

**Inculturation in Modern Zambia**

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**Abstract**

This article discusses the significance of inculturation and why Christianity in Zambia should be inculturated. It analyses the concept of inculturation and gives a brief background on how Christianity came to Zambia and how the Zambian Traditional Religions were rejected and considered barbaric by the early Missionaries. The paper goes further to recommend ways on how the Church in Zambia could carry out the inculturation process. The article also suggests how the Church in Zambia could ensure that the process of inculturation is addressed throughout the country. The paper asserts that Christianity in Zambia will remain half-baked and incomplete for as long as it is not contextualized to meet the needs of the Zambian people. The paper also discusses a few contemporary challenges which should be put into serious consideration in the entire process of inculturation in Zambia. The paper suggests that meaningful values in the Zambian culture should be identified and adopted into Christianity in order to add value to the worship of God by the Zambian Christians. In conclusion, the article states that if Christianity in Zambia is to survive, inculturation is inevitable. If a truly Christian religion is to be achieved in Zambia, then Christianity must adapt and allow the Zambian Christians to express their faith in God in their own way, in their own languages, in their own cultures! Without inculturation, Christianity in Zambia will remain widely spread but not truly practiced by the Zambian Christians.

This study was carried out in order to suggest how the hermeneutical gaps for Zambian interpreters of Scripture could be significantly reduced. The Catholic Church, the United Church of Zambia, the Reformed Church of Zambia and Pentecostal churches were visited and some members interviewed, in order to seek their views on whether Christianity has adapted to Zambian cultures.

**Keywords:** Inculturation, Religion, Christianity, Church, Culture.

## **Introduction**

Even though it is generally accepted that Christianity came to Zambia as a foreign religion, brought by the European Missionaries, Smith and Dale (1968) confirm that Christianity had previously existed in Zambia, because in cases of persistent sicknesses or persistent drought, the Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia would consult diviners who would instruct them to appease their ancestral spirit known as Shimunenga. If the appeasement yielded no positive result, then direct access to Leza, the supreme god of the Ila-speaking peoples, would be sought. They further assert that according to most native-told accounts or legends, in spite of the existence of many Zambian Traditional Religions amongst the different ethnic groups in Zambia, most of them had a theology that was closely related with the phenomenon of a god who stood in a class of his own and whose abode was the sky. This god was known by different names in the different ethnic groups, but he was the maker of all things and the guardian of all men. Even though he was not worshipped or prayed to, because he was too far removed from men to heed them, there was, already in Zambia, an acknowledgement of a supreme god. As such, the Zambian ancestors regarded all the other gods in their many Zambian Traditional Religions as intermediaries between themselves and this supreme god.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, a 1996 amendment to the Zambian Constitution declared Zambia a Christian nation, while providing for freedom of worship. An estimated 85% of the population professes some form of Christianity. Another 5% Muslim, 5% subscribe to other faiths including Hinduism, Baha'ism and traditional indigenous religions while the balance of 5% are atheist. The majority of the Christians are either Roman Catholics or Protestants. Currently, there is also a surge in the Pentecostal Churches, which have attracted many young followers.

The 2010 Zambia census done by the Central Statistics Office of Zambia found 75.3% of Zambians were Protestants, 20.2% Catholics, 0.5% Muslims, 2.0% followed other religions and 1.8% had no religion at all.

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether Christianity has adapted to the Zambian cultures such that it has taken root and it is truly being practiced by the Zambian Christians. This study desires to fill in the gap created by the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and the need for Christianity to be contextualized in the Zambian culture in order to produce authentic Zambian Christians who practice true Christianity, such that modern Zambian Christians become not only listeners but 'doers' of God's Word.

### **Definition of Inculturation**

According to the Oxford's Lexico, inculturation is the adaptation of the Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background. It involves contextualization and indigenization of the Christian faith in the culture of the people and in this case, the Zambian culture.

Schineller (1990) defines inculturation as an incarnation of the Christian life and the Christian message in a particular cultural context. Mawusi (2009) says that inculturation is God's incarnation and God's saving presence in human cultures. He goes further to state that inculturation is something to be seen in the light of the mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became a human being and lived among the Jews, making the Gospel visible in the life and history of the Jewish people.

Cashen (2010) asserts that inculturation is a dialogue between faith and culture whereas Owoahene-Acheompong (1998) defines inculturation as the integration of the Christian experience of the local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture, creating a new unity as described by Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17. He asserts that inculturation is a mutual dialogue between the local culture and the teachings of the Church, such that it gives rise to a mutual relationship between the evangeliser and the evangelized.

Lukwata (2003) defines inculturation as the dynamic relation between the local church and 'the culture of its own people.' From the above definitions, inculturation is, therefore, the concern of every local church without exception. It is the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and the message of salvation relevant and understood by people of every culture, of every locality and of every time. Inculturation is the re-formulation of the Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-pattern of each people and this involves dialogue and assimilation to help people become genuine and true Christians all the days of their lives. Inculturation is the help that is needed by the Zambian people in order to become genuine practicing Christians.

### **The Concept of Inculturation**

Inculturation is a process which is as old as the people of God and it is 'work in progress' because it is ongoing. It is through inculturation that the Word of God becomes companionable and agreeable with the human ecological realities of the people. Through inculturation, the Gospel is evangelized to the people in their cultural plurality, God's message becomes edified, relevant and given a deeper interpretation and meaning with cultural relevance and sensitivity.

The Oxford Dictionary defines salvation as the deliverance from sin and its consequences. Salvation is God's gift to *every nation* and *every person of every culture*.

The purpose of inculturation is to contextualize the Scriptures and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, such that God's Word adapts to every culture in order to respond adequately to the needs of the people in that culture. Inculturation in modern Zambia would certainly make the Christian faith *culturally permissible, acceptable* and *incarnated*, so that it can have meaning to the Zambian people. But this can only happen if Christianity is allowed to express itself through the culture of the Zambian people.

### **The significance of Inculturation**

Matthew 28:19-20 implies inculturation, which is central in the evangelization of multicultural communities in the world. In response to the Great Commission, the Christian message must be contextualized and this in itself demands that the evangelists in the Church must learn the cultures of the Bible as well as the cultures of the people to be evangelized so that faith and culture can be integrated.

According to the Jewish law known as Halakha, ritual circumcision of male children is a commandment from God that Jews are obligated to follow. Circumcision became the symbol of the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants. Abraham was circumcised at age 99 and Zippora circumcised Moses' son in order to comply with God's command and to fit in the Jewish culture. In Luke 2:21, we read about the circumcision of Jesus at age eight days, and in Acts 16:3, we hear how Paul circumcised Timothy. Both these two circumcisions were done so that Jesus and Timothy could fit service for the Jews. All these examples of circumcision are Biblical justifications of inculturation that are meant to close the gap between faith and culture.

The coexistence of Christianity and other cultures dates back to the apostolic age. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, we see inculturation at work as the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. According to Mutiso-Mbinda (1986), the resurrection made possible the release of the Holy Spirit to people of every culture at Pentecost, when people heard and understood one language and one message of faith, and as a result, 3000 men were saved. In Acts 15:1-21, we have a picture of inculturation of the Gentile culture into the Christian faith. After the council of Jerusalem, it was resolved that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to belong to the Christian faith, but that they should remain Gentiles and worship God as Gentiles. John 1:14 we see inculturation in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became a

human being. The word of God became incarnated in order to propagate the Good News of salvation to humanity. The doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation asserts that Christianity must be made relevant in the lives of the people.

In Acts 17:23, Paul taught about the 'Unknown god' that he had found in a temple in Athens. Paul used this opportunity to introduce the people to the true God. In so doing, he filled the gap in their knowledge regarding this deity, he appealed to their curiosity about the new and strange God that he was about to introduce them to and finally, he dismissed any idea that he was introducing a new god at all. This is yet another example of inculturation closing the gap between faith in God and culture. Inculturation in Zambia would close the gap between faith and culture because it would allow the Zambian values that enhance worship to be used in the Church. Inculturation would bring home the Gospel message through the values derived from the rich Zambian culture, allowing Christianity to be firmly rooted in the lives of the Zambian Christians. The blending together of faith and culture would result in meaningful worship of God. With the foregoing assertions, the Church should not be hesitant to embrace culture in the worship of God because it is the only way in which Christianity will adapt to the experiences of the local people. Inculturation, therefore, is inevitable and an absolute necessity if the Church is to survive and have an impact in the lives of Zambians.

### **Why Inculturate Christianity in Zambia?**

When the Early Missionaries first came to Zambia, they rejected the indigenous Zambian traditional practices and beliefs of the Zambian people, such as the veneration of the dead, belief in spirits, use of magic and traditional Zambian medicine. They categorized these practices as barbaric and unholy for the Christian God. Instead, they suppressed the Zambian culture and encouraged their culture which they believed was far more superior. At Baptism, they encouraged the Zambian Christians to change their names from indigenous Zambian names to Western names and to follow other imported practices of Christianity. They believed that in so doing, they were liberating the Zambians from their oppressive cultures. Zambians were denied leadership positions in the Church, while in collaboration with the colonial masters, stringent land, education, taxation and labour policies against Zambians were introduced. Christianity, therefore came to Zambia heavily Europeanized and encoded in a foreign language and culture. As a result, many Zambians broke away from the mainstream conservative Churches, as introduced to them by the Missionaries, and instead formed

their own indigenous *Zambian Churches*. Why? Because Christianity in its state at that time, failed to address the needs and aspirations of the *Zambian people*!

Baur John (1994) talks about an independent Christian Church, the *Lumpa Church*, established by a woman named Alice Mulenga Lenshina, which was euphorically followed by many Presbyterians, Catholics and Traditionalists, and whose cathedral stood out as one of the largest in Central Africa. Alice Lenshina was of very limited education but she claimed to have died, gone to heaven where she was told by God to return to earth to start a church for Africans only.

At one time, this church had 60000 followers within Northern Rhodesia. The greatest attraction was the Church's hymn-singing choirs which merged traditional and Gospel music. This church promoted a blend of Christian and traditional religious values and practices. Another independent Church was the *Chitawala* or the Watch Tower movement which rejected participating in political life, voting, refusing to sing the National Anthem or saluting the *Zambian Flag*. This movement regarded all governments as part of the kingdom of Satan.

According to Shorter (1973), Christianity must incarnate itself in the African culture. It must challenge and transform the African culture by '*undressing*' it from the foreign culture it came to Africa in and '*dressing*' it in the indigenous African culture. Shorter argues that Christianity must enter the African culture, live in the African culture, speak the African languages, wear African clothes, be eaten from an African plate, be drunk from an African cup so that it can be revalidated from within the African culture. Zambia is definitely no exception in this definition by Shorter.

According to Pope John Paul II, a faith that does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through and not fully lived out (Ezechi, 2011:221). John Mbiti (1969) also argued that for a conversion into a new religion like Christianity to have a lasting impact, it must embrace the language, the thought patterns, the fears, the social relationships, the attitudes and the philosophical disposition of the convert. In his opinion, Mbiti argues that due to lack of inculturation, Christianity, even though well-spread on the African soil, is not deeply engrained in the minds of the Africans. Again, Zambia is no exception in both the Pope's and John Mbiti's assertions.

Elizabeth Mburu (2019) defines culture as the beliefs, behaviors, objects and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. She asserts that it is through culture that people define themselves and conform to the society's shared values and also contribute to society.

In His teachings through stories and parables, the Lord Jesus Christ used elements of the Jewish culture, characters, images and situations already known by the listeners, in order to teach, moving

from the known concepts of the Jews to the unknown. In this way Jesus was able to establish, in a very natural way, unexpected links with new ideas or situations. This implies that without inculturation, the Church will continue to be perceived as a foreign entity in Zambia and conversion will continue to remain shallow in the people's lives. Without inculturation, Christianity will continue to be a '*Sunday only*' affair, with little relevance to the daily lives of the Zambians. It is only through inculturation that the Word of God will find a permanent home in the Zambian people's way of life. Christianity must be brought in context and be allowed to speak directly into the Zambian culture so that it may be able to transform some of its values.

Christianity must be stamped, "Made in Zambia", only then will it become deep-rooted and conspicuously present in the lives of the Zambian Christians. For Christianity to be rooted in the lives of the Zambian Christians, Christ must become incarnate in the Zambian culture and so that He may criticize it like He did to the Jews (Pharisees, in particular).

### **Is the Church in Modern Zambia Doing Enough in the Process of Inculturation?**

The Church in Zambia is not making enough efforts in the process of inculturation because it is now fifty-five (55) years since independence, and Christianity is still very much a foreign religion. Many denominations still use the same old traditional or conservative methods of worshipping God, as taught by the Early Missionaries.

Even though Zambia is a Christian nation, many Zambian Christians have failed to live according to God's standards. Many Zambian Christians still practice polygamy, witchcraft, political violence, ethnocentrism, discrimination, prejudice, fraud, inequality, corruption, same sex marriages. Corruption, discrimination, pride, greed, self-aggrandizement and several other vices that are contrary to biblical principles, are still the order of the day in Zambia. To-date, some Zambian Christians frequently visit diviners and witchdoctors and still wear protection and good luck charms. According to Marie Chene (2014) corruption remains a serious issue in Zambia, affecting the lives of ordinary citizens and their access to public services. Even though Zambia is a Christian nation, Zambian Christians continue to pay double allegiance to both Christianity and to the traditional religions.

It is facts such as these that give a clear indication that Christianity has failed to meet the deepest needs of the Zambian Christians because it is not yet characterized with Zambian cultural values. Christianity has not yet been effectively adapted, adopted and incorporated in the Zambian culture. This is what makes inculturation in modern Zambia absolutely necessary.

The teaching of Religious education as a subject in Primary and Secondary schools is not enough, because as far as the pupils are concerned, they study the subject in order to pass the examinations and not to impact their lives. The Church has not taken advantage of both the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and the introduction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs by the current Patriotic Front government, to engage the politicians and government leaders in order to lobby for educational policies that will incorporate the concept of inculturation in the curriculum development programmes for Universities, Colleges, Secondary and Primary schools in the country. Such an initiative will help the young Zambians to appreciate and be proud of their 'Zambianness' in the things of God at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.

The Church has not engaged the local communities in order to identify the good and meaningful values, beliefs and practices in the Zambian culture in order to appropriately integrate them in Christian worship. For meaningful inculturation to take place, the Zambian cultures have to be rehabilitated and developed for integration into the Church and the worship of God.

### **The Role of the Church in the Inculturation Process in Zambia**

Interpreting the Bible is a big challenge and the Church in Zambia must rise up to the occasion. Imported mimicked sermons and pulpit drama by Church leaders, preachers and evangelists undermine the inculturation process. For the inculturation process to succeed, preachers must stop trying to sound westernized because the two contexts – Western and Zambian - are very different. The Zambian theologians need to formulate theological concepts in the Zambian languages and express them in the context of the Zambian culture. In this way, Christianity will be given an opportunity to judge the Zambian culture, destroying elements that are incompatible with the Word of God, and employing compatible modes of expressions that bring new life to the Zambian Christians. The Bible must be read and faithfully interpreted from a Zambian perspective in order to acquire a Biblical worldview that is able to guide the Zambian Christians in the day-to-day living.

In Romans 12:1-3, Paul appeals for total transformation by the renewal of the mind. This can only take place when Scripture is made relevant to the context of the Zambian believers. Accurate interpretation of the Bible has to be made so that the message is understood in the Zambian context, taking into account the Zambian theological, literary and cultural-historical perspectives.

In a traditional Zambian society, death, lightning strikes, sickness, miscarriages, evil and other human misery are all attributed to spirits, witches or sorcerers, and not the Sovereign God who is in control of everything. This beliefs is so deeply ingrained in the minds of most Zambians such that total



transformation can only take place if this belief is effectively judged, destroyed and replaced by a new Biblical worldview that is able to guide the life of Zambian believers. If not adequately dealt with, Zambian Christians will continue to consult witchdoctors in order to meet their needs, instead of relying on God. For example, how well has the Church interpreted the story of Job in the Old Testament and the man born blind in John 9? Is suffering always a consequence of sin? Zambians must be made to understand that suffering is not always a consequence of sin and that God sometimes allows us to go through suffering for His own reasons and purposes and for His own glory. How has the Church interpreted and applied Deuteronomy 28? Is the focus of this chapter on sin and punishment or on the quality of the relationship God? Zambian Christians need to be helped by the Church so that they are able to interpret their experiences, in the context of a healthy relationship with God and not solely in terms of sin and punishment.

#### **Continued Use of Conservative Traditional Liturgies**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, Christian liturgy is the gathering together of Christians to be taught the Word of God and to be encouraged in their faith. In some of the congregations visited during this study, call to a worship service is signaled by ringing a bell, and the entry procession for the Bible and the preacher into the Sanctuary is acknowledged by a request to the congregants to stand up in silence. Generally, the worship service begins with a 'Call to Worship', in form of a Bible text read at the beginning of the service. This is followed by an Opening prayer and an Opening hymn. Then Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving are said, followed by the uplifting of Offering. The Offertory and Intercession prayers are followed by the Sermon or Homily, and finally a closing hymn and Benediction to mark the end of the service. This arrangement of the various parts of a worship service is based on the old traditional liturgy as introduced to Zambia by the Early Missionaries.

There is need to re-organize and introduce Zambian Traditional Liturgies by celebrating the above-outlined aspects of a public worship service in a Zambian way. In Zambia, whenever a traditional Chief or Village Headman wishes to address his people, a messenger is sent to sound the drum or some other traditional instrument, in order to call people to gather together in one place. This way of calling people to attend an important meeting can be emulated to signal the beginning of a worship service and entry procession for the Bible and the preacher into the Sanctuary. This kind of inculturation will create awareness among the Zambian people that their way of living is acceptable in God's sight and that indeed, God is not far from them but present in their own culture.

All the denominations visited use Bread (leavened or unleavened) or wafers with either alcoholic Altar wine or Grape fruit juice as elements for Holy Communion. These elements are not Zambian but a foreign culture and as taught by the Missionaries. If the true Gospel is to be deep-rooted and appreciated in the Zambian culture, then any staple food and drink which has meaning in the Zambian culture, such as sweet potato, cassava and a beverage such as munkoyo or chibwantu can be consecrated on the altar and used to replace the foreign elements currently in use. This will give the Zambian worshippers a sense of belonging, that indeed their own foods can have symbolic meaning in Christianity.

The idea of giving gifts to Zambian traditional leaders is a sign of humility and great respect in the Zambian culture. Gifts ranging from livestock to crops to food and indeed anything worthy of the receiver of the gift is most welcome. Each one willingly gives, according to their abilities and capabilities, with no extortion or underhand methods being applied in any way. The way Zambians present gifts to their traditional leaders, elderly people and other distinguished members of the Zambian society can be emulated in the Church.

Currently, Offertory in the Zambian Churches was all in monetary form and this was confirmed by most members interviewed. Ideally, Offertory should not only be in monetary form but include livestock, chickens and foodstuffs, and these should be presented in the Zambian way, accompanied by the singing and dancing as done at Zambian public celebrations.

Traditionally, Zambians have always acknowledged that good harvests are by divine intervention. As part of their cultural heritage, to-date, most ethnic groups hold traditional ceremonies to give thanks to their ancestors and to celebrate their harvests. These can surely be emulated in the Church. After the harvest has been gathered, a special Harvest service can be held in which people bring their harvest/produce to Church as a way of thanking God for the good harvest. By practicing what they already know, the Zambian Christians will be drawn closer to God and understand Him better. Some of the congregations visited already have this practice in place but it would have a wider impact if the entire Church in Zambian adopted the practice.

Traditionally, Zambians acknowledge that good rains are also by divine intervention. At the beginning of each rainy season, special thanksgiving services can be held in Church to thank God for His goodness and faithfulness in anticipation of a good rainy season. Later, another special service could be held where seeds for planting that season can be brought into the Church and placed before the Altar for a special blessing. None of the churches visited during this study hold special

thanksgiving services in anticipation of a good rainy season or to bless the seeds for planting that particular season.

To date, the hymns sang in most Christian Churches in Zambia are foreign and of foreign tunes. Zambians still sing about snow (which some of them have never seen!) and the Reindeer (animals) during Christmas services. It is time such terms were replaced with symbols in the Zambian culture that are familiar to the Zambians. Zambian hymns with Zambian tunes must be composed to be sang during worship services. External expressions and rhythmic movements such as dancing, ululating and clapping of hands are spontaneous in most Zambians and these must have a place in the Church in Zambia because they lead members to active participation during the service.

Playing indigenous instruments in the Church makes the members of the Congregation 'participants' in the worship service and this can arouse meaningful worship of God. Amongst the churches visited, the Catholic Church can be singled out as one church that has made tremendous progress in this area. Other Churches should follow suit and make the use of drums and other Zambian musical instruments acceptable for use during public worship services.

Traditionally in most ethnic groups in Zambia, during a Naming ceremony for a newly born child, family and friends gather together to perform some rituals as they give thanks to their ancestors for the gift of that child and also give the child a name.

This is another area where the naming ceremonies and baptism or dedication of infants could be combined and done together in a traditional but meaningful way during a worship service in Church. What is termed 'Christian' names should be discouraged and Zambian children should be baptized using their indigenous Zambian names.

In his paper, Kaplan (1986) suggests the assimilation of some African customs such as leading of the bride by her father to the bridegroom with Christian dancing and singing. Zambians have always celebrated marriages in their own special way. The Church should recognize the values of the Zambian customs of marriages such as dowry or bride price and insist that these and other traditional formalities be completed before a marriage can be solemnized in the Church. The Church should adapt itself more effectively to the Zambian cultural contexts. The progressive Zambian customs that promote fidelity, respect and general well-being of a marriage can be integrated into Christian rites and the Marriage Guidance lessons done by the Church. The various stages leading up to Zambian marriages can be refined to suit the Christian message. The Church should discourage the elaborate lavish and expensive wedding ceremonies based on the western culture that have currently risen to such discouraging levels in Zambia nowadays. The Church should instead encourage the simple but

rich traditional and cultural ones which are all-inclusive and every member of the family gets to participate and contribute in small ways to make them such joyous celebrations in the entire family and community.

Zambians have different ways of celebrating the birth of a baby, but each birth is always characterized with expressions of joy, presentation of gifts, singing and dancing. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and Christmas celebrations could be inculturated in the Zambian Christian Church. Good Friday is a sad day of mourning in the Church, a day when we remember the passion of the Christ. Kaplan (1986) in his paper narrates how Bishop Lucas of Mosasi incorporated African Traditional elements into the Christian funerals. Zambians have their own way of expressing sorrow and this can be inculturated so that Good Friday can be celebrated in the cultural way of mourning the dead in Zambia. Meaningful funeral songs can be integrated into the service to convey the message of bereavement. Also keeping vigil is very much a Zambian practice, as such, while waiting for the Resurrection Sunday, the Saturday night vigil can be inculturated and done in a Zambian way. Zambians love to celebrate, dance, sing and make merry. As such, Easter Sunday can be celebrated in so many different ways by modern Zambians.

Barrenness is considered to be shameful in Zambia and great efforts are always put in place by the elderly in the community. Childless couples are normally helped to access Zambian traditional medicine through diviners and witch doctors. Special Worship Services to pray for Childless couples could be adopted into the Church calendar.

Kaplan (1986) in his paper talks about Audrey Richard's study of initiation ceremonies among the Bembas in Northern Province of Zambia. He also mentions Mabel Shaw's success story of the creation of Chisungu and her acceptance as *Bana Chimbusa*, (Initiation Instructor), in Mbereshi in Luapula Province of Zambia, where girls were initiated into the 'tribe of Christ.' Both Audrey Richard's and Mabel Shaw's experiences are true testimonies that if taken seriously, inculturation can be done effectively in Zambia. Kaplan goes further to mention how other churches such as the Dutch Reformed and Roman Catholic churches attempted to develop Christianized version of the Cinamwali (initiation) where the Christian Alangizi (instructor) were being invited to instruct and emphasize to young girls on Christian values such as obedience, loyalty, temperance, purity, honour, good hygiene practices and good health instead of the pagan initiation. Kaplan (1986) also mentions Bishop Vincent Lucas of Masasi who did not promote outright prohibition, but instead attempted and experimented to Christianize the original traditional rites of passage to acknowledge the valuable social and educational functions of initiation ceremonies, which ordinarily, contain much that is

incompatible with Christianity. The Bishop emphasized that the bad must be eliminated and substituted with the good in order for the ceremony to remain African but the content to become Christian.

When young girls come of age in Zambia, they go through traditional initiation rites to prepare them for adulthood. The good values that agree with Christianity could be identified and incorporated into special services to be held for the young girls, as a way of committing them into God's keeping as they mature into womanhood.

Similarly, meaningful traditional values could be identified so that during installations of a Chief or a Village Headman, the meaningful Zambian values and practices that are done during such events can be identified, recognized, blessed and held in the Church during a special installation service.

The core principle of the Zambian Traditional Religion and the substance of its morality and ethics is the preservation, transmission and enhancement of life in its fullness. Zambians as a people will do anything to preserve life! As a result, all the Zambian rites and rituals that are carried out in a Zambian's life time from birth to adulthood are meant to preserve and solidify this life. Rituals practiced are meant to connect the Zambians with their ancestors and ancestral spirits. To most Zambians, fullness of life is expressed in the abundance of food, livestock, good health, security and in the bearing of numerous off springs. It is for this reason that Zambians spend a lot of time and financial resources consulting witchdoctors and animals slaughtered to appease the spirits in exchange for long lives. For a Zambian, the present life must be celebrated and enjoyed to the fullest. The promotion of life is the supreme goal of the Zambian Traditional Religions.

This resonates with the Christian ideal of life as the outcome of the redemptive action of Christ who came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). The Church should use this connection to help Zambians understand that abundant life, joy and peace can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ who came to bring us life in all its fullness.

Most Zambians are used to offering animal sacrifices in order to appease the ancestral spirits in one way or another. The function of the animal sacrifice is restoring both a sense of personal spiritual integrity and that of the community as a whole. The animal suffers and dies in place of human beings in atonement for their wrongs. During Easter, this same function can be used by the Church to explain the sacrifice of Christ because the concept of substitution and the powerful link between the animal sacrifice (shedding of blood) and Christ (shedding of blood) who died in place of human beings will be a great entry point for inculturation in Zambia. But in the Church in Zambia, rarely is

the death of Jesus Christ ever associated with traditional animal sacrifices but only with the Old Testament sacrificial system.

In his paper, Kaplan (1986) also shares the example of the Dutch reformed Church in Shonaland that incorporated the custom of sitting or kneeling with hands together, as a signal of respect during prayer. This practice corresponded with a Shona commoner expressing respect in the presence of a dignitary. This is yet another example of how some traditional practices should be openly practiced and talked about in the Church, for as long as they add to the understanding the Christian message. The Church in Zambia must be encouraged to apply efforts to preserve features of traditional culture which are valuable and compatible with the development of Christian spirituality.

### **Challenges of Inculturation in Zambia**

There is no doubt that the inculturation process in modern Zambia will be challenged by both internal and external sources such as ethnocentrism, the evolution of the Zambian culture and the lack of ecumenism.

#### **Ethnocentrism**

Zambia, like most other African countries, suffers from ethnocentrism and this is a major factor which causes divisions among Zambians of different ethnicities and religious groups. Each ethnic group believes that it is more superior and better than the other for reasons based solely on their heritage. Most Zambians harbour pre-conceived ideas and beliefs originating from their own customs and culture and this has led to political violence. The Church has to deliberately address the issue of unity so that Zambians can view each other as humanity, created in God's image and therefore of equal value in the eyes of God the Creator. Zambians have to be helped by the Church in coming to the realization that *'human beings are all one in Christ'*.

The Church in Zambia must stand up and preach love for one another, stand together to speak with one voice and in unity as one nation, so that the issue of ethnocentrism can be dealt with in modern Zambia.

#### **Evolution of the Zambian culture**

Culture is dynamic and the Zambian cultures are no exception! Globalization has made significant cultural influences and has created 'cultures on other cultures'. These 'new cultures' have spread across the entire country of Zambia like a wild fire, resulting in a 'new Zambia'. Science, technology and digitalization are the order of the day such that present day Zambia comprises 'Zambian hybrids'

who are products of both a foreign and indigenous heritage! The Zambian cultures are no longer 'pure' because they have been exposed to other external influences. As such contemporary Zambians are significantly different from the pre-colonial Zambians. The task of inculturation in modern Zambia should therefore be done wisely such that only the Zambian values that are relevant to the contemporary Zambian society are 'resurrected from the dead'.

### **Lack of Ecumenism**

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, ecumenism is a tendency towards worldwide Christian unity or co-operation. The term emphasizes universality of the Christian faith and unity among churches. Christian unity is a pre-requisite for the mission of the universal church and for its effectiveness. In John 17:11 our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for unity amongst believers. The Zambian Church must unite in terms of relationship, co-operation and tackle the issue of inculturation as one. Earnest efforts should be made to achieve ecumenism so that the many Christian denominations that are in modern Zambia today are able to work under one umbrella and be able to achieve the one purpose and mission of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ - *salvation for humanity*. Without the apostolic sense of the early church for unity in diversity, inculturation is bound to fail.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed inculturation in contemporary Zambia. It has not only analyzed the concept of inculturation but also made recommendations on how the inculturation can be realized in the Church in Zambia, as well as highlighted the challenges arising thereof. While some elements such as the worship of Traditional divinities, polygamy and witchcraft should be abandoned, the good practices should be retained, transformed and adapted in order to produce authentic Zambian Christians.

Zambians must be allowed to express their faith in God in their own way, in their languages, in their own words and in the way they know best! Through inculturation, the values of Zambian traditions and customs will find fulfillment in the Gospel message and close the gap between faith and culture. Zambian values that enhance worship should be allowed and used in the Church. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ must get to the Zambian people in their locality, in their culture and in their socio-religious backgrounds. Only then will Christianity be firmly rooted in the lives of the Zambian Christians.

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