

P.N. Wachege's M.A. Dissertation

Title: CHRIST OUR ELDER: A Christological Study From the Agĩkũyũ Concept of Elder.

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The present M.A. dissertation is both anthropological and theological: anthropological in the sense that it investigates from oral, written and experiential material concerning the traditional Agĩkũyũ understanding of elder; theological in that it is intended to examine the meaning and relevance of the Christ event from a new Agĩkũyũ perspective.

Among the justifications is that Vatican 11 and other Post Vatican 11 Magisterial Documents and Directives/Instructions are quite emphatic in challenging us to make theological Inculturation a reality. In *Ad Gentes* Article 22<sup>1</sup> we are informed that no culture is totally satanic, and that every culture is imbued with some valuable elements. Hence the Document teaches us that all cultures, including the Agĩkũyũ culture, have their potential contribution to Christianity. This Document does not merely ask us to utilize our cultures for the purpose of the Church. It also maintains that the task of Inculturation is an obligation. According to it, theological investigations must necessarily be stirred up in each major socio-cultural area.<sup>2</sup> This is what the theory of special and general revelation, which is among the ones guiding this dissertation, is about.

Likewise, in his address to the bishops of Zaire- and indeed, to the whole of Africa- Pope John Paul 11 instructs that:

One of the aspects of this evangelization is the Inculturation of the Gospel, the Africanisation of the Church... That is part of the indispensable efforts to incarnate the message of Christ. The Gospel, certainly is not identified with the cultures, and transcends them all, but the Kingdom that the Gospel proclaims is lived by man deeply tied to a culture...<sup>3</sup>

He further stresses that in theologizing:

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<sup>1</sup> A. Flannery, *Vatican Council 11, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), pp. 839f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>3</sup> R. Hickey, *Modern Missionary Documents and Africa* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1982), p. 258.

It is important to carry out a thorough investigation of the cultural traditions of the various populations and of the philosophical ideas that underlie them in order to detect elements that are in contradiction with the Christian religion and the contributions that can enrich theological reflection.<sup>4</sup>

The above and other magisterial teachings provoked us to choose our present subject so as to make Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, more meaningful and His Good News more fruitful to our people. As such, this is the main goal of the study.

We were also inspired by our strong urge to elaborate an Agĩkũyũ *Mũthamaki* Christology in response to our people's needs, aspirations, thought forms and mentality, thereby hoping to contribute to African Christology in particular and to the global Christology in general. Moreover, since Christology is a central theme in theology, we are convinced that our choice is a good point of departure for further and deeper treatment of theological subjects and themes from similar African perspectives. This is thanks to the theory of inter-connection of Christian mysteries which the dissertation especially in the area of implications of the study and further areas of related theological investigations triggered by the study.

The legitimacy of the endeavor and the basic approach in our dissertation is further and explicitly supported by Edward Schillebeeckx. In his book entitled *Interim Report On The Books Jesus and Christ*, he provides very interesting reflections in which he spells out the theological legitimacy of looking for NEW TITLES for Jesus and the conditions for doing so.<sup>5</sup> Schillebeeckx does not allow such an insight into Christology which he gives remain a mere abstraction. Neither does he let it be an idle speculation. He himself profoundly, critically, scientifically and systematically exemplifies its validity in another monumental monograph<sup>6</sup> thus showing us how to go about it. Thanks to all these, our dissertation explicates that we not only concur with the Magisterium but we also share the views of E. Schillebeeckx in the condition for such research.

The work is divided into **two main parts**:

**Part One** is anthropological and is subdivided into: **Chapter 1** which deals with historical and social contexts of the Agĩkũyũ useful or necessary for a better understanding of the Agĩkũyũ elder-hood; **Chapter 2** which visualizes elder-hood within the Agĩkũyũ world-view. The main thrust is the question: to the Agĩkũyũ , what makes an elder an elder?;

**Part Two** is, in a certain sense, the most important part of the dissertation. This is mainly because our dissertation is primarily theological in its intent. In this vital Part, an effort will be made to scrutinize the Christian teaching on the Redeemer and Savior in the light of the Agĩkũyũ

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>5</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report On The Books Jesus and Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1980), pp. 21-27.

<sup>6</sup> Id., *Jesus In Our Western Culture: Mysticism, Ethics And Politics* (London: SCM Press, 1987).

understanding of *Muthamaki* (Ideal Elder). We will examine the Biblical notion of elder and of the Biblical understanding of Christ within the perspective of elder- using the theory of redaction criticism of historical critical method. An explanation will be reached that, basing ourselves on our perception of the Agĩkũyũ notion of elder, it is justifiable according to both the Old Testament and New Testament concept of elder-hood together with the other given characteristics in the Bible application to Jesus Christ, to call Jesus a *Muthamaki*, but in a higher and eminent sense

It is here that an effort is made to create an **Agĩkũyũ *Muthamaki* Christology**. We will endeavor to reflect systematically on Christ's mystery from the perspective of Agĩkũyũ sense of elder-hood. We will begin with a comparative analysis between the Agĩkũyũ elder-hood and that of Christ so as to find out the analogies between the two types of elder-hood. This will end with some further interpretation of the similarities and differences. Then we will tackle Christ's elder-hood in the light of other Christian mysteries.

Eventually, an explanation will be arrived at that, in view of the theory of interconnection of Christian mysteries, our **Agĩkũyũ *Muthamaki* Christology** will have implications for our understanding of the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption and Ecclesiology. After that, the study will strive to show the goal or finality of our Christology. The method to be followed is the one based on the teachings of Vatican 1 (DS 3016) and Vatican 11 (*Optatam Totius*, Art. 16) as the Chapter explicates.

Areas for further research:

1. To make our kind of Christology to dialogue meaningfully with Karl Rahner's transcendental Christology and Leonardo Boff's Liberation Christology to avoid being fixed in parochial mindedness technically called force particularism.
2. To deepen the anthropological areas using Leonardo Boff's mediation theory among others.
3. To examine and explore the relevance of the traditional Agĩkũyũ elder-hood for today and the future. A re-evaluation of the role and function of Agĩkũyũ elder-hood to verify that the traditional Agĩkũyũ elder-hood is still relevant for today and the future.
4. To strive for a more profound identification and explication of pastoral relevance of the study.
5. To provide and analyze Christianize elder-hood ritual as a major consequence of the study.

Thus this M.A. dissertation will need to be used as a base for a more serious study that goes beyond it profoundly at PhD level.

