Jesus¹¹⁸. It can be hypothesized that at the background of their belief, there is a fear that the message of Jesus who is a foreigner may fail them, and since the destiny of man is that which constitutes the foundation and the reason of being, this double adherence is like an assurance that they would remain with their ancestors and in case not then together with their ancestors would be with Jesus for they would have fulfilled also the law of Christ¹¹⁹.

In this point of view there would be congruence between some norms of Christ and those established by the ancestors. The obvious Chagga norms which are incompatible with Christianity and proven to be so by the Chagga would be eliminated and in the same way the elements claimed to be Christian but which endangers the Chagga religious beliefs would face resistance and in case of insistence on the part of Christianity as it has been the case, they would operate in the background as many authors have complained and a good example again is the belief on the ancestors and the living-dead¹²⁰.

When a Chagga is found keen to fulfil the Christian requirements and at the same time fulfilling the traditions of his ancestors, it is because he believes that at the end it is God who receives the petitions and the one who rules the world of the ancestors, and since Jesus is God, it is He who is fulfilling also this task¹²¹. Petitions of the living to God through their ancestors would be presented to God but since Christ is also God, the ancestors are presenting the petitions to Christ who lived among men and knows well their behavior¹²². Thus Jesus has all the power to punish

¹¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 55-57.

¹¹⁹ Cf. MUSHETE, A. N., "La Figura de Jesús en la teología africana": *Conc(E)* 216 (1988) 242-243.

¹²⁰ Cf. AKUBUEZE OKWUOSA, *In the Name of Christianity*, 26.

¹²¹ Cf. DUNDAS, *Kilimanjaro*, 128; LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 42-44.

¹²² Cf. VATICAN II COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: "He Who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam, He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin".

them for not fulfilling the norms of the ancestors and those of his Gospel because he has been given all power by his Father (Cf. Mt 28:18).

Here one may see the logic and equilibrium of this argument. If the traditional customs are not seen with good eye by Jesus they would be abandoned because they would affect their relation with God even though they have been approved by the ancestors because the ancestors are only human beings while Jesus is the same God who has given those norms¹²³.

The incarnate Word then has the right to say that he is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). Christ is by his relationship to God and his own involvement in the unfolding of the world, comes to place himself between God and the ancestors forming thus a unique mediator between the creation and God¹²⁴. His mediation does not destroy the role of the ancestors as mediators because even after the incarnation and the coming of Christ who reveals God to men, "God retains his essence, he remains also a hidden God. In Christ God lowers himself in a way that one could possess him and use him. Jesus is not a substitute of God"¹²⁵.

The ancestors' role in this case is improved for now they can approach God easily with the help of Jesus who is God but also human through incarnation who knows better the needs of the living than ancestors because he is with them always as God through his Word and the Sacraments¹²⁶. In this aspect the ancestors and the living-dead are still loved and respected and anything demanded by the ancestors, which goes against the commandment of love should be questioned and here is where discontinuity and continuity may result regarding the fundamental aspects of both religious views¹²⁷. Jesus is not only God and man theoretically, rather in the practice since he has left the guidance and the norms for the daily life under the great commandment of love (Mt 22:34-38; Mk 12:28-

¹²³ Cf. B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community* (Nairobi 1998) 16-17.

¹²⁴ Cf. MUNUNGURI, *The Closeness of the God*, 67.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹²⁶ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 57-58.

¹²⁷ Here is what has been advocated by some authors as purification and transformation of both parts in an encounter of two or more cultural subjects because the God of history speaks to all people in a particular manner, in such a way that it can be said that the Holy Spirit is working through the traditional religions transforming and purifying them. Cf. AETTM, "Comunicado Tras el Encuentro de Accra", 34.

34; Lk 10:25-28), just as is believed that the ancestors did leave some rules and norms in relating with God though do not affirm explicitly such commandment, implicitly it is directed to that because the good of the community is achieved by increasing its life through putting individual interests aside on the expense of the community¹²⁸.

The Chagga people are aware that the mediation of the ancestors and that of Jesus cannot be confused because they have never thought at moment that the ancestors are gods or divinities. Ancestors are mediators between them and God and so for them Jesus being God (Ruwa) should not be put among the ancestors ontologically rather in terms of solidarity with them in the sense that Jesus as human being knows well the human beings: their needs, desires and so at the end He as the mediator per excellence is the one who fulfils their petitions and supplications brought to God through the ancestors¹²⁹.

3. Chagga Evangelization: A Mutual-understanding Process?

Horton¹³⁰ in his discussion on the relationship between traditional society and scientific oriented societies uses two categories: that of “open” predicament and the “closed” predicament and more concretely that of “open society” and “closed society” respectively. And closely associated with these two predicaments is the concept of “alternatives”. “It is that in

¹²⁸ Cf. MBITI, *African Religions*, 106-109; BUJO, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, 19-97.

¹²⁹ Cf. BEYERS – Mphahlele, “Jesus Christ as an Ancestor”, 1-2.

¹³⁰ Robin Horton was born in 1932 in the Great Britain and is a dedicated anthropologist specialized in the field of comparative religion. He had been working in this field and had realized specialized study in it since 1950 onwards. His studies have contributed much in the field of anthropology challenging and improving the anthropological study of religion. As he himself always says in his papers he is notable for his effort to study religion scientifically. The scientific approach to the study of religion can be seen even in his examples used in his presentations. In fact, this approach formed the basis for his analysis of African thought in his two instalments published in 1967: “African Traditional thought and Western Science I and II”. Horton lived in Africa for almost forty years and this enabled him to conduct a research on African religions and at the same time exercising as a professor of Philosophy and Religion in some universities in Nigeria (University of Port Harcourt in Rivers State, and the University of Ife in Osun State. Cf. “Robin W. G. Horton”, in: https://wiki2.org/en/Robin_W._G._Horton (15 October 2017).

traditional cultures there is not developed awareness of alternatives to the established body of theoretical tenets, whereas in scientifically oriented cultures, such an awareness is highly developed. It is this difference we refer to when we say that traditional cultures are ‘closed’ and scientifically oriented cultures are ‘open’¹³¹.

I will use the idea of open and closed predicament in trying to interpret and understand the dialectical reception of Christianity by the Chagga people¹³². As a theory, my intention is not to make a critical analysis of his theory for this has been challenged already by J. Beatties¹³³, rather to use it as a help in my discussion and with the possibility of modifying it taking into consideration that his discussion is based more on the level of comparison between the traditional societies thoughts and the western science just as the title of his two discussions indicates¹³⁴.

The basic principle for Horton is that in the encounter between two realities, efforts must be made to search for that which unites them rather than concentrating on the discontinuities. This does not mean that the differences are ignored rather once the continuities are identified adequately then the discontinuities would be faced with easily¹³⁵. “My approach is also guided by the conviction that an exhaustive exploration of features common to modern Western and traditional African thought should come before the enumeration of differences. By taking things in this order, we shall be less likely to mistake differences of idioms for

¹³¹ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 157.

¹³² I am using the idea of Horton as help in understanding the process of the Chagga people in the reception of Christianity. I am using the ideas of “open predicament” and “closed predicament” together with the concept of “alternative” in order to explain the encounter of the Chagga people with Christianity. I use these concepts according to the context of the Chagga in order to be in position to elicit a proper hermeneutic of the Chagga conversion process and their religious situation today. It is not necessary that such an application reflect the whole process because here I am not searching for the truth of the beliefs rather the manner these beliefs (Christian eschatology and Chagga eschatology) have been lived by the same person and at the same time.

¹³³ Cf. J. H. M. BEATTIE, “Ritual and Social Change”: *Man* 1/I (1966) 60-74.

¹³⁴ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought I”, 50-71; and *ID*, “African Traditional Thought II”, 155-187. The same articles are found also in HORTON, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West. Essays on Magic, Religion and Science* (New York 1993) 197-258.

¹³⁵ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 155.

differences of substance, and more likely; to end up identifying those features which really do distinguish one kind of thought from the other”¹³⁶.

In this context then the African religion has many continuities such as the belief in God, respect and praying for the dead, sacrificial rituals, and many other religious phenomena which are found also in Christianity though they may have different interpretation for example: belief in one and true God, the communion of saints, the Eucharistic celebration, praying for the dead and many other devotions¹³⁷. These could be points of departure but in order to be able to have this capacity one must know well his religious tradition and be able to interpret it before diverse circumstances. It is even more a requirement for the foreign religion brought to another culture and for a scholar who is realizing such studies in a foreign culture to have that in mind¹³⁸.

I would say that, today, it is the task of the African Christians (Chagga) people to know their religious beliefs and interpret them in line with the modern challenges and situations because ignorance of one’s culture can also be the source of misunderstanding and misjudgment not only in the past but even today. Just as it was for the anthropologists and missionaries who came into contact with African religion at the beginning of evangelization it can be the same for the Africans themselves if they do not study seriously their religion¹³⁹. Doing this would be the beginning of mutual enrichment spiritually and bodily because today, no matter how sweet a religion may claim to be, if it does not take into account the wellbeing of its adherents it may lose its credibility. The sages were not wrong when they claimed that a health mind dwells in a healthy body or what Pope Paul VI said that evangelization goes hand in hand with a whole transformation and promotion of the people¹⁴⁰. This affirmation

¹³⁶ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought I”, 50.

¹³⁷ Cf. E. UZUKWU, “Liturgia e inculturación”, 147-165.

¹³⁸ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought I”, 50-51.

¹³⁹ Cf. CHIDILI, “Is African Religion a Religion?”, 341-342.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 31: “Between evangelization and human advancement- development and liberation- there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions”.

according to the Pontiff does not discard the belief that inner change, conversion to Christ is the final purpose of evangelization that is why the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert by transmitting the good news of Jesus Christ and not only the social and moral activities¹⁴¹.

If it is agreed with Horton that the closed predicament is prevalent in the traditional societies, thus tending to be closed societies we can say that the African people in the process of its encounter with Christianity seemed to experience the tension between closing itself, in its traditional thought (closed society) and the need to open itself into a more scientifically oriented thought or open society¹⁴². This tension among the Chagga was the consequences of the introduction of Christianity because, from this encounter they have had an “alternative religious phenomenon” which made them reflect not only about their religious practices but also those of the other religion. We replace here the metaphor of stranger with the concept of “alternative”. Here then, we have two basic predicaments: the closed – characterized by lack of awareness of alternatives, sacredness of beliefs, and anxiety about threats to them; and the ‘open’ – characterized by awareness of alternatives, diminished sacredness of beliefs and diminished anxiety about threats to them¹⁴³.

The Chagga came across an alternative that made them question their established religious structures, situation that necessarily forced them to know and experience the alternative (Christianity and the associated cultural carrier) in order to be able to make comparison and thus have the capacity to question their beliefs. Such alternative is necessary in such case because, “any absence of awareness of alternatives makes for an absolute acceptance of the established theoretical tenets, and removes any possibility of questioning them. In these circumstances, the established tenets invest the believers with a compelling force. It is this force which we refer to when we talk of such tenets as sacred”¹⁴⁴.

The lack of alternative and its consequence has been also noted by Pritchard –though his language may be offending to some, my intention is to show the importance of “alternatives” in the context of the Chagga

¹⁴¹ Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 18.

¹⁴² Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 60.

¹⁴³ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 156.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

people— through his experience with the Zande. “In this web of belief every strand depends upon every other stand, and a Zande cannot get out of its meshes because it is the only world he knows. The web is not an external structure in which he is enclosed. It is the texture of his thought and he cannot think that his thought is wrong”¹⁴⁵.

Lack of an alternative can be a consequence of many factors and can affect any traditional society in any part of the world. Thus the effort should aim at making possible the presence of alternatives with their proper expositions because an alternative may still be there but its employment may be another thing.

Horton offers an example of a lack of an awareness of alternatives in a reaction of an Ijo man to a missionary who invited him to leave aside his old gods: “Does your God really want us to climb to the top of a tall palm tree, then take off our hands and let ourselves fall?”¹⁴⁶ Fear of losing everything and thus creating chaos is typical of closed societies because the established tenets have an absolute and exclusive validity for those who hold them and they are convinced that an alteration of them can bring chaos and thus causing great anxiety among them¹⁴⁷. Geertz claims in the same line that man can adapt himself anything to his imagination but he cannot deal with chaos¹⁴⁸.

There should be, perhaps, a process to be followed in order to make sure that the encounter does not produce such consequences. The Chagga people maintains their relationship with their ancestors and offer sacrifice to them, a practice which has existed before the coming of Christianity and continue to be done though with modifications and it is possible to find people who do not practice the rituals but still remember their dead relatives. They believe that in the remote future there would be purifications influenced by Christianity. Christianity is also presented with an alternative in the Chagga Religion¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁵ EVANS-PRITCHARD, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford 1936) 194.

¹⁴⁶ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 156.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 156.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. C. GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York 1973) 99-100.

¹⁴⁹ “The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the commu-

Thus, the same process should take place within Christianity. It will have, at one moment, to recognize that opening itself to the other is necessary by reducing its absoluteness before Chagga Religion without abdicating its fundamental tenets because these are the basis of its being an “alternative”. “With developing awareness of alternatives, the established theoretical tenets come to seem less absolute in their validity, and lose something of their sacredness. At the same time, a challenge to these tenets is no longer a horrific threat of chaos. For just as the tenets themselves have lost some of their absolute validity, a challenge to them is no longer a threat of absolute calamity. It can now be seen as nothing more threatening than an intimation that new tenets might profitably be tried. Where these conditions begin to prevail, the stage is set for change from a traditional to scientific outlook”¹⁵⁰.

The Chagga people as many other African peoples, had their own religious fabrics. These are the ones believed to have sustained them and were the only possible and all had to adhere to them because they were part of their life for a long time, the awareness of any alternative and its consideration would take some time¹⁵¹. The closed society would need a long time to open itself to new realities and this can be seen among the Chagga in the process of relating with Christianity in the way they still keep some traditions without questioning them or giving sufficient explanations though such traditions might have been valuable one¹⁵².

In these traditional cultures, the Chagga included, questioning of the beliefs for example on which the divinity is based and the weigh up of success against failures are just not among the paths that thought takes “because they are blocked paths because the thinkers involved are victims of the closed predicament. For them, established beliefs have an absolute validity and any threat in such beliefs is a horrific threat of chaos”¹⁵³. Due to this tendency, it has taken time for the traditional African man to

nity of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love”. Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 156.

¹⁵¹ Cf. AETTM, “Comunicado Tras el Encuentro de Accra”, 34.

¹⁵² Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 60.

¹⁵³ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 168.

consider the alternative presented to them or Christianity as sufficiently to be trusted for all their religious needs. They struggle between the two choices and till now they are still realizing it through that dialectical process in which now they have adopted what is good for them from the alternative and in their part leaving aside what may contradict some elements presented by the alternative¹⁵⁴.

Horton finds the underlying readiness to scrap or demote established theories, the most important single feature of open society and thus scientific attitude¹⁵⁵. The traditional African people may still be in this process, for as it can be seen after one hundred years still there are some elements which in my opinion are to be scrapped especially the need to sacrifice to the ancestors in order to appease and to make sure that they do not cause problems and disorders in the family¹⁵⁶. If they are able to see an alternative of remembering them in the ordinary sense without attributing them power over the living, could be useful in their life not just because they are Christians but as a positive aspect of their life¹⁵⁷.

It is good to remember the beloved departed family members, the living-dead and ancestors but they should not become an obstacle in the daily life because they have to be sacrificed often¹⁵⁸. This belief increase the degree of being a closed society because the whole issue of ancestors is associated with other aspects that may cause stagnation or make the Africans live and remain in the vicious circle of other useless beliefs like that of trusting the diviners and the associated practices of witchcraft and sorcery¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 56, 60.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 169.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 49-50.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. P. HASU, "For Ancestors and God: Rituals of Sacrifice among the Chagga of Tanzania": *Ethnology* 48/III (2009) 202.

¹⁵⁸ The ritual sacrifices described by Dundas seem to be simplified and others abandoned in as much as more changes were introduced in the course of time. See also Wiredu, "Como no se debe comparar", 218-219.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. WIREDU, "Como no se debe comparar", 218-220: Wiredu is convinced that the best way of reforming outdated customs in Africa should begin by weakening the superstitious beliefs on which such beliefs are built by instilling in the new generations the spirit of critical analysis and investigation in order to recognize that the fact that such outdated customs are to be found practiced in Africa alone be a reason to eradicate them. The key here is being outdated and be practiced only in Africa.

When this is put in the dimension of open society and the related alternative thought, one can conclude that the Chagga exaggerate the importance of their ancestors and their living-dead because of the diviners who are not challenged since the Chagga do not take into account how successful the diviners are regarding their divination. “In the theoretical thought of the traditional cultures there is a notable reluctance to register repeated failures of prediction and to act by attacking the belief involved instead, other current beliefs are utilized in such a way as to ‘excuse’ each failure as it occurs, and hence to protect the major theoretical assumptions on which prediction is based”¹⁶⁰.

For example, someone would visit another diviner in case of failure of the other or may repeat a visit to the same diviner. There is no comparison of the results no matter how much the diviners have failed and here to use a proper terminology: how many times such diviner has deceived him and in fact they do not put their divinations to the test¹⁶¹. In case of failure they go to another one and in a strange manner even the victim would defend the diviner’s failure as his failure in fulfilling certain secondary requirements¹⁶². In cases of difficulties and hard times, the diviners remedy must satisfy their needs and in case of failure, again the Chagga should have been able to question the reason of this failure and this could have had opened a new way to an alternative but this is not done. That is why a good number of the Chagga are found attending to the diviners for various misfortunes just as it is practiced by many people in Africa¹⁶³. Horton describes this phenomenal lack of critical examination towards the diviners as an example: “What is notable in all this is that the client never takes his repeated failures as evidence against the existence of the various spiritual beings named as responsible for his plight, or as evidence against the possibility of making contact with such beings as diviners claim to do. Nor do members of the wider community in which he lives ever try to keep ever track of the proportion of success to failures in the remedial actions based on their beliefs, with the aim of questioning these beliefs”¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶⁰ HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 167.

¹⁶¹ Cf. SHORTER, *African Culture*, 72.

¹⁶² Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 167.

¹⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, 167.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

The Chagga people in their process of encountering Christianity have to accept the alternatives presented before them and work on them so that they may help to establish a right relationship with their dead family members without associating them with the diviners and this would be possible if they find an alternative in the concept of cause and effect¹⁶⁵. If they are capable of asking themselves that how can a diviner know the wills of the ancestors and accept that they are the cause of diseases which the today's world know their cause, then they would be able to move from the mesh of fear of being punished by the ancestors since they are believed to be guardians of traditions and morality in the community¹⁶⁶.

The restoration of the things as they were in the olden times can be helpful but should be relative, and should come a moment that proper problems be solved by the mortals themselves by trying to find proper solutions because sacrificing to the ancestors would not cure one from malaria or typhoid or from cancer, no matter how much animals are slaughtered¹⁶⁷. In other words they should know that in this process of moving from a closed to open mentality, they would have to think of doing things as they should be done today and not as the old-time people told them to do¹⁶⁸.

If the Chagga are considered as being in this process of moving from closed society to open society, the ceremonies and the different rituals can be understood within this perspective and the contradictions which may arise when one observes them from outside, would then be part of the dialectic process involving the encounter with the alternative presented before them and so they should not be condemned or be attacked immediately¹⁶⁹. The alternative would help them to develop a proper progressive secondary elaboration, which would facilitate to improve not only their religious beliefs but also other unhealthy phenomena¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 48-49.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. MAGESA, *African Religion*, 35; MBITI, *African Religions*, 85.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 177.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 177.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 57, 60-61.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 168-169.

3.1. Confession of Ignorance: Important factor in this Process

In this process, if it has to be successful, Horton suggests that the confession of ignorance should be taken as another fundamental category especially regarding the aspects which one may find a loop hole for alien causes¹⁷¹. He finds it curious that there is a tendency of the people with whom he had lived to have neither interest regarding the beginning of the world nor the human being, though they acknowledge that it was a work of the Supreme Being, but when asked about questions that they consider important about their life, answers were given abundantly¹⁷². “Scarcely ever, for instance, does he come across a common diseases or crop failure whose cause and cure people say they just do not know. Given the predicament of the traditional thinker, such an admission would indeed be intolerable. For where there are no conceivable alternatives to the established theoretical system, any hint that this system is failing to cope must be a hint of irreparable chaos, and so must rouse extreme anxiety”¹⁷³.

In this Hortonian perspective, the confession of ignorance is one of the alternatives because it would enable the subject to search for means to eradicate or reduce such ignorance. If it is not admitted, especially in cases of diseases, which today we know that they are incurable, would make the diviners continue with their business of deceiving the people and increasing the victims of witchcraft accusations and other related practices. Horton may have reason when he claims that “it is only in a culture where scientific attitude is firmly institutionalized that one hopes to hear the answer ‘we do not know’ given by an expert questioned on the causes of such a terrible human scourge as cancer”¹⁷⁴.

This argument is clear when today in many parts of Africa and among the Chagga, one finds even Christian denominations claiming to have power to cure incurable diseases without the use of medicine or groups that encourage their followers to believe exaggeratedly in the faith healing and thus miraculous cures¹⁷⁵. Even worse there are some traditional

¹⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 173.

¹⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, 173.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. COMORO – SIVALON, “The Marian Faith Healing Ministry”, in: *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 280-290.

doctors who claimed to cure all kinds of disease thus propagating the attitude of closing within their structures discouraging even the spirit to search for the true cures of the diseases haunting the people. These mentalities are the worst enemies for the process of moving from closed society to a scientific oriented society¹⁷⁶.

In line with the thought of Horton there are three aspects associated with the confession of ignorance that the Chagga people do not take seriously just as many other traditional African societies: coincidence, chance and probability¹⁷⁷. The acceptance of situations which cannot be explained or predicted in the human life is poorly developed and not easily acceptable by the Chagga people just as it is for the other African tribes as is clearly demonstrated by Mbiti here. "Even if it is explained to a patient that he has malaria because a mosquito carrying malaria parasites has stung him he will still want to know why that mosquito stung him and not another person. The only answer which people find satisfactory to that question is that someone has 'caused' (or 'sent') the mosquito to sting a particular individual by means of magical manipulations. Suffering, misfortune, disease and accident, are all 'caused' mystically, as far as African people are concerned"¹⁷⁸.

The notion of coincidence can be said to be poorly developed also and the general tendency is to give any problematic happenings a definite cause something that should not be so. For example when a tree branch falls and kills a person who happens to be passing at that place at that moment, there should be an explanation for this disaster: perhaps the man had quarreled with another man or has robbed something from someone else, or has not fulfilled some requirements from the ancestors or the living-dead¹⁷⁹. Sometimes it may be associated with a sorcerer sent by his enemies for various motives to make the branch fall and kill him¹⁸⁰. The idea that such an event could be an accidental convergence of two independent chains of events is inconceivable because it is psychologically

¹⁷⁶ Cf. DE LA PADILLA, "Aproximación a la medicina tradicional africana", in: *Cultura Africana y Cristianismo I* (Madrid 1988) 78; MBITI, *African Religions*, 169-171.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 175.

¹⁷⁸ MBITI, *African Religions*, 169.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional II", 174.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 48-49.

intolerable¹⁸¹. Why to this man and at that time if many people have passed here all the day! To accept this would be to admit that it is inexplicable and unpredictable which is equal to confession of ignorance while there is no alternative¹⁸².

It is the same with the idea of probability. A traditional society thinker demands definite forecast whether something will happen or not and since he believes that his traditional structures are capable of fulfilling this through the diviners and spirit mediums, then no doubt that all kind of people dealing with these things are numerous in traditional oriented societies or closed society than in the more scientific oriented or open society. While pre-scientific thinker is unable to confess ignorance on a question of vital practical import, a scientific oriented mentality is able to do that and where the pre-scientific thinker rejects to acknowledge any limitation on his power to explain and predict, the scientist not only faces such limitations with confidence but devotes a good deal of energy and time to explore their extent¹⁸³.

Horton calls the development from a closed society to opens society as a growth of “intellectual humility” which is a consequence of an underlying confidence, resulting from one’s ability to see his current beliefs not as an end in themselves, but rather as a point of departure for the human search for order, something that would possibly enable a society to surpass the difficulties in facing their own limitations in controlling their environment¹⁸⁴.

Associated with the confession of ignorance, coincidence, chance and probability is the taboo practice. Horton sees taboo as an anthropological terminology for “a reaction of horror and aversion to certain actions or happenings which are seen as monstrous and polluting”¹⁸⁵. In principle those who maintain this practice are unable to explain it because it is even taboo to explain it and so it is bad in itself and as a consequence people make all effort to prevent tabooed events from happening and whenever

¹⁸¹ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 174.

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, 173-175.

¹⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, 175.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 175.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

such an event occurs appropriate sanctions would be applied and sometimes irrational ones¹⁸⁶.

In principle taboos are taken as legislation for what is inadequately legislated in a society, or that which surpasses the capacity of man to legislate in the traditional society because it is believed to be beyond man's jurisdiction due to the consequences of its violation¹⁸⁷. There are taboos which are also sanctioned in the scientific oriented society but they are explained and then they are no longer taboo but a law that sets up demarcations for example the case of incest. It is no longer controlled by fear of polluting the land and causing the anger of the ancestors rather it violates the laws of nature and especially the genetic laws¹⁸⁸.

The open predicament may enable the society members challenge the taboos because some of them can be a handicap in their process of moving from closed society to open society due to the fact that often taboos impose silence on some cases due to the radical consequences to those who break it, thus impeding individual freedom in the cases for example of going against some tenets of the society believed to be inevitable for the life of the society. And in this, Horton may have reason: "Just as the central tenets of the traditional theoretical system are defended against adverse experience by an elaborate array of excuses for predictive failure, so too the main classificatory distinctions of the system are defended by taboo avoidance reactions against any event that defies them. Since every system of belief implies a system of categories, and vice versa, secondary elaboration and taboo reaction are really opposite sides of the same coin"¹⁸⁹.

Horton is aware that the process of moving from the closed predicament to the open predicament is neither easy one nor of a short

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 175.

¹⁸⁷ Taboo is an avoidance of the act and the deed due to a fear to the power associated with it that is why in some cases explanations are seldom given except prohibitions: It is taboo for anyone to leave his house, it is taboo for any dog to bark, taboo for any cock to crow, any pig to grunt. All should sleep till the taboo ends. Cf. G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Fenomenología de la Religión* (México 1975) 34-38; BUJO, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, 155-161.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 175.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

term¹⁹⁰. The movement from a “closed society” to an “open society” involves inner confrontation in the individuals¹⁹¹. And the reason is that though the open predicament has enabled individuals to tolerate threats to their beliefs, “it has not been able to supply them with anything comparable to the coziness of the traditional thinker ensconced amidst his established theories”¹⁹², which provide him with the “womb-like warmth”¹⁹³. This is the inner tension when an individual is confronted with alternative factors that shake those considered by his belief and social structure, to be unchangeable and untouchable. It involves pain from those who may be affected by the process of developing an alternative conception of the world. “A development of alternative world-views erodes attitudes which attach an absolute validity to the established outlook. Throughout the process there are bound to be many people on whom the confrontation has not yet worked its magic. These people still retain the old sense of the absolute validity of their belief systems, with all the attendant anxieties about threats to them”¹⁹⁴.

A good example is from the ancient Greece, beginning with the pre-Socratic philosophers whose independent thinking evoked strong and anxious reactions and Socrates was its victim or in the late medieval times whereby a few decades of confrontation with alien world views and open skeptical thinking were followed by decades of persecution for those responsible for disturbing the established orthodoxy by general closing up of thought¹⁹⁵. Before such confrontations, Horton claims that there are two responses: first they would make sure that those responsible for the confrontation are impeded or destroyed to the last one or the second alternative is converting them to their own beliefs through fanatical missionary activity¹⁹⁶.

When applied to Chagga, their encounter with Christianity presented before them an alternative to their religious beliefs, enabling them to

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 178-180.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 185.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 185.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 185-186.

make comparison and draw their own conclusion from this process that was not a one day activity¹⁹⁷. They had first to know the alternative presented before them with all its associated beliefs. The first reaction must have been that of rejection by many but as time moved on and the alternative presented before them not only challenges them in term of their religious beliefs, but also other issues of life such as health and formal education; the “alternative” provided them with an easy occasion to examine their structures and see how this alternative is really an alternative worthy to be embraced¹⁹⁸.

If Christianity is presented as an alternative, and when I say Christianity I refer to all that which has been associated with Christianity, that is, with all its cultural baggage. It is possible that the wide context itself was a closed reality but before the Chagga people it was an alternative which helped them to question their religious beliefs and practices recognizing that they were not the only one who believed in God¹⁹⁹. There were other people who also believe in God and now they are invited to believe in their God. When they began to ask themselves why they should believe the foreign God while having their God (Ruwa), then the process of moving from a closed religious system towards an open one was initiated because they would have to ask the same question for many of their religious practices and this inquiry is also an alternative in itself²⁰⁰.

In this case instead of destroying those who are bringing this confrontation as did happen in some areas where Christianity was brought, they relativize their beliefs by scrapping out what could not be considered fundamental in their religious life and accept what Christianity contributed in their religious life. They had to be cautious in this process because Christianity presented itself with many other realities which made it to remain more closed within their traditional world especially by not accepting any other religious reality and the cultures of the world²⁰¹.

They might have questioned many of their beliefs and religious practices but due to insecurity and the nature of the alternative itself they

¹⁹⁷ Cf. PLANNELLS, “Actitudes de los misioneros”, 20.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 60.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. STRIJDOM, “Towards a Critique of Indigenous African Religion”, 1.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 2.

²⁰¹ Cf. MANGANY – BUITENDAG, “A Critical analysis”, 4-8.

had to make a choice of not opening completely to unknown religious beliefs and our case Christianity²⁰². They wanted to be an open Chagga society ready to accept Christianity as a way of challenging their own established religious and cultural systems²⁰³. This is what makes them continue with the Chagga religious practices and at the same time accepting Christianity but as already said dialectically as has occurred in other areas in their encounter with Christianity²⁰⁴.

Transition from a closed predicament (closed society, traditionally oriented society) to open predicament (open society, scientific oriented society) touches the whole being of the individuals and so the reluctance and sometime passive resistance within the closed society may cause an inflexibility or a methodical adaptation that can be noted before the “alternative”, the subjects tended to adopt some tenets of the open predicament and at the same time maintaining some tenets of the closed predicament²⁰⁵. The Chagga people should be seen in this dynamic for they seem to recognize the good elements found in Christianity but they could not abandon completely their own religion for the sake of the alternative because their religion also had some good elements that had sustained it before their encounter with Christianity. It is also healthy this process because an encounter of two different realities, normally a mutual influence is to be expected²⁰⁶. In this way they accept the open predicament tenets (challenging and questioning their beliefs) but at the same time they maintain some tenets of the closed predicament (the acceptance of some beliefs uncritically and to consider them as unchangeable)²⁰⁷.

This attitude can be possible but in the long run it would be unsustainable as other factors which contribute to open predicament are acquired and stressed by the society. This can be possible especially when

²⁰² Cf. LEMA, “Chagga Religion”, 60.

²⁰³ Cf. STRIJDOM, “Towards a Critique of indigenous African Religion”, 2-3.

²⁰⁴ Cf. SPEAR, “Toward the History”, 5-6.

²⁰⁵ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 185.

²⁰⁶ Cf. POBEE – MENDS, “Social Change”, 11: “On the other hand, the influence has not been only one way, from outside factors to African traditional religion; it has also been from African tradition religion to outside factors”.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Horton, “African Traditional Thought II”, 162.

the generations that had believed that their existence and survival has been the consequence of what has been inherited from the old, is no longer active due to the movement to other areas encountering people with different ways of thinking and of viewing things, and especially the formal education which may lead to the improvement of the knowledge of the factors which make them maintain certain beliefs and practices²⁰⁸. Improvement in health services in the sense that different illness are cured and the recognition of an integral human healing as an important health service can also speed up the process from a closed society to open society²⁰⁹.

Since the Chagga were and are still confronted with an alternative that enables them to make choice, today their wavering regarding a total acceptance of Christianity as an alternative can be increased by the situation of Christianity today in the countries from which it was brought for it is facing some crisis which may make the Chagga as well as other African Christians see some of their religious beliefs fundamental though he may not be able to give an explanation according to the open predicament model²¹⁰. The Chagga may question also or even demand an answer regarding some practices found today in the old Christian tradition countries from which the missionaries came who prohibited some cultural practices as evil and now some cultural elements considered by the Chagga and the Africans, in principle, to be evil and satanic are found prevailing in the cultures with old Christian traditions especially in the questions of sexuality, marriage and atheism²¹¹.

When an individual or society is challenged by a reality different from the accustomed one, different reactions may result due to the insecurity or fear arising from this alien element²¹². There are those who would manage and adjust themselves to the new reality though with difficult and insecurity hoping for things to be better in the future while others would long nostalgically for the fixed and unquestionable beliefs of the closed culture with the possibility of persecuting those who have managed to

²⁰⁸ Cf. POBEE – Mends, “Social Change”, 11.

²⁰⁹ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 180-186.

²¹⁰ Cf. LEMA, “Chaga Religion”, 44.

²¹¹ Cf. BUJO, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, 25, 35.

²¹² Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 185-186.

adopt themselves to the new reality and here it can be seen that the open predicament is a precarious and fragile thing²¹³.

In the process of evangelization, among the Chagga, such phenomena occurred but with modification in the sense that during evangelization the general principle of hospitality for any stranger could not be applied easily to Christianity because, unfortunately, it came in a context closely connected with colonization of Africa²¹⁴. Though it was rejected primarily for questioning some aspects that could not be scrapped by some Chagga people, it did not suffer serious persecution as in some other areas of Tanzania and Africa, except for the accusation as traitors for those who accepted Christianity at the beginning²¹⁵. In some other African societies, those who accepted Christianity were accused of many things including the raising of the anger of the ancestors and thus causing disorders and diseases and other misfortunes in the society and even in some cases missionaries suffered²¹⁶.

As time passed and after seeing the benefits associated with it, more were ready to accept it and this was for them the beginning of the process of moving from the closed milieu to an open one²¹⁷. There was no continuous reaction normally common to closed societies for an authoritarian establishment of a systematic control and persecution of those who managed to be at ease in a world of ever shifting ideas²¹⁸.

3.2. Open and Closed Predicament Models: Critical view

The open model has its danger not only for the Chagga religious tradition but also for the alternative itself (Christianity) which facilitates the process of shifting because it has to adapt itself to the new situation and because scientific advancement can have negative influence in the field of religion²¹⁹. Once the process has been initiated the questioning

²¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 185-186.

²¹⁴ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 60.

²¹⁵ Cf. DOERR, *Peramiho* I, 35-64.

²¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 35-64.

²¹⁷ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 56.

²¹⁸ Cf. HORTON, "African Traditional Thought II", 186.

²¹⁹ Cf. JOHH PAUL II, *Novo millennio imneunte*, 40; J.C. CARVAJAL BLANCO, *Pedagogía del Primer anuncio* (Madrid 2012) 93-107; O. G. DE CARDEDAL, *La entraña del cristianismo* (Salamanca 1997) 107-139.

would even touch also the alternative itself. In this perspective, it means that even Christianity itself would be put into questioning and be considered as one among the many religious systems, causing as such religious relativism because all religions would be considered equal ways of salvation, something which is against the Christian faith which is believed to be the only way of salvation²²⁰.

For Horton, the closed predicament motives can also contribute to the development of the open predicament²²¹. The case of the missionaries, for example, which in our case are an alternative in the areas where they evangelized play this role. “Perhaps the most interesting example of essentially “closed” motivations behind activities which were to make a great contribution to the development of the open predicament is provided by the operations of Christian missionaries in the fifteenth–eighteenth centuries. The fanaticism with which the missionaries worked to convert distant peoples of alien faith can, I think, be understood as a product of the “closed” society’s determination to protect itself from the possibility of being disturbed by confrontation with alien world view – a possibility which loomed large in this era of exploration”²²².

If the missionaries wanted to protect themselves -in this sense their sense of belief- then in their encounter with foreign cultures with proper claims of having their religion, they automatically had to question also their world view because now there is another world view which contradicts that of theirs²²³. They had to make sure that they understand better their beliefs and those of to be evangelized. In other words they had to open themselves to the new reality encountered²²⁴.

This was not an easy task that is why in the history of evangelization there have been rejections and condemnations of the cultural elements of the people encountered which can be taken as a resistance towards the open predicament movement which required them not consider their world view as absolute²²⁵. Even with these difficulties still the missionaries

²²⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 8, 36.

²²¹ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 184-185.

²²² *ibid.*, 184.

²²³ Cf. ADAMO, “Christianity and the African Traditional Religion(s)”, 6.

²²⁴ Cf. HORTON, “African Traditional Thought II”, 184-185.

²²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 183-184.

embarked on studying and understanding the new world and the result was a body of records of alien views that came to color much of the thought of the times, and this was undoubtedly one of the important contributions to the genesis of the open thinking in the areas where the missionaries have come and worked²²⁶.

To conclude this discussion, we can say that the Chagga as well as the African Christians are in the process of establishing equilibrium between the movement from a closed society to an open society, from a traditional thinking orientation to a more scientific orientation and this would take time regarding some aspects of their culture²²⁷. It is important to note that in this process, it is not easy to achieve a total and complete change from traditional oriented world to a total scientific oriented world. It is not even recommended especially in some parts of the world where scientific advancement have tended to eliminate the presence of God in the world²²⁸. There are some elements, and here especially the religious one, which would resist the questioning and challenging of the open predicament because they do not have empirical proofs of which science demands. Science in the strict science does not admit any authority that cannot be scientifically proven and here it means empirically, claiming that only is true that which is the result of a scientific verification²²⁹. They may forget that just as it is difficult to prove that God exists empirically, the same it is to prove that He does not exist empirically that is why faith in God who reveals himself is fundamental especially for the Christians, which has emphasized on a mutual relation with science recognizing the autonomy of the human culture and especially science²³⁰.

This can be applied also for the Chagga people who are Christians and at the same time continue holding some beliefs of their traditional

²²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 184-186.

²²⁷ Cf. LEMA, "Chaga Religion", 59-60.

²²⁸ This began with the Enlightenment Period where God was considered to be not an omnipresent reality in the human world for he was considered to be in heaven and the human beings on the earth. Even though they did not deny his existence, for them he was an impersonal being away from the world for after creating the world he limited himself in contemplating it without any interference in its activities. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 8-9; J. C. CARVAJAL BLANCO, "El testimonio, corazón de la misión", in: J.C. CARVAJAL BLANCO (coord.), *La misión evangelizadora de la iglesia* (Madrid 2016) 71-74.

²²⁹ Cf. R. FISHELLA, *La nueva evangelización* (Santander 2012) 34.

²³⁰ Cf. VATICAN II COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 59.

religion. The dialectical process can be said to fit somehow in this dynamic for little by little a point of convergence would be achieved. If we force them to abandon completely that traditional mentality, which is rooted in various beliefs as already seen, the final result would be that of separating their culture from their religion and thus losing their religious curiosity²³¹. We should not forget that the human beings and especially the Chagga do associate their present life and the belief on the life after-death which is believed to resemble that of this world. And this is not peculiar to the Chagga; Xenophanes had already insinuated this many years ago in the following passage: “Mortals considered that the gods are begotten as they are, and have clothes and voices and figures like theirs. The Ethiopians make their Gods black and snob-nosed, the Thracians say theirs have blue eyes and red hair. Yes and if oxen and horses or lions have had hands, and could paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the gods with shapes like horses, and oxen like oxen, and make their bodies in the image of their several kinds”²³².

Conclusion

The above reflection can help us now to make some few observations regarding the way how Chagga Christians have been able to live both Christian faith and their traditional religion. First it must be clear that in any process of encounter there are many factors which played part in the establishment of the relationships between the subjects involved. In my opinion the fundamental aspect in the case of the Chagga people are the internal factors inherent in its culture itself and especially its religious perspectives. The nature of traditional religions in Africa to have that capacity of accepting and integrating new religious views should be the point of departure though in some cases it did not function in the same way as the case of the Chagga.

The second factor is the missionary activities which presented the message of Christ as an alternative to the Chagga religious beliefs with convincing offers which were seen to be useful in the Chagga life and connected to this is the access to the Christian Scriptures with stories

²³¹ Cf. PAUL VI, *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 20.

²³² Xenophanes cited by Horton, “African Traditional Thought II”, 184.

similar to those found among the Chagga and so taking to some extent the place of the oral narratives. It is true that many people had no access to the Bible but biblical stories were shared to the people by the agents of evangelization.

The third factor is the willingness of the Chagga themselves to enter in the dynamic process of associating Christian faith with their traditional religion, a process which started in the moment of their encounter with Christianity more than hundred years ago till today. This process which I have referred to it as a dialectical one is continuous one because religion is not a static phenomenon rather a dynamic one. It involves an integration of values from both Christianity and Chagga religions without diminishing the fundamentals of either in such a way that the individual continues to be a Chagga and a Christian. The principle here is that grace is built on nature, it does not destroy nature in order to implant itself on it or to heal it²³³. The fact that religion and culture are closely connected and that religion contributes an important part of that fabric and its internal order, does not necessarily mean that new religious elements cannot penetrate and instill its novelty there²³⁴.

In this case, the aspects seen to be in tension or conflict, in the long run will be purified in as much as they are fitted in their life after experiencing them, rather than attempting to create abrupt discontinuities which may increase the duplicity in the life of the Chagga. There would be tension always because new realities emerge in the course of history requiring new understandings, interpretations and even new language. Even the resolved tensions can at a time become unresolved and the unresolved may become resolved as time goes because the Spirit has not ceased to work on the earth²³⁵.

The scholarly theological elaborations should take into consideration the ordinary Christians who lead their life without making complicated theological debates and sometimes are not even aware of such

²³³ Cf. TOMAS DE AQUINO, *Exposición del "De Trinitate de Boecio"* (Pamplona 1987) 270; K. RAHNER, *Escritos de teología IV* (Madrid 1964-1969) 215-243.

²³⁴ Cf. S. G. GONZÁLEZ, "Inculturación de la fe y evangelización", in: J. C. CARVAJAL BLANCO (cord.), *La misión de la iglesia. Apuntes para su estudio* (Madrid 2011) 203-204.

²³⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 21.

interpretations²³⁶. It is the role of the agents of evangelization to apply them in the pastoral activities especially today since most of them are the natives, the Chagga people who are working with their own people in their own culture. They should make effort to understand their religious elements and be able to direct their people on how to relate them with those of Christianity. We cannot complain about the past missionary activities while we being Africans are doing the same and sometimes worse.

The fact that one is less traditional and more scientific does not necessarily mean that the associated religion with that system is better or more acceptable. Were it so, things would have been different for the more scientific oriented societies where today are suffering from serious crisis because the scientific orientation or mentality has reached a point of doubting all that is religious²³⁷. No doubt that more traditional oriented society provides better environments for religion than more scientific environments whereby everything is given a scientific explanation and requires empirical proofs for everything. Equilibrium between the two realities is necessary for a healthy religious life²³⁸.

The fact that the Chagga have accepted Christianity and at the same time have remained Chagga is a good sign that still they can improve their religious life by accepting Christ event integrating it holistically in their life. If the belief of incarnation as has been explained in the above theory, as a point in which they have been able to live the “two eschatologies” until now, then in the same line they may at the end, reduce the tensions that have been existing between Christianity and their traditional religion elements and especially the belief on the ancestors and the living-dead regarding the manner of relating with them and especially the issue of sacrifices.

The veneration of Saints in the Christian tradition can be one of the solutions for the African Christians when the question of the ancestor veneration is addressed by making this ancestral belief part of their

²³⁶ Cf. BUJO, *African Christian Morality*, 123-124.

²³⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 8-9.

²³⁸ The problem facing the Occident has its root in the dictatorship of scientific advancement which at the final end excludes God in its environment, something which if not taken into consideration may affect the African societies as well though not immediately. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 8-9; CARVAJAL BLANCO, “El testimonio, corazón de la misión”, 71-74; FISHELLA, *La nueva evangelización*, 12-13.

spiritual heritage in the proper way instead of categorical rejection of them, though I think that such a move can only be possible after a long process of integration of both realities involving understanding of each part's stand especially on the part of Christianity²³⁹. As noted that the Chagga may find it difficult and even impossible to consider Jesus as an ancestor, it can be easy for them to consider their ancestors, their living-dead as their saints and find a place for them in their Christian faith, for some suggest that the "the devotion to ancestor spirit and the communion of saints are not far apart in practice"²⁴⁰. In this way it can be possible for the novelty of Christianity to penetrate in that belief and become a true alternative, without ideological pretensions²⁴¹.

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²³⁹ Cf. F. WIJSEN, F. – TANNER, R., *Seeking a Good Life. Religion and Society in Usukuma, Tanzania* (Nairobi 2000) 24-34.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁴¹ It is important to note that veneration of the ancestors has an important aspect on the identity of the concerned because in this way they value their personalities also. If the veneration of the ancestors is to be abdicated it would mean to forget all their historical background which links the present generations with the past. It is more serious because it gave the impression that those of their culture are to be forgotten and embrace the foreigners. The reactions in some countries of Africa especially the Congo-Kinshasa where Mobutu imposed that only African names or ancestral names were to be used, could be the result of the need for self-affirmation, even though political motives were behind the process, the names given were foreign due to the mentality that the African names were pagan and immoral. In fact, it was objected by church authorities in Congo at that time who claimed that the Christian names were sign of Christian authenticity. Even with all the negative aspects associated with the policy of authentication, the ancestral names were accepted in the church. Cf. BAUR. *2000 Years of Christianity*, 447-448.

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