

Christianization without westernization: A study of Acts 15:19-20 in relation to African-Western discriminatory bias

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ABSTRACT: It is a happy news and a welcome development that Christianity registered an incomparable acceptance and growth in Africa. Religion deals with faith. It can make or mar the people's development depending on how it is presented. It is appreciable that Christian missionaries to Africa brought with them civilization, ranging from education, politics, and even socio-economic area. However, the spate of fanaticism and fundamentalism in Africa not unconnected with a misconception of the biblical message is worrisome. Of greater concern is the inability of some Africans to distinguish between the truth of Christianity and the western bias. Left in a confused state not unconnected with the teaching by some confused or biased missionaries, some Africans repudiate African culture on the altar of Christian belief. The hardworking African has turned into a lazy one on the hope that God takes care of him. Her highly spiritualized culture has been abandoned for fear of idolatry. Her strong family cohesion has been exchanged with western individualism. Her respect for elders and ancestors has been replaced with blames against the ancestors for their woes and failure. This paper employs exegetical lens to study the response of the Apostles in the face of similar problems in the gentile world. It then exhorts Africans to accept that which is authentically Christian without neglecting her richly cultural heritage.

Keywords: African, Christianization, culture, discrimination, exegesis, hermeneutics, westernization.

INTRODUCTION

Either by coincidence, crook or means, colonialism and western missionary escapade thrived contemporaneously in Africa. The same race that enslaved Africans and usurped their natural resources for their selfish whims also evangelized Africa. Over-awed at the sight of humanlike being with different skin colour, language, way of life and seemingly promising future, Africans opened their arms to welcome the westerners. The visitors, stupefied by the rich cultural heritage of the Africans especially her strong family cohesion, resilient and rich religious background, misconstrued and so cowed the Africans into believing in the superiority and saintly heritage of the whites and degradation of hers as evil.

The fact is that Christianity is a religion. As a religion, it is concerned more with the hereafter. Her mission is to win souls for Christ in fulfilment of his Mandatum Magnum in Matt 28:18-20. It is therefore structurally and directionally

in parallel line with colonialism and its political deceits. However, since human being is an *ens politikon*, and the mission of evangelization is perpetuated through the instrumentality of human agents, the infiltration of political and cultural bias in the same mission of evangelization is comprehensible. Now that Africa has come of age both in education and religion, it is her duty to assert her independence physically, politically, culturally and religiously. Part of this realization must be effected through a delineation of the truth from aberrations. There must be a clear line of demarcation between African thought and culture diametrically opposed to Christian teaching and the ones that are substantially helpful. The researcher frowns at categorization of almost everything African as evil based on misconception and western egocentric mentality.

The challenges of culture conflict in the face of new ideas remain undeniable. Jesus did not find it easy with the

Pharisees and Sadducees when he abstracted from Mosaic documentation to Christianization. The Apostles faced similar issue. In Acts 17 for example, Paul's method and teachings were warmly welcomed by the Athenians who were itching for knowledge. However, the moment he spoke about resurrection, he was met with rebuff and abandonment. The Fathers of the Vatican II (1965) were aware of this problem and so made it clear that the Church is not opposed to the culture of any people which are not anti-Christian. In her theology of inculturation, the Church has gone a long way in inter-cultural crosspollination of ideas. The culture has also been used by the Church as powerful and successful tools for evangelization. This paper believes that a lot more needs to be done in Africa to help the Africans. The researcher submits that there should be Christianization without westernization. An African ought to be an African Christian in thought and deed without actually being a westerner. This paper is inspired by the conviction that the role of Christianity in and to African culture should not be an antagonistic one (Onwubiko, 1991). The paper does not celebrate the crisis nor does it concern itself with encouraging a nostalgia or morbid fear of change. It is structured to motivate the African to see the things that are good in her culture and then use them to become better without necessarily rejecting the many good things that came with Christianity (Obielosi, 2020).

It is the strong understanding of this research that Acts 15:19-20 offers an exemplary approach to issues bordering on culture conflict with regard to evangelization of Africans. The paper advocates for a culture-based Christianity. Culture based Christianity here must not be interpreted to mean idolatry. Idolatry is a form of religious belief. It is not culture. Culture concerns with people's way of life, understanding and practices. The researcher attempts an exposition of some aspects of westernization that ought not be and then uses an exegetical lens to study Acts 15: 19-20 with a view to charting a part way through trackless ocean on Christianization without Westernization. The position of the Vatican II Fathers on the Church and people's culture served as arms chair in the propositions while the clarion call for culture-based Christianity remains the hermeneutic application of Acts 15:19-20. This is followed by evaluation and conclusion.

AFRICAN CULTURE AND THOUGHT IN FACE TO FACE WITH CHRISTIANITY

It is important to note that quite unlike Aluko (1967) and Achebe (1975), the researcher repudiates any attempt to view Christianity as whiteman's religion. Again, the paper is not comparative studies of Christianity and African Religion with a view to depicting which is stronger just as Nzekwu (1971) attempts to do. The position of the paper is obvious. The author believes that there are many African

cultural values misunderstood by missionaries as evil. There are also some cultural values that have been swept under the carpet by the missionaries leading to failures in some aspects of the African way of life like marriage (Iharihani and Olehile, 2021). Maluleke (2020) frowns at the replacement of African values with Eurocentric approach by most Christian missionaries without proper attempt to integration. The researcher is of the opinion that if such values are positively appropriated, they would aid in easy and more successful evangelization of the Africans. Africans will see Christianity as theirs and God as God and father of all and not westerners alone. Until this is done, Africans will remain estranged from Christianity. A relapse into her original belief will always be the case. Banton (1966:48) agrees with this position and tries to give the reason when he maintains that:

“for the African in particular, his life in the job is divorced not only from his childhood experience but also that of his home, neighbourhood and tribe, and the values of the two milieus are often highly discrepant Problems are complicated, however, by the fact that most of the rapidly growing towns of African have developed out of the commercial industrial and administrative activities of foreigners who have brought with them traditions and experiences of urban life and have therefore created towns in the midst of people whose social life was organized on a rurally based tribal life within a markedly dissimilar cultural setting”.

The researcher aligns with Ngugi (1978) in his initial submission that:

... not all the ways of the white man were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some good, some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith needed washing, cleaning away all the dirt, leaving only the eternal. And that eternal that was the truth had to be reconciled to the traditions of the people. A people's traditions could not be swept away overnight.

Kenyatta (1979) as well as Onwubiko (1991) strongly believe in the resilient nature of the African culture as a living and dynamic culture, and thus, her institutions as well as culture should not be judged, approved or disapproved only through the observation of its external manifestations, internal meanings are necessary. This is also the position of this writer. Removal of one essential element in the cultural life of a people could upset the whole life system of the people and confusion is the consequence (Onwubiko, 1991). Magezi (2007) rightly insists "... that a pastoral counsellor in Africa should be aware of the crucial role played by the African worldview

in order to have meaningful diagnosis".

Much more than denouncing the mistaken conception of Africa as a continent without religion, clean slate on which anything could be written (Kenyatta, 1979); the European putting order in African where he thought none existed (Onwubiko, 1991); the researcher also concludes that since religion and culture are tightly related, care should be taken not to relapse into syncretism and eventual deculturation and crisis. The paper insists on an African Christianity that is truly so without a transposition of Africanism into it and is still devoid of European acculturation of the African. Far from inciting a rejective process by pointing out only the conflicts, crisis and analysis of the problems, the paper postulates a reformulation based on resolution to be a Christian and still African. It protests against reductionism of rich African cultural and religious heritage to 'paganism' by the European missionaries (p'Bitek, 1970); and observes with much concern the striking similarity one finds between some African and Western theological concepts.

AFRICAN CULTURAL BELIEFS AND CHRISTIAN TEACHING: DEALING WITH SPECIFICS

Religion according to Metuh (1991) is commonly shared spiritual vision. This explains why religious belief appear to be territorial and racial. Every race has her religious belief handed on from the ages past. Though the beliefs may be improved upon, the fundamentals remain and tend to influence the life of the people in question. Thus, religious beliefs are often interwoven with cultural beliefs. Introduction of a new belief in a place is like introducing a foreign body in an existing system. The success of the new belief is proportional to its ability to either adapt, assimilate or improve on the old belief through a welcoming rapport. A direct condemnation of the old one meets a confrontation. Suppression of the old belief is usually temporal. With time, the old belief either comes up to assert its originality or the new belief get warped in transposition and syncretism leading to confusion. The best thing for carriers of new belief to do is to understudy the existing beliefs, see points of interface and seek for ways of adoption while at the same time maintaining cultic and substantial originality. This paper submits that the European missionaries did not take time to study the African religion to see areas of agreement with Christianity. The researcher dedicates this small section to specific agreement between African belief and Christianity. It limits her purview to Igbo tribe in Nigeria which coincidentally seem to be the hub of Christianity in Africa.

Cosmological dualism

Christianity teaches the reality of the physical world

occupied by human beings and the spirit world occupied by the unseen (Eph 6,10-12). This is exactly the same with the African (Igbo). All beings belong to either of the two worlds – the visible world (*Uwa*) and the invisible world (*Ala Mmuo*). The former is peopled by men and his familiar surroundings. The later is the spirit world. It is the abode of the Creator (*Chukwu*); the deities (*Mmuo*); spirit forces (including small gods, *Alusi* and ancestors, *Ndi Ichie*); disembodied or malignant spirits such as witches, *Amusu*, evil spirits of the dead, *ogbunuke*. Though the African like the Christians belief in the reality of a dual world, both uphold the belief that both worlds engage in continuous interaction. The Catholic church teaches communion of saints and combats against malignant forces; other Christian denominations believe in the communication between the physical and the spiritual either through petitionary prayer or deliverance prayer. Eph 1:20-2.7 is a good text to express this Christian belief. In a similar mode, the African expresses his through Divination (*Afa*); Medicine-man (*Dibia*) and Sacrifice (*Aja*).

The Creator/Chukwu/Chineke/Osebuluwa

Metuh (1991) gives a detailed explanation on the terms the Africans/Igbo use in referring to God. Like the Christians, the Africans believe in a creator God (*Chukwu, Chineke, Osebuluwa*). The first two names are composed of *Chi* (God) and an adjectival attribute - *ukwu* (great); and – *eke* (creator). The last name means 'carrier of the universe'. In religious context, however, the word 'Chi' evokes three related concepts, namely, the Creator, the Guarding spirit given by the creator to each individual, and the Destiny given to each person also by the Creator (Metuh, 1991). God is also known by other names like: *Chukwu Abiama* (God of the Universe), *Chi Okike* (Creator Providence), *Ezechitoke* (the King that creates), and *Obasi di n'enu* (The Lord above). The Africans have these nominal references to God ever before the advent of Christianity. The Old Testament and the New Testament, and indeed Christianity have similar references to God. God is called *Yahweh, Nisi, Adonai, El, Rapha, Elohenu, Elohim*, etc. Some Igbo proverbs depict the unalloyed belief of the Africans in God, the Supreme Creator. Below are some examples:

Chukwu kere gi kee chi new gi = God created you and your destiny

Okike kere onye bu Chi ya = One's Creator is also one's god

Chi kere nwa ogbenye kere amadi = The same God created the rich and poor

Chukwu nwe ndu onye n'efu ohia = God owns the person lost in the woods

Chukwu sepu aka uwa agwu = without God, the world will end

Onye di ka Chukwu = Who is like God (Michael)

Metuh (1991) summarizes the African belief in the Creator God thus:

The Creator is the Great Spirit or Supreme Being or God. He is the creator of the universe, *Oke Abiama*. He creates each individual person as well as his Chi, or personal god. Whatever man has, has been received from the Creator for a purpose. God continues to sustain the world after creation. In fact, should God remove his hand, the world would end, says an Igbo song. God continues to provide for every creature. He protects and provides for man in a special way. He endows each person with special gifts with which to provide for himself. Every gift of God has a purpose and has a place in the overall scheme of his providential care for his entire creation. One could in fact say that the most dominating ideas in the Igbo conception of God are the ideas of creator and providence.

The attributes of God which feature more prominently in Igbo proverbs are his transcendence, his power and his knowledge. God transcends the world. He is everywhere. God is above man. His power surpasses that of the medicine man. Only God can terminate human life. Not even the deities can do this. God knows everything. Man does not know the intentions of God while God knows man's innermost thoughts. His intention sometimes makes void all man's proposals.

Initiation

In line with the Mandatum Magnum of Matt 28:18-20, one becomes a Christian through the sacrament of initiation, baptism. It is believed that this sacrament configures the recipient into an *alter Christus*. He participates in the tripartite functions of Christ: Priest, Prophet and King. He becomes ipso facto, a child of God by adoption (Gal 4:4-7; John 1:12); putting in on Christ (Gal 3:26-27). It empowers him to receive the other sacraments as and when due. Without this initiation, reception of any other sacrament is invalid and void. Baptism, is, therefore, a cultic act making one full-fledged member of the Christian cult with all its rights and privileges. The rituals must however, be strictly followed. Baptism could therefore be seen as a rite of passage. The Africans also have rites of passage. Initiation into Mmanwu cult is one of them. With it, one

passes from *ogbodu* to manhood. There are also pregnancy rituals, betrothal rituals, purification rituals, puberty rites. All these translates one from what he was to what he was not with all the rights and privileges just like the baptismal rites. In the words of Onwubiko (1991) "Rites of initiation as it is properly known, takes place at the period in life when a young man is no longer disposed to allow others to do his thinking for him, a period he is undergoing a fluent and imperceptible transition, which, if care is not taken, can result in a rebellion".

Ancestors/saints

Christianity insists on three groups of the mystical body of Christ: the church militant; the church triumphant and the church sufferings. Because the three form one mystical union in Christ, they enjoy unbreakable communion. The militants pray to the triumphant for intercession on needs; they also pray for the sufferings while the later pray for the militant. In Africa very much like the Christians believe in ancestral cult. Metuh (1991) maintains that death by itself does not make an ancestor. In some Africa societies, old age, life lived according to the accepted moral standards of the group and appropriate funeral rites are some the essential requirements. In many others, the funeral rites are absolutely necessary because they are regarded as 'rites of passage' by which the dead are installed as ancestors. Unlike the disgruntled malignant spirits of the departed who have not reached the spirit-land, ancestors are good spirits believed to be not only well disposed, but also look after the welfare of their kinsmen (Metuh, 1991). Respect for ancestors did seem to have gone down well with the European missionaries. They categorized it as satanic. In the real sense of it, ancestral cult is like cult of the saints. Not every deceased Christian is seen as a saint. Martyrdom, exceptional moral life are some of the qualities. They are known to be closer to God and so are respected and prayed to for assistance. They are given *dulia* type of worship as differentiated from *latria* which is an unalloyed worship given to God alone. Africans do not see ancestors as God. Ancestors are human beings who have braved it through life, leaving good examples by the type of life they lived and have undergone rites of passage. Africans also give them *dulia* type of worship and not *latria*. There are the daily prayers with the 'Ofo' during which simple offerings of kola and chalk are made to the ancestors.

Good and malignant spirits

Like Christianity, African traditional believe in the reality of good and malignant spirits. Among the good spirits are God, deities, and ancestors. On the other hand, evil spirits, witches and sorcerers are seen as bad spirits. Through

prayers of deliverance and exorcisms, Christians handle cases of obsession and possession by evil spirits. Africans also have rituals to deal with these.

Communion/kola nut

The kola nut is a seed from a plant. It is generally bitter with parts gummed together as one. It occupies a very prominent place in Africans' social and spiritual life. It symbolizes unity, peace and love. If one or a group of persons visit a family or social group, they must be offered a kola nut as a sign of warm reception. A visitor feels unwelcomed even if you lavish him with gifts, food and drink without first giving him kola nut. Social gatherings, meetings and other activities always begin with kola nut ritual. Refusal to take kola is a proof of evil intention. Every person present except infants must partake of the kola even if a little piece. Someone with an evil intention or plans is not expected to partake of it. In Christianity, communion is for those in good moral state (1Cor 11:23-30). Any one with unconfessed mortal sin is expected to abstain from communing with the rest of the congregation till he/she reconciles with God and human beings.

There are many other areas of agreement between African traditional practices and Christianity. Sacrifices, Arts are other examples. The paper limits itself in the main to these salient ones to show that actually, *Africanus Religiosus* is not far removed from Christianity and that most of the things tagged as evil or diabolic are not actually so. Misconstruction and misrepresentation of an act does not prove the reality. In truth, a deeper understanding and appreciation of these practices will be a perfect and welcoming method of evangelization for the African continent. Outright condemnation of these rather distances people and may even make them apprehensive. They will begin to see Christianity as whiteman's own, an intrusion and invasion against her natural belief. The attitude of the Apostles in Acts 15:19-20 is an eye opener to the expectations and better technique of evangelism.

EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT OF ACTS 15:19-20

Preliminary observations

Acts 15:20 is overtly laden with observable textual issues. The paper resolves the textual problems under the textual criticism and then gives a working translation for a better interpretation.

Textual criticism

ı⁷⁴ A C E Y 13. 1739 Ū lat inserts *apo* after *apechesthai*. The manuscript used in this research is supported by ı⁴⁵ a

B D 81. 1175 *pc* e p^{*}. The affirms the text used as closer to the original on the grounds of *lectio difficilior* and age of the manuscripts containing the text.

Again *kai tēs porneias* is omitted by ı⁴⁵. Other later manuscripts: D gig; Ir^{1739mg.lat} 323. 945. 1891 *pc* have *kai osa an mē thelōsin* (thelousin D) *autois* (eautois D) *ginesthai eterois mē poiein* (poiei te D) alternative reading. The text used is supported by ı⁴⁵ a C E 1739 Ū sy^h. A consideration of the age and number of texts supporting the text used confirm its proximity to the original text.

Working translation: The Greek Text here is a transliteration of Nestle Aland Greek New Testament, 8th Edition

Dio egō krinō mē parenochlein tois apo tōn ethnōn epistrophousin epi ton theon, alla epistolai autois tou apechesthai tōn alisgēmatōn tōn eidōlōn kai tēs porneias kai tou pniktou kai tou haimatos.

¹⁹I, therefore, judge not to give trouble to those of the gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰but to instruct them to distance from pollutions of idols and fornication and of strangled animal and of blood.

Acts 15:19-20 is part of a larger pericope detailing on the resolution of catechetical issues encountered by Paul and Barnabas in their mission among the gentiles. Already in Acts 8,26-40 the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch has a thematic value in the Acts narrative as illustrative of the universality of the Christian mission (Martin, 1989). The racial motif got even more overshadowed by a concentration on the Roman centurion Cornelius in Acts 10 as representative of the mission to Gentiles (Pregeant, 1997). Felder (1989) reasons that this is so because of the author's acceptance of the notion of a Roman-centered world. The text plot examined in this paper is James' recommendation in response to the pastoral problem posed in Acts 15:1: *Ean mē peritmēthēte tō ethei tō Mōuseōs, ou dunasthe sōthēnai* (If you are not circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you will not be saved). This teaching which came from some conservative Jews to the gentile converts to Christianity became a problem leading to heated argument. The question is not whether Gentiles can become Christians, but whether they must be circumcised and accept the regulations of the Jewish law, imposed by Moses. Peter speaks against the necessity of gentile circumcision, stating that salvation is through grace (Acts 15:11). Then after Paul and Barnabas, the emissaries to Jerusalem, reported on the signs and wonders that God has done through them among the Gentiles, James, (probably the brother of Jesus since the other James was reported

beheaded in Acts 12), affirms Peter's judgement and proposes that Gentiles simply be required to follow the regulations that, according to Jewish teaching, apply to all humankind (Pregeant, 1997). The researcher differs from Perkins' (1977) view that Acts signals a triumphalistic church. The paper upholds the view that with Peter and James' interventions, the early leaders of the Church defended strongly the idea that the Gentiles could be Christians without necessarily becoming Jews.

Semantic analysis

James starts his intervention with the particle *dio* (therefore). Van der Minde (1990) avers that the particle serves to coordinate what follows with what precedes. It occurs about 8x in Acts. It often goes with *kai* (Blass and Debrunner, 2007). It serves as an inference from what preceded. James just summarized what Peter said, backed it up with citation of the Old Testament and then adopted the particle *dio* as a link to indicate that his position is not independent of the truth of the prophets and Peter's submission. The fact that James shows himself to be in agreement with the basic principles of Peter explains why he deliberately used the Hebraic name of Peter, "Symeon" instead of the usual "Simon". James' judgement demonstrates the council as all important so much so that not only Peter but even the more traditional or conservative James, taught as a basic principle the freedom of the Gentiles from the law, and even called on Scripture in support. His reference to Scripture could be considered against the background of the prophetic expectation which saw the Israel of the future as a mighty fellowship of all those who united in seeking God (Kürzinger, 1971).

His use of the preposition *egō* shows a laying of emphasis. It is a way of saying that his judgement is his and that he is firm in his position without prejudice. His use of *ethnos* instead of *laos* is revelatory. Both terms can mean 'people'. However, *laos* is used of the Jews as people of God while *ethnos* refers to non-Jews. James was careful in his choice of terms to indicate that his judgement is with strict reference to non-Jews.

Alla epistelai autois (but to instruct them) has an adversative connection with *parenochelein* in v. 19 and then the reprise of vv. 10-11 in v 19 demonstrate that the "decree" is a concession rather than an imposition making common life and table possible without laying any onus on the new comers (Dillon, 1994).

The four things proscribed, *eidōlōs* (idol), *porneia* (fornication), *pniktos* (strangled animal) and *haima* (blood) reflect the prohibitions of Lev 17:8-9, 10-12, 15; 18:6-18 (cf. also Exod 22:31). The mention of *porneia* (fornication) disturb the sequence of the other three items which concern edibles. If *porneia* is interpreted in the light of Lev 18, it may be understood to mean incest. Thus, with the proscriptions, the author indicates that Gentiles embracing

the gospel gained access to the terrain of the chosen people, kept sacred by the "holiness code". Observing the four clauses is their recognition factor, based on universal Torah, instruction. Hence the author's use of the word *epistelai* (to instruct) which itself also connotes something written down and thus, depicts the church as an ordered community; an organization that uses the means and methods of human secular societies. But this does not detract in any way from the Church's true nature, which puts her on a higher plane than the merely human.

Hermeneutic application

The Document of Vatican II Council (1965) maintains that the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions. She has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. The Fathers of the Council underscores the provisions of Wis 13:1-11 and Rom 1:18-24. They teach that throughout history even to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the event of human life. At times there is present even a recognition of a supreme being, or still more of a Father. This awareness and recognition results in a way of life that is imbued with a deep religious sense.

The position of the Council Fathers summarized above underscores the veracity of Acts 15:19-20 and the mistake of the European Missionaries who evangelized Africa. James did not condemn the culture of the Gentiles. He was able to separate the moral laws from the ceremonial and cultic law of the Jews. Gentile converts would not become Jews by observing the cultic and ceremonial laws of the Jews prior to being real Christians. It was enough that they observed the moral laws which are divine and common to all humankind. The warm reception and happiness with which the Gentile converts received the written instructions delivered through Paul explains the eventual success of the Pauline mission among the Gentiles and why the Church prospered speedily. With James' approach, the Gentiles understood Christianity and her teaching as what is meant for all humankind and not for the Jews alone. They needed not become Jews by circumcision before becoming Christians. They did not see themselves estranged from the truth of the truth of the gospel and still left in the mess of confusion as to what is right or wrong in their way of life.

Today, Christianity could be said to prosper in Africa but the reality is in the number of professed Christians without the fruit in their lives. Africans appear so confused. The bible is often misrepresented and poorly communicated. Failure of what are understood to be the promises leaves most believes in the mess of confusion and questioning of

the veracity of biblical claims. Almost all the great blessings God gave to Africans have either been subdued or lost in the belief of keeping God's tenets. The missionaries are culpable but even more so later and contemporary indigenous evangelizers. Most places of worship and shrines have been destroyed, burnt and the artifacts carted away under the pretext of evangelization and rejection of idolatry. Our dressing code is completely westernized. Liturgy and theology of some of our songs are purely western. The substance of Africanness have been sacrificed on the altar of Christianity. The result is confusion and people wallowing in darkness without knowing their right from their left. This explains why most Africans now wait on God to do what they ought to do themselves. Instead of going to hospitals when sick, they end up in prayer centers for healings. Rather than being in the market on time, they spend hours in churches praying for success. Instead of investing in the building of factories to provide jobs for her citizens, old factories are sold and turned into churches. They then end up in the same factory turned into church to ask for jobs! Africa is blessed with natural herbs. Rather than researching and developing these to help themselves, we see some of them as evil and diabolic while we spend money on synthetic drugs from the western world. Organic food has given way to processed foods all in the name of civilization. Our education is purely western. Even institution meant for formation of the clergy are affiliated to western universities. The scheme of works are structured and monitored from the western world and yet the products are hoped to minister to Africans. In fact, even the lecturers are western trained and certified before they can lecture in houses of formation. Formators of African missionaries are western trained to work in Africa. Matter and Form of most sacraments are western and African spend fortune to buy these from the western world. One may even wonder, if Jesus used vine that was cultural to his people to turn into his blood, and He is the creator and all powerful, would he reject African biscuit and palm wine if used as matters for the Eucharist? This paper is a clarion call for a culture-based Christianity. The author believes that Africans can be good Christians without being westernized.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI (1975) warns against two types of reductionism in the commitment to justice and liberation, one religious and the other political. Boff (1985) documents that religious reductionism encloses the Church in the sacristy and in sacred gestures. Pope Paul VI adjoins the Church to include the world with its pluses and minuses, in its basic evangelization. Evangelization without respect for people's culture and eventual attempt to destroy it is tantamount to human rights violation. One can excuse the missionaries that they made some

outrageous mistakes because they did not understand. For evangelizers of today to continue with a perpetration of the same vice is not only an abuse, unchristian, illegal and abiblical but also a systematic dehumanization. We can be Christians without being westernized. The moral laws are known to all and are common to all humankind. Adoption and observation of these and appreciation of great gifts in the African culture will yield better result than westernization of Africans in the name of Christianity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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