

Successful Inculturation of Christianity in Africa

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INTRODUCTION

What is inculturation? Where is it going on and how came it to be there? How is it being done there and what are the results so far? How ought it be done at all and what is its goal? What are the discrepancies between how it ought to be done and how it has been done so far, between the ideal and the real, and what can be done to better the standard?

These questions on the substance, principles, practice, goals, area, development, fruits, quality, problems, and amelioration of inculturation form the ten major centres of gravity under which, since the Second Vatican Council, the important place that Inculturation occupies in the effort to translate the Christian faith into action has caught the attention of many Papal Documents, Episcopal Conferences, Pastoral Letters of Bishops, several Theologians, Priestly meetings, Parish Council discussions, the formators of future Priests, Catechists and modern missionaries, and the Chapter discussions of many Religious Congregations.

The present article will, from the background of the level reached so far in the research on this topic, first sketch out the quintessence of the theology of the Inculturation of Christianity (cf. Part I) and then dedicate itself to the present state of affairs in the practice of such inculturation in Africa, using the Nigerian-Igbo case to exemplify the methods required to be applied in order to achieve success in this laborious but decisive process of assimilating Christ's sacred signs, words, actions, way of thinking, acting and living (cf. Part. II).

PART I:

TOWARDS THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCULTURATION OF CHRISTIANITY

§ 1

The people of God ('the Church') are those people *called* by God

the Father (= Vocatio) to follow the way of God the Son (Christ) under the illumination and guide of God the Holy Spirit and who are actually listening to the Son (cf. Tabor) and doing what the Son tells them (cf. Cana). And as the Father has sent the Son, so has Christ *sent* the Church into the whole world (= Missio) to continue: under the light and guide of the same Holy Spirit, to spread *the Evangelium*, the happy news of the arrived Kingdom of God, to all creatures, and thus to all the peoples on earth, to the remotest ends of the earth, till His return at the end of times (= Evangelisation). And since the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of the Most Blessed Trinity, it is the Kingdom of the one divine Substance (thus the Kingdom of Infinite Freedom) and three divine Persons (thus the Father's Kingdom of Love, Justice and Peace, the Son's Kingdom of Grace, Truth and Life, the Holy Spirit's Kingdom of Unity, Sanctity and Joy). And since both the good News of the Kingdom (the Evangelium) and the Kingdom itself are concretely perceptible in the Son of God made man, the teachings of *Christ* have to be addressed by the Church to the deepest longings in life of the individual and of the society and, through this, be introduced into the very vein of the blood of the addressees until He enthroned in their hearts, in order, therefrom, to determine every aspect of their life, their social, economic, political, moral, religious and spiritual practices. For only by addressing the Evangelium to the deepest longings of human beings can the christian faith appeal to human hearts, penetrate the human mind, permeate human thinking and life and, thus win over the human race to the Will of God revealed by the Word of God made flesh, win it over to an undivided allegiance to the Son of God made man, win it over to a decided followership of Christ's way of life.

§ 2

But since the deepest longing of the society is so rooted and latent in people's native culture as the deepest longing of the individual is hidden and resident in the human heart, the Evangelium of the divine Kingdom must be continuously addressed to the people till the values constituting this Kingdom (namely freedom, love, justice, peace, grace, truth, life, unity, sanctity and joy) *permeate the culture* of the people a) capable of receiving the good news and b) desirous of the Kingdom (= Inculturatio), so that they in their life may begin to think and to act and thus to truly live like Christ (= Christianisatio).

In this conformity with Christ in the way of thinking and acting consists that life of *holiness* (= Sanctitas) to which all men have been called (vocatio) by God the Father.

Thus: *Vocation, Mission, Evangelisation, Inculturation, Christianization* and *Sanctity* form an inseparable Sextet, whereby the first pair, Vocation and Mission, is the prerequisite for the pastoral act of the Church; the second pair, Evangelisation and Inculturation, is the process and method of the act itself; and the third pair, Christianization and Sanctity, is the effect of the act.

Inculturation lies thus within the context of systematics and is appropriately discussed and adequately practised only within this systematic context. Inculturation presupposes the vocation and mission of the Church, is the Church's method of evangelisation, and leads to that christianization and sanctity of man for which the Church has been called and sent into the world.

§ 3

Lying within a systematic context, Inculturation can only rightly be carried out when it is done *systematically, not confusedly*. Confusion is the fusion of two incompatible ends; such a fusion produces a *circulus vitiosus*. System on the contrary is effected by the fusion of compatible, distinct but complementary and thus inseparable parts into an organic whole; the diverse parts (like *the root, the stem, the branches, the leaves* of a tree) follow an irreversible order (first the root, then the stem, then the branches, not vice versa) and are correlated among themselves through their functions; this correlation gives dynamism to the whole system; and the stability of the whole is guaranteed by the foundation on which it stands (like the soil in which the tree is rooted) and fortified by the irreversibility of the order followed by the parts innerly connected among themselves.

§ 4

Inculturation is a synthetic term; it connotes the synthesis, the fusion, of culture with some other thing compatible with it and life-bringing to it. For in order that the fusion may not result in a confusion, this 'other thing' must be something compatible with culture. Thus, in order that the inculturation of Christianity may not result in a confusion, Christianity and the native culture of the people must be compatible.

And truly they are, if well understood. The practice of a systematic, synthetic (not confused, syncretic) Inculturation of Christianity must thus proceed from a concept of christianity that is compatible with that of culture and a concept of culture that is compatible with Christianity.

The compatibility of 'the other thing' to be fused with culture in the act of inculturation becomes all the more a *conditio sine qua non* when one thinks of the fact of the mortality of cultures or when the survival of the culture in question is at stake. For, in order that the fusion may not put the life of the culture in jeopardy, since cultures can die, the culture is to be fused with only what can promote its life, not what can paralyze or kill off the culture.

Christianity can be united to the native culture of the people because the two are compatible; they are compatible because they have something in common: both are cultures. However, while the native culture of the people is the culture of those who either do not yet believe wholly in Christ or do not believe wholly in Him anymore, Christianity is the culture of those people who believe ever more wholly in Christ as true God and true man, the culture thus of the new people of God, the culture of the Church. For, there is no person, individual or collective, who does not believe somehow in Christ, implicitly or explicitly, partly or wholly.

§ 5

Every culture, be it the native culture of the people, be it the culture of the new people of God, comprises five elements. The inculturation of Christianity is the insertion of the five elements of Christianity as the culture of the new people of God into the corresponding five elements of the native culture of the people, in such a way that: 1) the relationship between the first element of the native culture, namely the history of the people's experience in the world, *and* the first element of the culture of the Church, namely the history of the Church's experience of divine revelation, is that between 'Nature' and 'Grace' (thus 'temporal thing' and 'eternal thing'), whereby grace does not destroy nature but rather presupposes and perfects it; 2) the relationship between the second element of the native culture, namely the people's view, notion, understanding of the different perceptible realities (God, the world, man, life, death, etc.) in the world based on these their experiences, *and* the second element of the Church's culture, namely the Church's Dogma on the different perceptible realities (God, the world, man, life, death, etc.) built

on her experiences of divine revelation, is that between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ (thus 'created person' and 'uncreated person'), whereby both have genetic relation, John is precursor of Christ, prepares the Way to Christ, leads people to Christ, and gives way to Christ, as the proper and only Messiah and Redeemer; 3) the relationship between the third element of the native culture, namely the people's attitudes to the different realities based on the views, notions, understandings they have of these realities, and the Church's Morals built on her Dogmas, is that between the Jewish Law and Jesus Christ (thus 'temporal thing' and 'eternal Person'), whereby Jesus, though He has not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law, corrects and complements and surpasses thereby the Jewish Law, for He Himself is the Lord of the Law, and the Law being a thing rather gives indication to Him as the Law giver and the Judge of all, living and dead; 4) the relationship between the fourth element of the native culture, namely the people's expression of their attitudes, views and experiences through varied forms of arts in signs (cf. symbols, carvings, painting), words (cf. language, literature) and actions (cf. Music, Dance), and the fourth element of the Church's culture, namely the Church's Kerygma, Liturgy and Caritas as the expression a) of her experiences of divine revelation, b) of her Dogmas, and c) of her Morals, is that between Nature and Grace; 5) the relationship between the fifth element of the native culture, namely the peculiar artistic style and endowment with which the people express their attitudes, views and experiences, and the fifth element of the Church's culture, namely the Church's incarnational method with which she synthesizes the divine and the human realities, following the model of the hypostatic union in Christ: the model in which the Holy Spirit (the vivifying principle of the Church) unites the divine Word with the Immaculate Flesh of the Virgin into the one Person of Jesus Christ, is that between Nature and Grace.

To show this, here is a diagramatic parallelism of the structures involved in the inculturation of Christianity:

The Native Culture of the People *Christianity as the Church of the New People of God: The Culture of the Church*

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| 1) The history of the people's experiences in the world | 1) The history of the Church's experience of divine revelation |
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(cf. Nature---Grace)

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|---|---|
| 2) The people's view (notion and understanding) of the different realities (God, the world, man, life, death) in the world out of these experiences | 2) The Church's Dogma on the different realities (God, the world, man, life, death) built on her experiences of divine revelation |
|---|---|

(cf. John the Baptist---Jesus Christ)

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|---|--|
| 3) The people's attitudes to these realities based on these views (notions and understandings) they have of these realities | 3) The Church's Morals built on her Dogmas |
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(cf. The Jewish Law---Jesus Christ)

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| 4) The people's expression of these attitudes, views and experiences through varied forms of arts in signs (symbols, carvings, paintings), words (language, Literature) and actions (Music, Dance) | 4) The Church's Kerygma, Liturgy and Caritas as the expressions a) of her experiences of divine revelation, b) of her Dogmas, and c) of her Morals |
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(cf. Nature---Grace)

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|---|--|
| 5) The peculiar artistic style and endowment with which the people express these attitudes, views and experiences | 5) The Church's incarnational style by which she synthesizes the divine and the human, following the model of the hypostatic union in Christ: the model in which the Holy Spirit as her vivifying principle unites the divine Word and the Immaculate Flesh of the Virgin in the one person of Christ. |
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(cf. Nature---Grace)

The Church is the tie and transmitter, mediating, reconciling and uniting Christianity to the native culture of the people. She is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit (as the vivifying principle of Christianity and of the Church) inserts, infuses, the five elements of Christianity as the culture of the Church into the corresponding five elements of the native culture of the people and thereby fuses the former with the latter. The Church is thus the instrumental agent of the inculturation of Christianity by the Holy Spirit. Inculturation, the fusion of Christianity and the native culture, cannot be done any way whatever,

but rather in such a way that on the one hand the whole of Christianity becomes the new culture of the people and the entire people become the new people of God, and on the other hand some of the elements of the native culture become superceded, removed and replaced, while the rest are corrected, complemented and fortified and become means of the necessary self-expression of Christianity in a way accessible to the people. These happen when Christianity (which has come to fulfill by penetrating and perfecting the native culture) does five things: 1) with her second element *replaces* the second element of the native culture, and thus liberates the people from the darkness of ignorance to the light of the knowledge of the real truth; 2) with her third element *corrects and transforms* the third element of the native culture, by *converting* from commanding to promising, from demanding to exhorting and encouraging, from complaining and indicting to absolving, acquitting and releasing, from court threats to amnesty and pardon, from condemnation to forgiveness, from camping and constraint to liberation, from oppression and affliction to comfort and consolation, from intimidation to fascination, from desperation to hope, from diverse individual laws to the all-uniting law of double love, from using force to appealing to freedom of will and conscience, from imperative to indicative; 3) with her first element *reveals* the proper sense and value of the first element of the native culture; 4) with her fifth element *widens and deepens and renders more efficacious* the fifth element of the native culture; 5) *Uses* the fourth element of the native culture *mutatis mutandis* to express her fourth element in a manner thus accessible and attractive to the people.

PART II:

AFRICA AND THE INCULTURATION OF THE CHURCH'S CHRISTIAN MESSAGE OF SALVATION

2.1 *The Church's christian message of salvation*

The proclamation of salvation is the center of the Christian message to all of humanity and of the Church's major missionary activity in the World. It is the message that *there is eternal life*; that death is not the end! that there is resurrection of the dead; that there is only one person who can raise man from the dead, namely the only begotten Son of God made man, Jesus Christ; that Christ can do this not only because He has already called some dead people back to life, but also

because He Himself even has resurrected from the dead; that He has been able both to raise others from the dead and to resurrect Himself because He Himself is that which He does: He has been able to effect the resurrection of the dead because He Himself is the resurrection and the life: eternal life: the life of the eternal God, which He, the Son of God made man, has promised to grant whoever believes in Him and eats His body and drinks His blood.

Eternal life for man thus means participating in the divine life. It is for man the fullest form of living, a new state of life, a new experience, the content of which for man consists in seeing His Creator as the Origin and Goal of his terrestrial life; this seeing, this vision, does not just mean a looking at, a gazing at, the gloriously splendid face of God, but rather the highest form of knowing, loving and serving God; the intrinsic value of this highest form of knowledge, love and service of God, for which God has created man, is eternal joy, infinite gladness, perpetual felicity, unlimited bliss, beatitude without end, which satisfies all the most intimate and ultimate desires of man perfectly.

Salvation thus consists in God's gift of this divine, eternal life to man, whereby God first intended to make this gift; then He created man as the beneficiary in such a way that man has a) an in-born desire for this divine life, b) an innate capacity to receive it, c) a co-natural habitability, interior indwellability, for God Himself as the source of all life, temporal and eternal.

Man as creature is by nature so frail as his life is fragile and delicate. Out of this frailty he perverted, by collaboration with the tempting spirit, the originally God-willed desire in him for eternal, divine life into a desire for the eternal, divine substance, namely for omniscience and (since knowledge is power) omnipotence. This mistake was grave; for, just as it is impossible for a man to jump over his shadow without getting dizzy and giddy and falling and fainting, so it is impossible for a creature to want to become the Creator Himself without falling. Man is fallen and lying helplessly in a faint, cannot revive himself, cannot call himself back to consciousness, cannot regain strength by himself and stand on his feet any more without the help of one totally different from him: a gallant passer-by on high mount (in contrast to man lying on the ground having fainted), so benevolent (in contrast to the man who will-ed evil, beneficent (in contrast to the man who did evil), compassionate and prepared that he goes and helps the man out of the danger of death (cf. the merciful Samaritan and the man who travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho, namely moved *away* from the land of peace to the land of perdition, namely

deviated from God to the devil through willing and doing evil).

The Son of God descended from on high to become man, and lived among men to show them the true way: the true way to live in peace with God and with one another; the true way out of their crisis and conflicts: the true way to follow to reach the desired divine life: the way of obedience to the Will of God. The obedience to the Will of God is the guarantee to the truthfulness, authenticity, of the relation of man towards God; disobedience is inauthenticity and falsehood.

God created man in the image of God ('a norma dell'immagine di Dio'). This image of the invisible God is the Son of God made man who is called Christ. The Son of God made flesh has shown Himself as the true way, as the truth, through his paramount obedience to the Will of God, obedience till death, death on the Cross.

The radical obedience of Jesus Christ to God His Father is, from the point of view of His true humanity, a mentality suckled at the breast of an Immaculate Mother most docile to God and famous for her 'Fiat'; but from the point of view of His true divinity it is founded on the indivisibility of the only one divine substance which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have in common and which brings with it that though the three divine persons are ever distinct they are never separable from one another, neither in their Wills nor in their Act. For, whatever each one of them wants or does, He wants and does it together and in concord and harmony with the other two, and there was never disagreement, there is no discord and there can never be conflict in the divine Trinity as the homeland of love, peace and order.

Christ is the Son of God in whom the Father is well pleased on account of His perfect obedience to the Father; He is perfectly obedient to the Father on account of His perfect faith in the Father. He obeys the Father perfectly, convinced of the Father's love for Him. The Father loves the Son so much that whatever He wills from the Son cannot but be for the Son's good. Christ in His exemplary obedience to and faith in the Father is the norm, the criterion for measuring out which the human being is pleasing to God, He is for every human being *the true way* to follow in order to please God; and without pleasing God no human being can be admitted by God to participate in the divine life; Christ is therefore the true way to reach eternal life.

Christ as the principle of Christianity is the Head of the Church and gives commands to the members of His Mystical Body and Bride which is the Church; the Church carries out the orders from Christ and does what Christ Her Head and Bridegroom wants to be done and the way

He wants it be done: she has not got to do other than what He has asked her to do or what He has initiated and asked her to continue, and He has gone about doing good in order to give her an example of how it ought be done to be pleasing to God (*exemplum dedi vobis...*). For, since what the Son does is what He sees the Father doing and He does it the very way the Father does it and would want it to be done, the people of God therefore can do what pleases God only by doing what the Son does and asks them to do and by doing it the way the Son does it and wants it be done, or would have done it if He were to do it or if He were there. Christ the Son of God made man is thus the Teacher and Model of the Church, the new people of God, in doing what is pleasing to God. Only from Christ the Son of God the Church as the new people of God takes her bearing towards God.

But the light with which she sees this her christian spiritual orientation comes from the same Holy Spirit that both guides and guards the pilgrim people of God on earth and animates and vivifies the entire mystical Body of Christ, the ever indestructible and ever young Church.

2.2 *The prevailing seven main stages in the historical development of the acceptance of Christianity among the Black African peoples*

The acceptance of the new Christian message and understading of salvation among the Black African Peoples in the South of the Sahara is a historical event that has taken place in a remarkable chain of, till now, seven noteworthy stages:

1) First, there was the original position of the people, namely their pre-christian idea of salvation.

The African peoples, prior to the encounter with the Christian message of salvation, had a particular concept of salvation. For them, salvation consisted in the security of life. For this they attached themselves both to God from whom all life comes and to every instruction from God that served to assure them of life. This attachment was extended in the form of servile obedience to every messenger from God. Such messengers they called their gods; and these gods were innumerable and diverse. The danger of being gullible and naive was inherent in such a servile outlok. Besides, the danger of one feigning to be a messenger from God and of intimidating and terrorizing such simple minded, naive and gullible people was almost inevitable.

Moreover, in their concept of salvation as security of life the people venerated, up to adoring, certain things that could serve to protect their

lives: trees, animals etc. Idolatory, totemism, etc., was inherent in such a panic about life. Last, not least, it was the quest for long life, not for deep life, it was quantity, not quality, polytheism, not monotheism, polygamy, not monogamy, that was their priority in this panic about life. But the burning desire for long life, the ardent request to be allowed to live on, was soon contradicted by the experience of inescapable fragility and death. The long life which the people desired was one that was always inescapably under the shade of death and had beginning but should, so they desired, in spite of its permanent threat by death, have no end. The idea of another type of life, namely a life that has neither beginning nor end, knows no sorrows, but is rather filled up with joy and glory, was outside their imagination; they had never heard of it, such is the eternal life.

2) Then came the Christian proclamation (preaching and teaching) of a new and fuller concept of salvation according to which the idea of salvation *existed* in God before all creation, and the reality of Salvation *subsists* in the Son of God made man and, therefrom, in the Church as the mystical Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit, and *consists* in the participation of man in the eternal life as the life of the eternal God one and triune, through believing decidedly in word and action in Christ as God and receiving His eucharistic Body and Blood.

3) Then followed the *resistance* to this 'novum' by the people as the addressees, a resistance which took different forms, ranging from doubting, through total refusal, to violence.

4) Then followed the *persistence* and *insistence* of the courageous and perseverent bringers of the message on the veracity of the proclaimed truth.

5) Then came the *assistance* of the convinced missionary proclaimers of the message to the people to help the latter *in their own way* to experience the veracity of the truth. For, whatever is received, is received according to the capacity, the desire, the disposition, the temperament, the mien and the culture of the receiver.

6) Then came the gradual withdrawal, *desisting*, of the people from their original resistance to the novum, and therefrom began the gradual chewing, swallowing, digestion, assimilation and inradication, of the novum among the people.

7) Today has begun the stage of retrospection in which the people, looking back to their past, have begun to say with Saint Paul the converted Saul: 'when I was a child I thought like a child and I acted like a child, now I am an adult ...'. And this means, from the point of view of

doctrine, a realization that it was pure misunderstanding believing in many gods and enslaving oneself to them. And from the point of view of administration, it means: the young community of believers in the new message of Salvation has now, after a hundred years, reached a noteworthy grade of maturity, an over-average grade of maturity both in the numerical strength of the laity, the religious and the clergy, and in the quality of academic scores; the young community has grown up enough to be not only co-responsible for herself as a branch of that universal living Vine plant which is the Mystical Body of Christ the Vine, but also co-responsible for the life on the whole plant.

2.3 Concrete exemplification of the method of successful inculturation

Having worked out in Part I, § 6, the five things that must be done and how they ought to be done if the Inculturation of Christianity should be a success, and having delineated in Part II, section 2.2, the prevailing seven stages of the historical development of the acceptance of Christianity among the Black African peoples, it remains now in the following concluding section 2.3 to show concretely how such a success can be scored in Africa, after the necessary discernments of spirits. However, on account of the limited space given to the present article, 1) this concrete demonstration will restrict itself, on the one hand, to the fifth among the prevailing seven stages of the historical development and, on the other hand, to the first among the five things that ought to be done in Inculturation, and 2) the writer will use only the Nigeria-Igbo case to exemplify the hope of success in the inculturation going on today in Africa. In other words: in this section 2.3, the aim is to show how the Church can succeed in inculturating her dogmas (cf. Section 2.1) vis-a-vis the Nigerian-Igbo people's native views, notions and understanding of religious realities.

The inculturating Church in Igbo-land wants to synthesize *Christianum* with *Africanum* as two compatibles hitherto ununited. And she does so in five steps.

1) She takes off from 'Christianum', breaking it down to Jesus Christ the divine Word made flesh (*Verbum divinum caro factum*) who is still today dwelling in Spirit among the entire human race, after He has dwelt physically among our Asian neighbours.

2) Then she takes up 'Africanum', breaks it down to the multiplicity of languages as a specially African and Asian phenomenon, and differentiates the 'Proverb' (*Pro-verbium*) as the African preferred and darling

pattern of thinking from the 'Parable' (Parabola) as the Asian preferred and darling category.

3) Then she synthesizes: Jesus Christ, the incarnatum Verbum divinum, must be proclaimed (preached and taught) as 'the Proverb of God' to the Africans, if the Africans as lovers of Proverbs are to rise and declare totally for Christ and for the Wisdom of God in Him. For just as in Proverbs the speaker makes use of the things with which the listeners are conversant, to clothe his idea, namely that which he wants to say, and this in such a way that the entire Proverb bespeaks wisdom,, so too in Jesus Christ God makes use of our human nature through the immaculate flesh of the Virgin to wrap the divine Word He wants to speak to the entire human race in such a way, and with the result, that this Word reveals the divine Will and the whole Christ bespeaks the Wisdom of God. For « what is more basic to the reasoning of our black people than 'theological' thinking, the looking for and finding in God (= theos) the reason (= logos) of reality? What is more primeval to our black people's world-view than religion? What else is the chrystalization point of our people's daily thinking and living than God? What is more primordial to our piety than being for (= pro) the High God by clinging lively to the word (= verbum) said to us by those He sent to act for (= pro) Him as truly His word (= verbum)? What is thus more original to us than our 'pro-verbial' and 'symbolic-allegorical' thinking? In what way do our people communicate as conspicuously as in proverbs and symbols? How else do we build our proverbs and symbols than by assembling traits taken from the particular data in our surroundings to compose the rules of thumb, the succinct principles according to which we act? How else did our ancestry compose such models than by imitating Nature, with which they lived closely and which they were good at observing? What more was the Cosmos for them than the work of art designed by the Creator for stimulation? Why else did they look to Nature for inspiration than because it delights and thereby teaches? For, who can 'edify' a man, without first 'elevating' him? Is it not this delight and elevation that underlies our hilarious temperament, spontaneity and liveliness, and culminates in our humour and openness, our joy and festivals? Is it not so, that in the heat of the summer we beat the drums, bend the waist and move the hips, as we intone one song after the other and, at the height of the chorus, shout our joy, firing several shots in rapid succession into the sky, to quicken and increase our hilarity, out of happiness and gratitude to the most High God and Creator? Is the symbolic thinking

not the basis of our dialogical reasoning, and this, in turn, the foundation of our community spirit »¹?

4) With this proverbial reasoning therefore the Church advances to urge the prevailing adherents of the native African religion to pass over irrevocably and irreversibly to the Christian religion. This she does by presenting the relationship between the Igbo native religion and the Christian religion as that between a Typos and its Anti-and-Prototypos. Such a relationship is not the same as that between things, as between Nature and Grace, but rather between persons, as between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. It is such that the two have some genetic relation, but the Typos is only a precursor of its Anti-and-Prototypos, prepares the way to it as its superior, suffers for its sake, point at it as the proper one, gives way to it and is replaced by it as the true one. Consequently, the inculturating Church replaces, substitutes, the 'typical' traditional Igbo religious beliefs about the High and most sacred and, for this, transcendently inaccessible God, the gods, the benign spirits, the malign spirits, the reality of fortune, the ancestors, the diviners, the elders, the clan, reincarnation, ritual sacrifices, and the fairy queen, on the one hand, with the anti-and-prototypical Christian religious beliefs about God the Father, the only begotten Son of God, the Holy Spirit and the Angels, the Devil and the evil spirits, the reality of Grace, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Church, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Eucharist, Mary the Queen Mother and Star of the Sea, on the other hand.

To show this, here is a diagrammatic parallelism of the items of this particular inculturation of the Church's Dogmas vis-a-vis the Nigeria-Igbo native religious beliefs:

<i>The Objects of the 'Typical' Igbo Native Belief</i>		<i>The Objects of the 'Anti-and- proto-typical' Christian Belief</i>
1) the High and most Sacred, transcendently inaccessible God	»	1) God the Father
2) the gods, minor deities,	»	2) the only begotten Son of God
3) the benign spirits	»	3) the Holy Spirit and the Angels

¹ J. Egbulefu, Do we need Scientific Theology?, in: « Vidyajyoti », Journal of Theological Reflection, Vol. XLIX, May 1985, No. 5, p. 230-233, here: 231.

4) the malign spirits	replaced by	4) the Devil and the evil spirits
5) the reality of fortune	»	5) the reality of Grace
6) the Ancestors	»	6) the Patriarchs
7) the diviners	»	7) the Prophets
8) the elders	»	8) the Apostles
9) the Clan	»	9) the Church
10) the reincarnation	»	10) the Resurrection of the dead
11) the ritual sacrifices	»	11) the Holy Eucharist
12) the fairy queen	»	12) Mary the Queen Mother and Star of the Sea

5) With this change, removal of the one and replacement of it with the other, the inculturating Church then concentrates its pastoral work on instilling in the people the courage to start and persevere in the necessary passover from the Typos to its Anti-and-Prototypos, knowing fully well that it is not easy for a people who for long had been emotionally attached to the objects of their native religion to detach themselves from these and transfer their emotional attachment to objects of the new, fuller and proper religion. For in negotiating between the new, christian religion and the old, Igbo native religion, the inculturating Church takes into decisive consideration the fact that each of the *two* religions calls for *three* elements: i) the objects of belief, ii) the willingness and obsequies with which the believer adheres, attaches himself, clings to the objects of belief, and iii) the innate, inborn, intrinsic capacity of man to believe at all. The synthesis aspired to by the inculturating Church is that which on the one hand *includes the following quartet*: A) the belief objects of the Christian religion, B) the willingness, readiness and obsequy with which the Igbo people have hitherto adhered, attached themselves, clung to the objects of belief of their pre-christian, native religion, C) the innate, inborn, intrinsic capacity of (the Igbo) man to believe at all, and D) the adjustment of B) and C) by the Holy Spirit to the Holiness of A), because the method must be conformed to the object, the means must be adapted to the goal, in order to be adequate — hence, in this sense, inculturation is a task that calls for strategic planning and careful calculations, as well as for concentration, continuity and perseverance — and on the other hand *excludes* the objects of belief of the native religion, for they lead to problems of syncretism and double morality in the neophytes' practice of the christian principles of life. The elimination of such objects of belief is already legitimate from the inner logic of the inculturation system. For guided by the dogmatica insight

that grace does not destroy nature, but rather presupposes and perfects it, and by the biblical insight that Christ has not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to complete them, *on the one hand*, the inculturating Church sees the Igbo native religion correctly as a religion of nature preparing the way for the christian Religion as the religion of grace. Because in such a theological forefield of the christiana revelation as the native religion of the people one finds important analogies (but not more than analogies) for the christian revelation (in the biblical-theological understanding of the word, therefore, in the sense of a dialogical event).

Grace, by coming to perfect nature, implies with its coming the imperfection and need for complementation of nature. Since Christ, who came to fulfill the law and the prophets implies by his arrival that the law and the prophets are not the fullness and since He has criticized explicitly the Law and Prophets only as far as some errors have sneaked into them through human beings in their misunderstandings and exaggerations which have meanwhile disfigured and obscured the original intention of the Father (whose Will has been expressed in the Law) and of the Holy Spirit (who has spoken through the Prophets), therefore, *on the other hand*, the fundamentals of the Igbo native religion in general should be examined critically. In fact, a historico-critical examination of the genesis of the Igbo pre-christian religion which is a typical primitive religion reveals three phases of its historical development.

It came into existence: a) from the experience of the transitoriness of all creatures, especially the experience of families dying out, b) through the more intensive observation of the cause of the phenomenon of death and the alledged ascertainment of two incomprehensible powers in nature, the one causing death, the other causing healing, c) to the trepidation and fear of the killing power in nature, but also the superstitious mystification and magical obscuring of the mystery of the healing power in nature.

It has evolved: a) from the search to overcome this fear, b) through the development of animism as the putative answer and the emergence of manism from animism, c) to the development of totemism from manism.

It has been stabilised: a) from the superimposition of fetishism on animism-manism-totemism, b) through the application of a destructive power in the sense of magis, c) to polytheism and its consequences in the belief, in the morals and in the rituals of the people.

Besides, the analytic critique of the historical origin and develop-

ment of the history of religion has made it possible to identify the following three basic difficulties of the old Igbo people with regard to their native religion as rather man-made problems: a) fear and trepidation instead of the liberation and fortification of the human being, b) tutelage instead of helping man to come of age, c) movement without encounter, the soul ever moving towards the divine but never encountering God himself.

The present enthusiasm of the people in Igboland wherever christianity is transmitted as a dialogical and liberating religion, is understandable also from this side: in the new christian religion one sees what one has been missing, one hears what was kept a secret from one, one receives what was denied in the old, native religion.

In addition, the basic criticism of the old religion unmasks the trick in the politics of its human mediators between the supreme god and the people: it is not so much the grace of God must be brought to the people so that the people may be saved and God be praised, as it is that the sins of the people must be reported to God so that God may get angry and the people be afraid and, in consequence, flee to the human mediator and bind themselves to him instead of to God. But through such a politics the intrinsic essence of religiosity, namely the selfbinding and devotion of the person to God, is left out. In this manner the old, native religion forfeits the claim to be the true religion.

CONCLUSION

1) The correctness of whatever the Church does depends on its conformity with how Jesus the Master, Model and Exemplar had already done it or would want it to be done. Whatever Jesus Christ does follows from what He is as the Union of God and man, it follows thus from the union in Him of the Divine and the Human, in short from the hypostatic union involved in the incarnation of the divine Word. The correctness of the Church's act of Inculturation, namely the act of inserting, infusing, the five components of Christianity as the culture of the Church into the corresponding five components of the native culture of the people and thereby fusing, uniting, the former with the latter in a particular way, not in just any way, depends on the conformity of this fusion, synthesis, union, with the hypostatic union involved in the incarnation as the insuperable model. The basic consequences are two: the one concerns the terminology, the other concerns the method.

A) For just as 'Incarnation' is the one word to express the biblical fact that the Word (*verbum*) was made (*factum est*) flesh (*caro*) and dwelt among us, namely the dogmatic fact that the divine Word was irrevocably united to the Flesh of the Immaculate Virgin by the Holy Spirit and dwelt among human beings in the person of Jesus Christ the divine Redeemer and Healer, so too is 'Inculturation' the one word to express the Church's missionary act of making Christianity become the culture of the people, namely the Church's pastoral act of getting Christianity irrevocably united to the native culture of the people through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and take roots among the people in the persons of the Christians.

B) And just as, and because, in the Incarnation the hypostatic union is such that: i) it is the Holy Spirit that unites the divine Word with the flesh of the Immaculate Virgin and sustains this indissoluble union; ii) the divine and the human components are so joined together that they on the one hand can neither be divorced nor be separated *from one another* and on the other hand neither be confused *with one another* nor be transformed *into one another*; iii) the divine presupposes, penetrates and perfects the human component; and iv) the human, which in prevision of the union has already long been adapted, adjusted, conformed to the sanctity of the divine through his conception, clings to the divine and participates in the life (not however in the impenetrable, inaccessible, transcendental substance) of the divine, so too in Inculturation the fusion, union, synthesis of the five components of Christianity with the five components of the culture of the people is and must be such that: i) it is done by the Church with the gift of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, knowledge, discernment, etc.) who is the animating principle of the Mystical Body of Christ, the vivifying Lord of the people of God, the protagonist of the missionary, pastoral, spiritual, intellectual activity of the Church, as well as the principle of the union not only between the Father and the Son and between Christ and the Christians, but also among the Christians themselves and of the union between Christianity as the culture of the Church and the native culture of the people, and without this last union every native culture is surely in the long run bound to dry up and wither away; ii) the native culture of the people is, before being united with Christianity, first of all cleansed of its imperfections, through the elimination, removal from it, of all such views and attitudes that are incompatible with the christian teachings (Dogmas) and practices (Morals) of the Church, such are then

replaced by the latter, the native culture of the people thus purged, is namely refilled with christian heritage and is, only so, 'fulfilled', not destroyed, for: iii) the imperfections having been eliminated, the bad elements having been removed, *the malign spirit* having been exorcised from the native culture, the Church then plugs the cable of her christian dogmas and morals as the Ideals into the sockets of the good elements of the native culture, while *the Holy Spirit* as the underlying current of this Christian heritage *penetrates the benign spirit* underlying the good elements of the native culture *and elevates* the quality of these elements from good to better till their better becomes best, *thus perfecting* the benign spirit of the native culture, the Holy Spirit effects the elevation by letting the benign spirit cling to Him and participate in His work in the capacity of an efficacious instrument and dignified co-worker; iv) through the refilling of the purged native culture with the ideal Christian teachings and practices on the one hand and the penetration and elevation of the benign spirit underlying the good elements of the native culture by the Holy Spirit underlying the Christian heritage on the other hand, Christianity and the native culture are so united by the Church in the inculturation act that the history of the experience of the christian people of God with the self-revealing God illuminates the proper meaning, and solves the riddles, of the history of the experiences had by the native people in the world in which they live.

2) After this article has illustrated the inculturation of the Church Dogmas, the later articles will therefore dedicate themselves to the illustration of the Church Morals, the Church Kerygma, Liturgy and Caritas, as well as the Church's history of experience with the God of revelation, and the Church's incarnational mode of operation, exemplifying these each time with one African native culture or the other.

3) To close, here are bibliographical indications for more information on the goings-on in Africa with regard to the theme 'Inculturation': Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990); Eric de Rosny, *Healers in the Night* (Maryknoll, N. Y. Orbis Books, 1985); Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1985). And for the collection of the most fundamental magisterial instructions and documents on the theme, see: Joseph Gremillion (ed.), *The Church and Culture Since Vatican II* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) and Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Modern Missionary Documents and Africa* (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1982).