

**The Relevance of the Eucharist as Meal: A Systematic Theological  
and Intercultural Approach in the Context of Akan Communal  
Meal in Ghana**

Dissertation

zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades (Dr. Phil.)

des Fachbereichs Erziehungs- und Kulturwissenschaften

der Universität Osnabrück

vorgelegt

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Sekondi, Ghana

Osnabrück, 2023

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work in loving memory of my beloved mother, Mrs. Charity Perpetual Biney who wished to have witnessed the successful completion of my studies in Germany but died on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, my birthday. May God grant her eternal rest. *Ruhe in Frieden, Mama; Der Herr weiß, was er tut!*

## SUMMARY

The celebration of the Eucharist is the centre of Christian life. So this research examines the Eucharist in a systematic, theological and intercultural way of meal-sharing among Akans of Ghana. The focus of this study is to discover ways of assisting Akan Christians to revere this sacrament just as their communal meal which brings an entire household together without exclusion. This attempt resulting from inculturation has become a significant part of today's evangelization in enhancing an active, full and conscious participation of Christians in local Churches in celebrating this sacrament. Although inculturation has not been considered officially by the Church until the Second Vatican Council, now is the time for such an inclusion since the use of local elements in the evangelization process speeds up the process of understanding the Gospel message by local Christians such as the Akans of Ghana. Secondly, the practice of inviting people of other denominations to partake in the celebration of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper is also important in the wake of ecumenism since traditional meal-sharing among Akans has no exclusion. Apart from the literature reviewed, the use of questionnaires and interviews were used in this study to elicit empirical evidence from the clergy and lay respondents and through their responses, they have expressed the importance of lay formation and also equipping catechists with the requisite training in their role of teaching catechism. This understanding of the Eucharist in the context of meal-sharing leads to an active participation and spiritual growth in the reception of Holy Communion. Therefore, the study recommends that, for the sake of fraternity and in the new way of synodality which is gaining grounds for a "new air" blowing into the Church, certain Akan practices such as Christians living in polygamous marriages and Christians in other Christian churches should not be discriminated against in the reception of Holy Communion. This is necessary since nobody can share in the life of Jesus Christ unless the person eats his Body and drinks his Blood as Jesus has commanded (John. 6:53-56).

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Feier der Eucharistie ist das Zentrum des christlichen Lebens. Daher untersucht diese Forschung die Eucharistie in einer systematischen, theologischen und interkulturellen Weise, das gemeinsame Mahl unter den Akan in Ghana. Der Schwerpunkt dieser Studie liegt darauf, Wege zu finden, wie Akan-Christen dabei unterstützt werden können, dieses Sakrament genauso zu verehren, wie ihr gemeinsames Mahl, das einen ganzen Haushalt ohne Ausgrenzung zusammenbringt. Dieser aus der Inkulturation resultierende Versuch ist zu einem bedeutenden Bestandteil der heutigen Evangelisierung geworden, indem er eine aktive, vollständige und bewusste Teilnahme der Christen in den Ortskirchen an der Feier dieses Sakraments fördert. Obwohl die Inkulturation von der Kirche bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil nicht offiziell in Betracht gezogen wurde, ist jetzt die Zeit für eine solche Einbeziehung gekommen, da die Verwendung lokaler Elemente im Evangelisierungsprozess den Prozess des Verständnisses der Botschaft des Evangeliums durch lokale Christen wie die Akans in Ghana beschleunigt. Zweitens ist die Praxis, Menschen anderer Konfessionen zur Beteiligung der Feier der Eucharistie/des Abendmahls einzuladen, im Zuge der Ökumene ebenfalls wichtig, da die traditionelle Mahlzeitenteilung unter den Akans keine Ausnahme darstellt. Abgesehen von der ausgewerteten Literatur wurden in dieser Studie Fragebögen und Interviews verwendet, um empirische Daten von den befragten Klerus und Laien zu erhalten. In ihren Antworten haben sie die Bedeutung der Laienausbildung und der Ausstattung der Katechisten und Katechistinnen mit der erforderlichen Ausbildung für ihre Rolle als Katechismuslehrer und Katechismuslehrerinnen zum Ausdruck gebracht. Dieses Verständnis der Eucharistie im Zusammenhang mit der gemeinsamen Mahlzeit führt zu einer aktiven Teilnahme und einem geistlichen Wachstum beim Empfang der Heiligen Kommunion. Daher empfiehlt die Studie, dass um der Brüderlichkeit

(Geschwisterlichkeit) Willen und im Rahmen der neuen Art der Synodalität, die der Kirche eine „neue Luft“ einhaucht, bestimmte Praktiken der Akan, beispielsweise wie Christen, die in polygamen Ehen leben, und Christen in anderen christlichen Kirchen beim Empfang der Heiligen Kommunion nicht diskriminiert werden sollten. Dies ist notwendig, da niemand am Leben Jesu Christi teilhaben kann, es sei denn, die Person isst seinen Leib und trinkt sein Blut, wie Jesus es befohlen hat (Johannes 6:53-56).

## ABBREVIATION

ARCIC:	Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission
CUCG:	Catholic University College of Ghana
EKD:	<i>Evangelische Kirche</i> in Deutschland
EKHN:	Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau
FGD:	Focal Group Discussions
GCBC:	Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference
NCS:	National Catholic Secretariat
ÖAK:	<i>Ökumenische Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen</i>
RCIA:	Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults
SC:	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SSCE:	Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
SCC:	Small Christian Communities
S. J:	Society of Jesus
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WASSCE:	West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Almighty God for showering me with mercy, strength, good health and favour from the commencement of this journey to its successful completion. Many were the painful events I had to undergo during this journey but God kept to his promise in seeing me through this journey successfully. *Aseda Nka Nyankopon ne Dzin*.

I appreciate in a special way, my “*doctorand Mutter*”, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Margit Eckholt in all the diverse ways she has guided me from the proposal stage of this dissertation to the full admission into the University of Osnabruck and seeing me through this academic journey. I cannot thank her enough for her christian role in making my life in Osnabruck fulfilling and also seeing to a good academic work done. Her new ideas, suggestions, recommendations and patience have shaped this masterpiece to its present stage. Frau Eckholt, “*Danke Ihnen*”.

In addition, I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke for accepting to perform the role of a second reader to my dissertation and her readiness to perform this task was inspiring to me hence she deserves my gratitude and God’s blessings.

I want to appreciate the benevolence of the Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst (KAAD) who first awarded me the scholarship to pursue my Master of Philosophy degree in Ghana and finally coming to Germany to experience another context of education through attaining the doctorate. A special mention of Dr. Marko Kuhn, the head of the African department of KAAD cannot go un-mentioned. I am most grateful for their supports in assisting me acquire such knowledge to this level and at this part of the world.

I shall always render my sincere appreciation to my family for standing with me throughout this academic journey and for the many sacrifices they had to endure in this regard. Thanks for their understanding, perseverance and words of motivation.

I owe a sense of gratitude to Rev. Fr. Dr. James Yamekeh Ackah who has supported me and my family for so long even in my absence, he proved to be not only a friend but a brother as well. I am also thankful for his academic support whenever I needed his theological advice and suggestions.

Also, I acknowledge the diverse contribution and support from many of my friends in this journey with their pieces of advice, encouragement and provision of academic materials: special mention can be made of Rev. Fr. George K. Akyeampong, Rev. Fr. Frederick Agyemang, Rev. Fr. Dr. Emmanuel Abbey-Quaye, Rev. Fr. Dr. Dr. Patrick Nkrumah, Rev. Sr. Alexandrina

Tsimese (HDR), Severin Johannes Parzinger, Dr. Farina Dierker, Jana Viktoria Twent and Rev. Fr. William Mulenga Chanda (OFM), etc.

I cannot conclude this obligation without acknowledging Most Rev. Peter Akwasi Sarpong (Archbishop Emeritus of Kumasi archdiocese) and Most Rev. Gabriel Justice Anokye (Archbishop of Kumasi) for their time spent with me throughout the interviews I had with both of them. The experiences shared and literature by both people provided me a better understanding of my research topic. I am immensely grateful to all priests and laity respondents in Amakom deanery who contributed with empirical evidences to this study. Finally, I am also grateful to Rev. Fr. Joseph Kofi Asante of Dompouse Parish for his preparedness to host me at a short notice during my fieldwork assignment in Kumasi and driving me to certain parishes to meet with respondents.



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# PART I

## 1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general introduction of the research work. It comprises the background to the study which connects with the statement of problem, research questions and research objectives, significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study. The methodological instruments which employed in undertaking this study, a brief history about the Akan ethnic group, research location, justification for the search area and the organization of the study will also be outlined. A general conclusion is also given as a summary to the whole chapter.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Communal meal-sharing is an outstanding part of the Akan social ethnic group just as the Eucharistic meal is an important sacrament of the Catholic Church. Understood in this way, meal sharing is a significant event in all societies due to the fact that food is a most basic need for the physical survival in every human society. A renowned dogmatic theologian, Bachl writes, food is part of a system of life that supports, strengthens and makes the human body healthy.<sup>1</sup> This means that every human being as well as every living creature needs an amount of food to exist in order to avoid starvation which could result in death. For an individual to escape this physical death, Schonfeldt opines that food and its nutrient is a key component in the physical growth and healthy stage of the individual.<sup>2</sup> In this regard of eating a meal to maintain one's physical stature, Scholliers contends, food has a role to play in the 'representation and identity of a person' in the community.<sup>3</sup> For him, an individual is who he or she is, by what food they eat, and this meal identifies the people of a community. Sharing a meal together therefore, as Mars writes, "has been considered [as] both a manifestation and a symbol of social solidarity and of community."<sup>4</sup> Understood in this way, eating food communally brings the members of a household or

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<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Bachl, *Eucharistie: Essen als Symbol?* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag. 1983), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Hettie Schönfeldt, Nicolette Hall and Marina Bester. "Relevance of food-based dietary guidelines to food and nutrition security: A South African perspective". 2013: *Nutrition Bulletin*, 38, No.2: 226-235.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Scholliers. (ed.) *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages*. (Berg: New York, 2001), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Mars. "Food and disharmony: Commensality among Jews", *Food and Foodways*, 7 No. 3, 189-202, DOI: 10.1080/07409710.1997. 9962064.

community together. This position of Mars confirms the African (Akan) understanding of sharing meals together as a communal obligation. This cultural practice of meal-sharing is used for a variety of purposes such as conflict resolution “by the sacrifice of a beast and its subsequent consumption, thereby sealing the reconciliation of feuding parties...; marriages, often between opposed groups, are celebrated with a feast...; political alliances are marked with official banquets;... Christmas dinner unites members of the extended family in Britain ‘who may not eat together at other times of the year’...; university departments acclaim their graduates with receptions for students and their families; funerals, especially in Jewish circles are followed by the week of the mourning, *shivah*, when the bereaved [family members] are fed by friends and neighbors...”<sup>5</sup>

Aside this emphasis of social harmony and identity placed on the sharing of meal in the community, food is also important for the spiritual survival of the human person who is composed of body and soul. Jesus, in fulfilling a Jewish cultural rite of meal-sharing before his suffering, death and resurrection event invited his apostles to a meal (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26). This farewell meal of Jesus with his apostles was symbolized by bread and wine which culminated in the fellowship among them. It is in this context of fellowship that Bachl contends that whoever wants to have fellowship, and fellowship with Christ must partake in the eating of his Body and drinking of his Blood as the ‘true’ food and drink which leads to eternal life.<sup>6</sup> This farewell meal of Jesus Christ is what is referred to as the sacrament of the Eucharist. One cannot talk of life in the Catholic Church without the participation and reception of the Eucharistic meal. Therefore the Eucharistic celebration has become an essential treasure and important sacrament for the Church. It is one of the three Christian initiation sacraments together with Baptism and Confirmation which initiates the neophyte<sup>7</sup> into the Christian community or assembly as a member. It is re-enacted in accordance with Jesus’ instruction at the Last Supper, as recorded in the New Testament books that his followers perform in remembrance of him. This Last Supper event appears in all three Synoptic Gospels and it is also found in the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, which suggests

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Bachl, Eucharistie, 45.

<sup>7</sup> An individual who is a new convert into the Christian faith and only becomes a full member through baptism.



how early Christians celebrated what Paul the Apostle called the Lord's Supper.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the celebration of the Eucharist becomes a living memory of Christ whose presence is always felt among the people who partake in this celebration. Therefore, the Eucharist makes present the Lord's once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross in his memory, a pledge and foretaste of heaven stemming from the Lord's own promise of immortality to its partakers (Matt 26:29; John 6:54.). Understood in this direction, the Eucharist becomes a memorial sacrificial meal offered for the forgiveness of sins and a pledge of immortality by the reception of this sacrament.

It is this sacrificial meal that the Church has been celebrating communally with the priests and laity<sup>9</sup> as a sacrament throughout the world for many centuries. The sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated on a daily basis but in Ghana, majority of Catholics mostly attend this celebration on Sundays because this is the day on which they are free and as well, the Church celebrates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on Sundays. Therefore Sunday has become an obligatory day for congregational worship. Nevertheless, some Catholics also attend the celebration of this sacrament daily due to their personal conviction and importance they attach to the celebration of Mass. During the Great Jubilee in the Year 2000, the Church in its official Catechetical Text explicitly referred to the place of the Eucharist, among the other sacraments as follows:

“The Eucharist is not simply one of the Sacraments. It surely belongs to the sacramental economy and cannot be honored to the detriment of Baptism, Confirmation, and Sacramental forgiveness. However, it possesses a unique excellence, as it is the sacrament in which is given not only grace, but also the very author of grace. In this way, the person of Christ is manifested in the most immediate and real manner”.<sup>10</sup>

In this Eucharist, the recalling of the suffering, death and resurrection [Paschal mystery] of Christ is celebrated in the form of a meal through the cultural symbols of bread as his body and the drinking of wine as his blood which is meant to give life and spiritual nourishment to the people who receive it. Understood in this way, the sacrament of the Eucharist is thus fulfilled in a meal setting and Christ himself invites all men and women from different parts of the world to come together and sit at this table. Based on this invitation, a Ghanaian archbishop and theologian, Anokye states, the Eucharist is a sacrament that symbolizes our unity.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he explains that the Eucharist does not only signify that we should be united, it actually unites all

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<sup>8</sup> Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (eds.). *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 254. Article *Eucharist*.

<sup>9</sup> Members of the Body of Christ who do not belong to the category of clerical ministry.

<sup>10</sup> The Official Catechetical Text for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2000), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel J. Anokye. *Eucharistic Spirituality in a new Millennium*. (Kumasi: Catholic Press, 2002), 24.

humanity irrespective of linguistic, racial, tribal, religious and doctrinal differences as presented by Sarpong.<sup>12</sup> This unity of the people of God with Christ actually grows and becomes lively in the celebration of the Eucharist. In supporting this unity during the celebration of the Eucharistic meal, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* offers a clearer illustration:

“This Church of Jesus Christ is truly present in all lawful local communities of believers who, in union with their shepherds in the New Testament, are themselves Churches. For they are ever in their place, in the Holy Spirit and with great confidence (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5), the new people called by God. In them, through the proclamation of the Good News of Christ, the faithful are gathered together, and in them the mystery of the Lord's Supper committed ‘so that by Lord's food and blood the whole fraternity is united’. In every altar community, under the holy ministry of the bishop, the symbol of that love and that unit of the mystical body, without which there would be no” salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

Hence, partaking in the Eucharistic meal brings togetherness among the People of God which calls for the full participation of all the members of the Church. It is in this direction that the Church's dogmatic Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated explicitly that a ‘full, active and conscious participation’ in the Liturgy must be adopted by the faithful. In this sense, there is no room for a Eucharist where no member of the church is actively involved, or where each individual worships on his or her own without showing concern for the needs of other people in the church. It is in line with this participation that Benedict XVI in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus* said:

“I exhort the whole Church in Africa to show particular care for the celebration of the Eucharist, memorial of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, sign of unity and bond of charity, paschal banquet and pledge of eternal life [...].”<sup>14</sup>

Due to the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the church, the Catholic Church requires its members to receive the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation before receiving the Holy Communion if they are aware of having committed a grave sin, and to prepare themselves by praying and performing other works of piety. The reception of the sacrament of Penance as part of the preparatory rites puts the people of God in a proper disposition to participate in this meal and receive the body and blood of Christ worthily. Although the Council of Trent<sup>15</sup> as well as other various treatise on the Eucharist focused on the dogmatic aspect of this sacramental theology as a sacrifice of the Paschal mystery of Christ, the focal point of this study would base

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Benedict XVI. *Africae Munus. Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation. The Commitment of Africa* (English Translation), (Takoradi: St. Francis Press, 2011), 202.

<sup>15</sup> This Council took place between 1545 and 1563 in Trent.

its efforts in emphasizing on the Eucharist as a meal in the sacramental sense and in the context of a communal meal among the Akan social ethnic group. The attempt of situating the Eucharistic meal in the context of the Akan traditional meal-sharing is meant to promote full and active participation in the celebration of this sacrament among Akan Christians.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Catholic Church celebrates the sacrament of the Eucharist on a daily basis and Catholics from all walks of life [which include Akan Catholics] are generally expected to participate and receive the Holy Communion in that respect. The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is given prominence over all the other sacraments because it is in this sacrament that Christians share in the life of Christ hence its spiritual benefits cannot be overlooked. However, there is a lukewarm attitude of Catholics towards participating in this sacrament. This was an outcome of a research conducted on the campus of CUCG concerning the attitude of Catholic students towards the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>16</sup> The question posed here is, do these Catholics understand the sacrament of the Eucharist? And if they have a deep understanding of the Eucharist, what causes this lukewarm attitude towards its celebration and reception of this sacrament? Based on this, this research considers the participation of Akan Christians in the celebration of this sacrament and how we can educate them on the importance of the Eucharist in relation to their traditional meal-sharing.

In the Akan social ethnic group or family system, meal-sharing is a communal event which expresses and builds up the community and thus becomes an obligation for all members of the family to partake. In other words, that event becomes a communal affair because of a mindset that ‘no human person is an island’. The women usually prepare the food not only for their immediate families but for the extended families, friends, among others. This symbol of friendship and communality, for Ackah, is not only with the living but also with the divinities, the deities and the dead who once shared life with the living.<sup>17</sup> This community living with the ancestors through eating and drinking together marks a communion between the living and the

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph R. Biney. “Catholic Students’ Attitude towards the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist: A Case study of Catholic University of Ghana”, Fiapre. (MPhil Thesis. KNUST, Kumasi, 2014), 4.

<sup>17</sup> James Y. Ackah. *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology*. (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller. 2009), 135.

dead. In agreeing to this participation, Bachl affirms that a meal shared communally brings fellowship among the people and makes us companions.<sup>18</sup>

Akan traditional meal-sharing is an important event in their social ethnic group. This practice emphasizes the values of communality and commensality among all the members of the family household without any exclusion. In this direction, can the Roman Catholic Church as a ‘global Church’ consider the use of cultural symbols or for instance, Akan staple foodstuffs in place of bread and wine as Jesus Christ used and instructed during the last Supper as the Body and Blood of Christ in the celebration of this sacrament? This is so, because local foodstuffs and drinks such as maize or ‘millet porridge, *fufu* or *ampesi* and palm wine or *akpeteshie*<sup>19</sup> are familiar to the Akan worldview. Perhaps the usage of bread and wine which is foreign to the African Christian could be a contributing factor to their lukewarm attitude?

According to Bujo, the ordinary African Christian, likewise the Akan has no idea of what is bread and wine as well as its composition so how do you establish a closer relationship between them and God through this celebration.<sup>20</sup> In this context, there seems to be a divorce between the cultural worldview of the African (Akan) and Christianity. The challenge of divorce between local and universal theologies which is lacking and affecting local Churches such as the African Church is very important as Healey and Sybertz states:

One of the great challenges of inculturation in Christian Churches in Africa today is to make correlation between African Oral Literature and cultural symbols and Christianity and to express this in pastoral theological reflections that concretely speak to people’s everyday life.<sup>21</sup>

Given this view of Healey and Sybertz, the need to have an “inculturated Eucharistic” celebration is to embark on building a dialogue between the African cultural symbols and the Gospel since the Church refers to the sacrament of the Eucharist as “the source and summit of Christian life.”<sup>22</sup> Understood in this way, participation in the celebration of this sacrament is very important.

Therefore, to what extent has the Eucharist been celebrated in the African context especially considering the meal aspect of this memorial event of Jesus Christ? This challenge calls for efforts to celebrate this sacrament in the context of local Churches. In this regard, the constant

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<sup>18</sup> Bachl, Eucharistie, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Some African staple foods and drinks in the continent that are familiar to African worldview.

<sup>20</sup> Benezet Bujo. *African Theology in its social context*. (Nairobi: St. Paul’s Publications, 1992), 47.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz. *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1996), 18

<sup>22</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

call for inculturation of Christianity in local churches becomes very necessary since for instance, the Akans in Ghana have a special reverence for their traditional meal-sharing and such understanding can be built upon in the catechesis concerning the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. Hence, coming together at the table of the Lord to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist in the form of a meal is important to the study of Eucharistic theology because we celebrate the living memory of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ together in this context. In the sense of using Akans as a reference point in this study, empirical evidence through interviews and questionnaires by the lay people and priests in Amakom deanery would be of importance. In conclusion, how do we revitalize Akan Christians to acknowledge the importance of the Eucharistic celebration, rediscover and penetrate the mystery associated with the celebration of the Eucharistic meal from their cultural practices and values thereby contributing to a fuller understanding of ecclesiological and sacramental dimension of Eucharistic communion?

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The principal research question in this study is:

- To what extent can the celebration of the Eucharist be presented to the Akan Christian as a communal meal?

The sub questions include the following:

1. To identify the key factors of the Catholic Eucharistic Celebration.
2. To identify the key factors of the Akan communal meal.
3. To establish the differences and similarities in the observation of the Eucharistic celebration and the Akan communal meal.
4. To clarify the values of each of the observation/ celebration in order to determine the possibility or otherwise of inculturation.

The above questions seek to ascertain the extent to which the missionaries propagated the Christian message in Africa during the colonial and post-colonial periods especially in assisting the African Christian to understand the Eucharist in the context of a communal meal? How does the Akan appreciate the Eucharist as a source of vitality bearing in mind their own communal meal setting and its benefits? Are there some elements in the Akan communitarian lifestyle that

can be drawn to enhance a better understanding of the Eucharist as a communal meal? It is with this background, and in finding answers to some of these questions that the researcher attempts to explore into the development of Eucharistic theology in the context of a traditional communal meal among Akans in Ghana with particular reference to Amakom deanery in the archdiocese of Kumasi through empirical evidence from the laity and clergy respectively. This has become necessary since the importance of inculturation is the promotion of participation of local Christian communities.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The principal research objective in this study is:

- To critically assess the relevance of the Eucharist as a Christian communal meal to the Akan traditional communal meal-sharing.

The sub-objectives of the study include:

- To assess the elements in both the Eucharist and the Akan Communal Meal in order to increase their participation in the Eucharistic celebration.
- To understand the reasons behind the celebration of communal meals by Akans that will end in full participation in the Eucharistic celebration.
- To assess the mode of catechesis in the formation of catechumens relating to the sacraments of the Eucharist in the context of an inculturated celebration of the Eucharist in the Akan community.

This study explores into relevant avenues of inculturating the Eucharistic meal in the context of an Akan communal meal. This attempt seeks to find out how the meal aspect of the Eucharist can be localized effectively in order to enhance a better approach towards its participatory role by Akan Christians. This is to assist the Akan to see the Eucharist as a meal-sharing which demands their active participation in this sacrament without any coerciveness. In other words, this work is motivated in making the Eucharistic meal more appealing to the Akan by way of their understanding of their cultural meal. This attempt is geared towards motivating the Akan Christian in fulfilling the spirit of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*<sup>23</sup> by an active, full and conscious participation of the Eucharistic celebration. This understanding of the meal aspect of the

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<sup>23</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

Eucharist will become more meaningful and useful to their Christian life as a sacrament. Weinandy, at the back-over comment of his book entitled, “*Catholics and the Eucharist*”, affirmed the position of Vatican II that “...the Eucharist is the summit of Catholic liturgical worship yet many Catholics do not fully grasp or appreciate its significance.”<sup>24</sup>

## **1.5 Importance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge concerning the various contributions regarding the Africanization of the Gospel message and the celebration of the Sacraments in elements proper to the African context and cultures (in this case, among the Akan Catholics in the Kumasi archdiocese of Ghana).

The researcher hopes that this study will not only make a valuable referential contribution to the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church in Ghana, especially among the Akan speaking people, but it will also serve as a useful guide for the Catholic Church in Ghana concerning the inculturation of the meal aspect of the Eucharist. Their understanding of the meal aspect of the Eucharist is geared towards increasing their presence and participation in the Eucharistic celebration in their respective local communities.

The research findings could be made available to the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference as a reference tool for issues concerning liturgical inculturation pertaining to the Akan dominant communities and it can be a foundational document for other ethnic groups in Ghana.

This study could also assist the Bishop responsible for sacred liturgy and Music at the National Catholic Secretariat in Ghana to suggest practical methods of catechesis which considers the cultural background of the Akan people.

Above all, since the center of the life of the priestly institution is the celebration of the sacraments most especially the celebration of the Eucharist, seminarians and people in formation must have a very good idea of what they are celebrating with the people of God in elements familiar to their diverse cultural contexts. Thus, it will increase their knowledge base of inculturation of the Eucharist and equip them with appropriate method of catechesis in their pastoral assignments.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy. *Catholic and the Eucharist*. (Michigan: Servant Publications, 2000), Back-cover.

## 1.6 Methodology

The success of every research work depends on the usage of relevant research instruments and techniques. These instruments help the researcher to acquire the necessary tools in an effort in selecting the right target population and using the required instruments for data collection and analysis. In effect, the methodology of research guides the researcher in the whole research work. A brief description of the Akan people is introduced in this introductory chapter and later discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

### 1.6.1 Akan Ethnic Group

Boahen confirms that the Akan ethnic group, culturally are the dominant ethno-linguistic group<sup>25</sup> in modern Ghana.<sup>26</sup> According to a report of the National Statistical Service, the Akan people form the largest ethnic group of about 47.3% of the total population of Ghana.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, Aboagye-Mensah is of the view that, about a half of the Ghanaian population claims to have Akan ancestry or descent.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the Akan ethnic group according to Buah, is made up of many dialects namely, the Asante, Adansi, Assin, Akyem, Akuapem, Akwamu, Awowin, Bono, Fante, Twifo, Kwahu, Sefwi, Nzema and Ahanta.<sup>29</sup> With this background, the Akan tribe forms almost the majority of the Ghanaian population therefore attention must be given to their socio-religious activities. The researcher employed a scientific means of researching and composition in this work. The stages involved in the work followed the order outlined here.

### 1.6.2 Stages Involved in Research

The stages involved in the work followed the order indicated below:

The research work begun with proposal writing with the guidance of my supervisor. Based on the topic, the framework (presented on Table 1.1) for the research was designed to serve as guide in the entire process of the research.

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<sup>25</sup> A tribe with many dialects.

<sup>26</sup> Cosmas Justice E. Sarbah. *“A Critical study of Christian-Muslim Relations in the Central Region of Ghana with special Reference to Traditional Akan Values”*. (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2010), 28.

<sup>27</sup> Ghana National Statistical Service Report, 2013. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah. *Mission and Democracy in Africa: The Role of the Church*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1994), 18.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



<b>Data Required</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Research Techniques</b>
Key factors of the Catholic Eucharistic celebration	To identify and measure the key factors of the Catholic Eucharistic celebration.	Members of the Church Leadership of the Church Literature	Questionnaires Interview guides
Key factors of the Akan communal meal.	To identify and measure the key factors of the Akan communal meal.	Members of the Church Leadership of the Church Literature	Questionnaires Interview guides
The differences and the similarities in the observations of the Catholic Eucharistic celebration and the Akan communal meal.	To establish the differences and the similarities in the observations of the Catholic Eucharistic celebration and the Akan communal meal.	Members of the Church Leadership of the Church Literature	Questionnaires Interview guides
The values of each of observations/celebrations	To clarify the values of each of the observations/celebrations in order to determine the possibility or otherwise of inculturation.	Members of the Church Leadership of the Church Literature	Questionnaires Interview guides

Table 1: Data requirements. Source: Author's construct, January, 2019.

### *Literature review*

According to Vakalisa, "Literature study [review] is the focused attempt to get more familiar with what has been said and done on your problem area from documented information."<sup>30</sup> Literature review, in effect, involves general readings, consulting related books, articles from journals, dissertations and theses on the study topic worldwide in universities and theological institutions as well as theological and cultural reflections presented at conferences and among others. All these literature will be employed as secondary sources of this research by the researcher. It is worthy to note that selected documents of Church councils, Papal encyclicals specifically on the Eucharist and inculturation will also be examined.

In order to be well abreast with the issues of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and the culture of the Akans' communal meal, which defines the research unit, the researcher will spend time reviewing these theoretical and empirical literatures on the subject matter. The findings from this exercise will form part of every chapter of this dissertation and served as the basis for verifying findings from the field survey.

<sup>30</sup> Ntombizolile C. G. Vakalisa. *The Literature Study: Some Dos and Don'ts. In The Introduction to Masters' Studies* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1999), 38.

### 1.6.3 Research Type and Design

The approaches utilized in this study were under three headings namely: exploratory, historical, and analytical.

#### *Exploratory*

The Catholic liturgy has undergone several attempts of inculturation in the whole world for several decades after the Second Vatican Council with the archdiocese of Kumasi as no exception. Therefore this attempt culminated in the Asante liturgy which is been celebrated today by way of employing certain ‘Asante’ cultural values and symbols in making it more “Ashanti-like” to the Catholic faithful. The Akan Catholics in this part of Ghana express their joy at the level of Africanizing the liturgy to their ‘Asante’ cultural context. This study was exploratory in the sense that efforts were made to explore ways of stressing deeply on the meal aspect of the Eucharist. For instance, by using the common traditional communal meal-sharing in relation to the celebration of the Eucharist, can the usage of certain Akan common staple foodstuffs in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal assist them in acquiring a deeper understanding of this sacrament and as well, make it more attractive, lively and meaningful in their Christian life.

#### *Historical*

The historical information concerning the Eucharistic practice gives an in-depth examination of the Church’s teachings on the Eucharist. Doctrines of some Church Fathers, Papal exhortations and Council documents, for instance, the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council offer emphatic positions on the Eucharist as a sacrament. This historical trend enabled the researcher to examine various trends of events and development Eucharistic theology. The historical development of the Eucharist is significant because, according to Torquil “without a constant dialogue with the historical, the Eucharist, as an ahistorical medium, can become allied to the dominant forces of society and become a means of oppression.”<sup>31</sup> The sacrament of the Eucharist is a meal which is meant to give hope, vitality, togetherness, healing (medicine of Immortality) and above all, nourishment to all those who partake in its celebration. It is on this basis that the meal aspect of the Eucharist must be inculturated within the Akan concept of communal meal in

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<sup>31</sup> Macleod M. P. Torquil. “*The Eucharist and History*” (PhD Diss. Rhodes University, Grahams Town, 1990), 2.

the Kumasi archdiocese as part of efforts in calling for a new perspective in African Theology especially on the celebration of the sacraments to serve that purpose.

### *Analytical*

An analytical approach was used in this research because all the responses derived from the data collection instruments such as interviews, questionnaire and discussions have been analyzed by employing the appropriate instruments. In effect, this approach determined relevant information that forms part of the findings of the fieldwork results. This approach was very essential since it guided the researcher in the selection, use and quality of information needed in this empirical study.

### *Design of survey instruments*

After the literature review, with the direction of my supervisor, survey instruments were designed to help capture the situation on the ground. As identified in Table 1.1 above, data were needed from two main sources for the study – the laity who are also members of the Akan community and from the leadership of the Church such as the clergy in the Kumasi archdiocese. Therefore, based on the purposes outlined in the same table above, and with the guidance of my supervisor, questions were framed for these two categories of respondents.

It is worth noting that each item was based on the objectives of this research outlined earlier in this chapter.

## **1.6.4 Research Sampling**

The researcher used multiple sampling techniques such as purposive and random sample in this research. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the clergy and catechists on their understanding of the Eucharistic meal, culture and inculturation. In purposive sampling, Bernard writes, the researcher decides the purpose the respondents are to serve in realizing the study topic.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Given, also affirms that using purposive sampling is to ensure that the most needed source of data and informants are selected.<sup>33</sup> The sample of the clergy comprised of only

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<sup>32</sup> Bernard R. Harvey. *Research Methods in Anthropology (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2006), 189.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa M. Given. *Purposive sampling. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc, 2008), 697.

the parish priests and rectors in the deanery. The emeritus archbishop of Kumasi, Most Rev. Peter Akwasi Sarpong<sup>34</sup> and the metropolitan archbishop of Kumasi, Most Rev. Gabriel Justice Anokye were also interviewed. The purpose of the selection of the clergy respondents is due to the fact that the study of theology, until recently is a specialized area of study to a certain category of people especially the priest (in this case Ghana) which therefore needs the purposive sampling technique.

A random sampling was used in the selection of the lay people who worship in the selected parishes in the Amakom deanery. Five (5) respondents were selected from each parish or rectorate in all fourteen parishes and rectorates for this purpose. These lay respondents included church leaders, catechists and societal leaders. This type of sampling, Marshall writes, gives everyone in the population the probability of been part of the research survey.<sup>35</sup> The responses from these respondents dwelt mainly on their understanding of meal encounters, seek their understanding of the meal in relation to the Eucharist and measures to increase participation in celebrating this sacrament.

### *Field survey*

The survey instruments designed therefore became the tool for the collection of the necessary data for a situational analysis. The field survey also included focal group discussions with formators of the St. Gregory Provincial seminary, questionnaires and oral interviews.

The usage of questionnaires is of utmost importance in every research study. It is through questionnaires that the sampling views of respondents on a specified topic are achieved. In this thesis, the use of a structured interview guide which is designed in the form of questionnaires were used to solicit the views of respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first section contained the biographic data of respondents and the second section relates to the main research questions.

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<sup>34</sup> A renowned anthropologist and theologian who has worked immensely in the area of inculturation for decades.

<sup>35</sup> Martin N. Marshall. "Sampling for qualitative research," *Family practice*, DOI: 10.1093/fampra/13, No. 6, (1996), 522-526.

### *Data collation and analysis*

Data obtained through the fieldwork were analyzed and collated using the Statistical Package for Social Scientist.<sup>36</sup> The outputs of this SPSS software are presented in table and pictorial or graphical forms and analysed. With the Focal Group Discussions (FDGs), values were clarified quantitatively to know and understand the extent of connections that exist among the measured factors through in-text referencing. The clarified values were analysed based on the weighted averages. Therefore the data from the laity, clergy and archbishops were collected using the questionnaires purposely designed for such designated groups.

### *Compilation of the report*

Findings from the literature review up to the discussion and recommendation stages have been compiled as chapters leading to the completion of this research. Cross referencing were also used to highlight similarities and differences of opinions and findings from the literature review.

## **1.7 Ethical Consideration**

The need to apply ethical principles in conducting a research is very important. This is to protect the integrity of the research respondents or participants therefore the researcher adopted the highest ethical considerations and standards in this study. Guillemin and Gillam offer two kinds of ethical principles in research (Procedural ethics and “ethics in practice”) which guide the daily ethical issues which arise in the conduct of research.<sup>37</sup> These ethical guidelines assist the research in the pursuance of the research work especially during the collection of data.

Apart from taking notes while interviewing respondents, I sought for their permission to use a voice recorder. At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself as a doctoral student at the Institute for Catholic Theology at the University of Osnabruck and explained the purpose of this encounter with each respondent. Respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and their information shall be used purely for research purposes. Due to the nature of publication of research works, the researcher requested for their

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<sup>36</sup> This software is among the world’s leading statistical software which enables researchers to resolve research problems through ad-hoc analysis, testing of hypothesis and analytical predictions. It also serves as a means of providing data clarifications, analyzing trends, forecasting and assumption validation and ensures that accurate conclusions are derived.

<sup>37</sup> Marilys Guillemin and Lynn Gillam. *Ethics, Reflexivity, and “Ethically Important Moments” in Research. Qualitative Inquiry*, (2004), 10, No.2, 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>.

permission if certain names are printed in the work. However, pseudo-names are therefore employed in case certain respondents object to the publishing of their names. Notwithstanding, it is important to state that all participants were contacted before using their names in this research. As Guillemin and Gillam put it, respect for autonomy of respondents as well as the process of informed consent is a relevant component in a qualitative research study.<sup>38</sup>

Also, participants were made aware of their free decision to participate or pull out of the research interviews if they wished to do so through a form of consent declaration. Therefore, special permission of consent to undertake both the oral interviews as well as the administration of questionnaires was sought from the respondents before embarking on such activities. In this case, each respondent was advised to append their signature on this consent declaration form submitted to each of the respondents.

## **1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Generally, this study is limited to only the Akan ethnic group in Ghana with particular emphasis on the Catholic liturgy in Kumasi Archdiocese which is predominantly an Akan speaking community. The researcher who is an Akan has considered the great need for the Akan Church to build up a solid pastoral approach in relation to localizing the liturgy which includes acquiring a deep knowledge in Eucharistic theology as a communal meal. Therefore, I hope this research is a step in the right direction so that a new perspective of an African (Akan) Eucharistic theology could work out in the promotion of African Theology by the ‘global church’.

The nature of the topic of study requires respondents who have knowledge in both Akan cultural values and theology with special emphasis on Eucharistic theology who are to be selected for such information. This approach makes the selection of respondents very limited.

Secondly, another limitation of the study is that Akan social ethnic group does not have enough relevant sources on the subject under investigation. An effort was made in this endeavour, however, to consider some of the available information on the subject matter and apply to the Akan social setting. Thirdly, the timing of my fieldwork coincided with the Covid-

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

19 season where restriction ban was in full force in Ghana therefore much quantitative work could not be done.

## 1.9 Research Location

The study was conducted in Amakom deanery<sup>39</sup> in the Ashanti region which is one of the five deaneries of the Kumasi archdiocese. Administratively, Amakom is located within the Kumasi metropolis which is under the Oforikrom electoral constituency. It shares boundaries with towns such as Asokwa, Asafo and Anloga, and has an estimate population of sixty-five thousand (65,000) people with about 65% being Akans but religiously; the deanery goes beyond the administrative demarcation. The Ashanti Region is a typical Twi-speaking region of Ghana with rich historical and cultural heritage since the establishment of the Asante kingdom in 1670. Also, this region of Ghana significantly possesses a larger Catholic population which has always attempted to blend culture with the Roman Catholic style of worship. This attempt of blending culture with the original Roman style of worship makes it ideal for a case study of the subject matter in such area. Necessarily, Roman Catholicism has existed among the Akans in Kumasi metropolis since the year 1878 but this worship has not been fully influenced by the rich indigenous cultural elements of the Akan social group of people.

The choice of the Akan ethnic group is preferred in order to limit the frame of reference in this study and also to control the scope due to time factor (which is usually not more than six months duration of field research). Secondly, this archdiocese has a significant larger Catholic population which has always put in efforts towards inculturating the celebration of the Eucharist by using cultural symbols such as drumming to usher in the celebrants to the Church. According to the archdiocesan directory, the Catholic population in the archdiocese stands at thirty-three thousand, four hundred and fifty seven (33, 457) Catholics. Also, another important point worthy of mention is the choice of Amakom deanery within the entire Archdiocese of Kumasi which has been earmarked for this study. Currently, it is the deanery with the highest number of parishes

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<sup>39</sup> A small geographical area of parishes under the authority of a priest called, 'dean', a Latin term (*decanus*) German (Dechant) referring to a leader who is in charge of ten people. A diocese is a large geographical region and in order to govern the diocese effectively, the bishop needs deans to help oversee the parishes and ensure they are functioning properly. Hence the Code of Canon Law gives bishops the power to create deaneries in that regard.

and rectorates within the Kumasi archdiocese with a Catholic population of approximately eleven thousand, five hundred and nine (11,509) Catholics.<sup>40</sup>

## **1.10 Structure of the Study**

This research work is divided into four parts with each part making up of different chapters and a conclusion to every chapter. The first part which is the first chapter focuses on the general introduction which includes the background to the study which connects with the statement of the problem, research questions and objectives of the study as well as the importance of the study. Also, this chapter gives out the methodology for the research which includes a brief description of the Akan ethnic group, the research location or place of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, among others.

The second part comprises of three chapters which begins with Inculturation and its significant role in the participation of the celebration of the Eucharist. As a way of understanding inculturation, it is necessary to examine the other terms of inculturation such as adaptation, contextualization, indigenization, acculturation and incarnation. Each of these terminologies or principles explains its connectedness and significance in relation to the problem under study. And the scope and agents of inculturation will also be examined under this chapter. Additionally, a major purpose in this chapter will identify the common grounds for a dialogue between inculturation and participation of (Akan) Christians in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The chapter three offers detailed information about the need to study culture in its anthropological sense. It is in finding a common ground for dialogue that the concept of culture was examined which offers an in-depth understanding of the worldview of the people to be evangelized. This section is necessary because culture as a human phenomenon has to be realized as an important partner in undertaking theological discourses in the context of inculturation. Therefore, cultural anthropology and religious symbolism became important sub-themes in this chapter.

The chapter four gives a comprehensive history of the Akan social ethnic group which includes their traditional values of communalism and commensality as the major emphasis of this study. The communal nature of Africans with reference to Akans has been discussed in

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<sup>40</sup> Peter K. Sarpong, (ed.) *Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi Directory*. (Kumasi: Catholic Press, 2019), 184-185.



detail. This value of communality is a prerequisite in every clan or lineage especially when a symbol or a totem of a clan binds the clan folks together. In fact, the communal interests of Akans far outweigh the individual interest since communality is a socially accepted ethics for the Akan social ethnic group. The traditional value of communality urges the people to share everything in common hence the value of commensality. Thus, meal-sharing among Akans becomes an essential part of Akan worldview considering the physical and spiritual benefits associated with such practice.

The third part commences with chapter five and it presents the theoretical framework as well as a review of related literature on the Eucharist, its historical development, and theology as well as the different aspects of the Eucharist. Secondly, this session will also discuss the African culture of meal-sharing in the context of the Eucharist as a communal meal. A meaningful relationship between the Eucharist in the African (Akan) culture has been pointed out.

The fourth part focuses on the empirical studies and information gathered from the fieldwork. This section begins with chapter six which presents the field reports, discussions and analysis of findings gathered from the respondents which included the laity and clergy. These analyses from the fieldwork led us to identify certain persistent problems and propose recommendations for future studies since the concept of inculturation is an on-going process. Finally, the chapter seven becomes the concluding chapter to this research.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

The success of solving a problem is the identification of the causes associated with the said problem in the first instance. This general introductory chapter highlights the rationale and motivation behind the study, the questions and objectives to assist in having the required responses from the research population, importance of the study and structure of the study among others. The chapter further gives a clear method by which the researcher employed in arriving at the end results of the whole study. The introductory chapter is very important because it lays the foundation on which the actual research was built. Above all, the entire dissertation is to assist in making the meal aspect of Eucharistic theology more appealing or meaningful to Christians especially Akans as they also have a traditional communal meal setting in their communities using Amakom deanery of the Kumasi archdiocese as a study point.

## PART II

### 2 THE IMPORTANCE OF INCULTURATION TO PARTICIPATION IN THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL

The principal aim of carrying out this study is to make the Eucharistic celebration as more meaningful in the lives of the African Christian with particular emphasis on Akan Catholic Christians in the Kumasi Archdiocese in Ghana by situating the celebration within their cultural context of communal meal. It is necessary to undertake this exercise since the understanding of the Eucharistic meal in elements familiar to one's culture enhances their understanding and increase their participation since Christians do not participate in the Eucharistic meal as mere spectators. A conscious and attentive involvement or participation by Christians is a necessity in the celebration of the Eucharist because Christians encounter Jesus Christ in this sacrificial meal. Thus, although participation is a very important aspect of liturgical celebrations, an active participation as is the key and Pope Francis affirms this as one of the key words in the synodal process.<sup>41</sup> The Church says, "to promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of reclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes [...] and at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed"(SC 30). Furthermore, the Council also emphasizes that, "Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. Therefore, Catechesis must promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the Liturgy of the church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit" (SC 26). The origin of active participation is traced to Pope St. Pius X whom in his papal encyclical, *Tra le sollecitudini*, where he emphasised on "the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public

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<sup>41</sup> Pope Francis, "Address for the opening of the Synod, Vatican". 09.10.2021. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html> (retrieved 03.03.2023).

and solemn prayer of the Church”<sup>42</sup> by the faithful or laity whose functions in the Church differ from that of the clergy who are ordained.

Initially Pope St. Pius X understanding of active participation was geared towards the participation of the laity in singing their parts during the celebration of the Eucharist but later in 1905, he expanded this idea of active participation by allowing for more frequent reception of the Holy Communion and also, lowering the age for the reception of first Holy Communion in 1910.

In this chapter, the acceptance and contribution of the Second Vatican Council on inculturation will be assessed since their efforts created the auto-consciousness for African theologians and Bishops concerning this shift since European culture was viewed as identical with Christianity even on the soil of Africa. Secondly, an examination of some definitions and meanings of inculturation will be considered. This aspect intends to examine the development of various terminologies associated with inculturation which is a major part of this study not forgetting the scope and agents of inculturation. This chapter is geared towards emphasizing on Inculturation as an essential tool for a full participation in the liturgy of local churches. Considering the necessity of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the life of every Christian, the Christian must have a firm understanding of the need to participate in what is being celebrated in order to derive the needy benefits associated with it. This awareness leads to the recognition of the spiritual importance of these liturgical rites to Christian life and that will improve their participation.

## **2.1 Brief History of the Emergence of Christianity in Africa and Rejection of African Worldview**

The history surrounding the advent of Christianity in Africa dates back to the period between the second and fifth centuries in North Africa which was characterized by the colonial action of imperial Rome. This period is classified as the peak of Christianity where certain Church fathers such as Tertullian, Augustine and Cyprian emerged. Prior to the arrival of the missionaries into Africa, Africa had its own religion known as the African Traditional Religion (ATR) where God was regarded as the source of all things. For example, it is believed among the Akans that, ‘*Obi*

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<sup>42</sup> Pope St. Pius X. *Inter pastoralis officii sollicitudines: a Motu Proprio* on regulations for the performance of music, 22. Nov. 1903. n. 3.

*nkyere Abofra Nyame*' (literally means nobody shows God to the child) therefore as soon as a child is born, the idea of God is present in the child.

The missionaries, in their first attempt of bringing Christianity to Africa did not materialize due to the new environment they found themselves in. The health conditions in Africa such as outbreak of certain sicknesses such as Malaria killed many of the missionaries therefore they left the shores of Africa. The Christian faith was later re-introduced between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries in the Eastern and Western parts of Africa such as Ghana. The first Europeans who sailed to Ghana, then known as Gold Coast were the Portuguese in 1470 and 1471 however on 18<sup>th</sup> May, through the efforts of a lay person called Sir James Marshall, 1880 Frs. Moreau and Murat arrived in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) for evangelization mission. The country was named Gold Coast because of the plethora of gold deposited in the land which they found especially between the rivers Ankobra and Volta. It was after the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries to Gold Coast (Ghana) before all other western nationals such as the Danes, Dutch, Germans, etc also sailed to then Gold Coast.<sup>43</sup>

This period became the last moment of colonialism which saw the mixture of colonial governments and missionary activities operating hand in hand and as a result, this era witnessed a total disregard for the African world by the foreigners. The African and its religion were seen as primitive and pre-logical which gave way to the colonial imperialism and as a Ghanaian scholar Alex Quaison-Sackey writes, "Perhaps worse was the deliberate attempt to eradicate or destroy our cultural heritage. Since drumming, for example, was considered by the church to be a heathen practice, African Christians were at once cut off from the wellsprings of their culture—the rhythms of African music and dance. ...African medicine, too, was regarded as inferior; and if you were an African Christian, you were expected to seek help from the doctor at the hospital, not from the African herbalist, who had come to be styled the 'witch doctor' or 'medicine man'..."<sup>44</sup>

When the Europeans arrived in Africa, they found a functioning society where the people were living happily in their cultural milieu and religion. However, the question remains as to whether the Europeans were occupied with advancing their political and economic interests rather than understanding the African people and their religious practices. A quotation from Michael

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<sup>43</sup> Jamie Stokes (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East*, (New York: InfoBase Publishing Inc., 2009), 245.

<sup>44</sup> Alex Quaison-Sackey. *The African Personality*, in: *Africa Unbound*, London 1963, 38-58, here 52-53.

Kayoya, a Murundi priest, with the title, “The consciousness of the colonized” in this respect must be considered:

“In 1885 at Berlin our Continent was partitioned. Without consulting anyone they had pity on our misery. They came to save us from earthly misery; they came to educate us; they came to civilize us. This ‘Act’, known as the Berlin Act, has humiliated me for a long time.....”<sup>45</sup>

There are many Africans who agree with this reflection from Michael Kayoya due to the various roles played by not only the colonial governments but the Church as well. This is so because the missionaries worked hand in hand with the colonial governments in their evangelization activities. Hence most people are of the view that the Europeans who arrived in Africa initially did not come with the mindset of only civilizing Africans but they were also preoccupied with reasons of self interest hence trading in gold, manganese and other precious African minerals. Bujo writes, “For the missionaries worked hand in glove with the colonial power. They did indeed preach the gospel. But they preached it within the framework of a tainted system.”<sup>46</sup> Also, the Europeans who visited Africa regarded the Black people as inferior and unarmed hence the Africans were least respected due to their minority, socially economically and politically.

According to Hegel, the Black people were unruly and savage<sup>47</sup> and needed not to be acknowledged as human. The traditional chiefs were manipulated and used to serve the interest of their new masters (colonizers) and failure of these chiefs to abide by these dictates of their masters resulted in their destoolment. In this way, the cherished traditional authority of Africans lost its importance because their chiefs were treated as commoners. Likewise the missionaries also waged an attack against certain social practices such as polygamy, the cult of the ancestors, witchcraft, sorcery, etc.<sup>48</sup> Instead of refining these religious traditions by the missionaries due to the excesses which took place sometimes, they rather defaced the whole religious practices as fetish. These are some of the reasons why the Black people were not respected and everything about them was rejected by the Europeans and the missionaries respectively.

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<sup>45</sup> Benezet Bujo. *African Theology: in its social context*. (St. Paul Publications- Africa, 1992), 38.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel. *The Philosophy of History*. (New York: 1956.), 218-222. Cited in Bujo, *African Theology in its social context*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> Bujo, *African Theology: in its social context*, 39-41.

With this hostile attitude expressed by the missionaries towards “anything African” prompted Africans in their quest to fight for recognition and liberation. This idea of auto-consciousness of Africans towards recognition in the last time of colonialism begun by African authors such as Leopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Leon Contran. They were of the view that for Africans to win back their respect, dignity and freedom, they must begin to write and think as Africans.<sup>49</sup> In line with this, one early African writer, Senghor contends:

“Our [Africans] renaissance will be more the work of Africans writers and artists than of politicians. We [Africans] have seen from experience that there can be no political liberation without cultural liberation.”<sup>50</sup>

By this statement, he affirmed that, it is only when there is respect for the [African] music, sculpture, literature, worldview, dancing as well as its philosophy that the African can be acknowledged and win respect for themselves. This means that the culture of a group of people is essential to their way of life and since religion forms part of the culture of a social ethnic group, the study and understanding of culture is significant to the study of theology. Based on this understanding, Lonergan writes, “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix,”<sup>51</sup> thus encouraging theological reflections in engaging the cultural context of the people in order to ‘bear fruits’. In this way, the core African [Ghanaian] traditional values are been introduced into the life of Mission Churches as a way of embarking on a new era of African theology or Christianity. For instance, due to the disregard of the Ghanaian cultural style of worship by Mission Churches, the emergence of Ghanaian Indigenous Churches otherwise known as ‘spiritual churches’ became prominent. The Ghanaian Christian saw these churches as reflecting the true African style of worship as compared to the Mission Churches introduced by the European missionaries. In these churches, the worldview of the people was emphasized which led them to a relaxed form of worship without stringent rules. In other words, the people practised Christianity in a more practical Ghanaian way.

It must be noted that the methods employed by the authors of the Synoptic gospels in presenting the ‘Good News’ of Jesus Christ to the early Christians were expressed differently by

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<sup>49</sup> Bujo, *African Theology: in its social context*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 51. Quoted from Leopold Senghor. *No Political Liberation without Cultural liberation* (trans. from: *L’esprit de la civilisation ou les lois de la culture negro-africaine*), in: Senghor: *Prose and Poetry*, (London, 1965), 71.

<sup>51</sup> Gerard Whelan. “*Evangelii Gaudium as ‘Contextual Theology: Helping the Church ‘Mount to the Level of its Times’*”. (April, 2015), *Australian eJournal of Theology* 22. No. 1.

considering the worldview of the people they were addressing. Notably, this worldview is what we refer to as culture; thus culture plays a significant role in the evangelization mandate of the Church by preaching Christ's message of salvation in the Church, the "People of God" as Pope Francis states in his apostolic exhortation:

"To be the Church means to be the People of God, in accordance with the great plan of the Father's love. This includes being the ferment of God in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming the salvation of God in this world of ours and bringing it into this world of ours, which often loses itself, which needs answers, which encourage, which give hope, which give new strength on the way. The Church must be the place of innocent mercy where all can feel welcome and loved, where they can be forgiven and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel."<sup>52</sup>

In this case, there is a call for dialogue between the Church and the cultures of the people in the various local Churches towards a fruitful engagement. As an affirmation of the invitation to have a dialogue between Christianity and cultures, Pope Paul VI writes in his letter "*Africae Terrarum*" as a support for adoption of Christianity to African social organization that:

The church views with great respect the moral and religious values of the African tradition, not only because of their meaning, but also because she sees them as providential, as the basis for spreading the gospel message and the beginning of establishment of the new society in Christ.<sup>53</sup>

In agreeing to this dialogue as an important tool for the Church, Pope Francis also contends that: "dialogue with states, dialogue with society-including dialogue with cultures... and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church"<sup>54</sup> in its evangelization ministry is necessary. In this same vein of dialogue, John Paul II in his exhortation to the Asian Bishops reminded them that, if the Church "is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority."<sup>55</sup> This papal admonition calls for an effective approach in this task of evangelization therefore understanding the culture(s) of the African people has been noted as one of the effective approaches which must be employed by the Church in opening a dialogue with African cultures.

By tracing the history of the Church in the New Testament gives a vivid knowledge that Christianity does not simply have one cultural expression, but rather, as Paul VI puts it, "remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel

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<sup>52</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 114.

<sup>53</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum*, quoted in: Sussy G. Kurgat. "The theology of inculturation and the African church". *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(5), (2009), 090-098.

<sup>54</sup> Whelan. *Evangelii Gaudium* as "Contextual Theology", No. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Pope John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 451.

and the tradition of the Church, it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it [proclamation of the Gospel] is received and takes root.”<sup>56</sup>

This paradigm shift of theological method in the evangelization mandate of the Church has called for a new theological foundation in the African Church (that is inculturation) thereby acknowledging the proposal of this term by Fr. Joseph Masson, a priest of the Society of Jesus (S.J.) in 1962 to the Second Vatican Council. Through inculturation, the Church “introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her [the people’s] own community”, for “every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived”<sup>57</sup> because Jesus Christ is still present among his followers. In this way, the Church takes up the values of different cultures such as the Akan culture to enrich the message of Christ among the Akan people in the archdiocese of Kumasi.

It is with this understanding that Inculturation, as stated by Sarpong, a renowned Ghanaian anthropologist represents the attempt of Christians in particular places such as Ghana to understand and celebrate their Christian faith in their dominant cultural settings while still sharing in the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.<sup>58</sup>

In effect, any discussion pertaining to the evangelization of African Christianity cannot be complete without talking about the African culture since it is central to their Christian faith. As a support to this position, Waliggo confirms this stance of the significance of culture to Christianity by echoing the statement of John Paul II when he maintained that, “A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully lived out.”<sup>59</sup> For instance, the Akan cultural meal sharing as a traditional practice where all members of a family come together to share meal as a source of communalism, nourishment and unity can also be connected to the celebration of the Eucharist in Catholicism. In this sense, the Church in Africa is likened to the image of the family who are connected to each other. It is with this understanding for an urgent need for inculturation of the Gospel message and the liturgy that Schineller writes, “Wherever the Gospel is lived, wherever it is preached, we are obliged to search for ways in which the Good news can be more deeply lived,

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<sup>56</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 116.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Peter K. Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*. (Takoradi: Franciscan Publications, 1998), 54.

<sup>59</sup> John Mary Waliggo, Roest A. Crollius, J. Mutiso-Mbinda and T. Nkeraminhigo. *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*. (Nairobi: St. Paul, 1986), 7.



celebrated and shared. This process is [what is termed as] inculturation,”<sup>60</sup> an attempt to re-read the diverse missionary strategy in relation to local Churches of the Catholic Church. This process of inculturation, according to Karl Rahner, a Jesuit theologian, becomes essential to the Catholic Church if it wants to maintain its universality as a World Church. He writes: “The [Catholic] Church must be inculturated throughout the world if it is to be [considered] a World Church....This, then, is the issue: either the church sees and recognizes these essential differences of other cultures for which she should become a World Church and with a Pauline boldness draws the necessary consequences from this recognition, or she remains a Western Church and so in the final analysis betrays the meaning of Vatican II.”<sup>61</sup>

Dwelling on human development as part of inculturation, Kurgat writes: “the whole purpose of inculturation is to make evangelization the influence of the Good News [salvific message of Christ] more effective in human development. [Therefore], an integral human development necessarily includes cultural development and that cultural development is epitomized by inculturation.”<sup>62</sup>

## **2.2 Vatican II: Significance of Second Vatican Council to Inculturation**

The Second Vatican Council has been extolled for its role in the implementation of inculturation in propagating the Gospel message and in the celebration of the sacraments after the proposal of Fr. Joseph Masson, (S.J.) He realized at the time that Catholicism was changing from the ‘Westerners church’ to a ‘global Church’ which calls for an encounter with several cultures hence lead the campaign for inculturation before Vatican II. In this direction, the Council accepted and discussed this new theological concept and their effort have, on one hand, enlightened many people to appreciate the traditional values of local churches (Traditional African religions), “a ray of truth which enlightens all men [women] and, on the other hand, to admit that the Church is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any customary practices, ancient or modern”.<sup>63</sup> Thus, this new concept of inculturation is to change the face of Catholicism in this new era. This term therefore became an important concept for the

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Schineller. *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), back-cover page.

<sup>61</sup> Karl Rahner, “*Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II*,” *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1979): 718, 724 cited in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 190.

<sup>62</sup> Sussy G. Kurgat. “*The Theology of inculturation and the African Church*”, 90-98.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

African Bishops and Theologians during the Second Vatican Council. With this understanding, the Church is free to enter into dialogue or a sense of communion with several forms of cultures by way of enriching itself as well as the encountering cultures such as the Akan culture in Ghana.

For Sarpong, the theological investigations inspired by Vatican Council II in its document on the missions have been wonderful in the aspect of inculturation.<sup>64</sup> He further explains that those investigations that have been carried out by African scholars pertaining to African theology so far have revealed that there is an immense richness in the so-called life cycle ceremonies of Asante that in many ways should be a good assert to evangelization. For instance, appreciation of the Asante Kente<sup>65</sup> has been admired by both the local and westerners to the extent that priests from both local and foreign countries continue to wear the stole with chasubles which has the Kente cloth imprinted in it. The usage of this Asante Kente cloth by the ordinary European as well as the acceptance of the church's vestments such as chasubles and stoles bearing these African cultural symbols portrays the extent to which the Western church has come to appreciate inculturation of the African church through their traditional cultural symbols.

In this regard, the council changed its original mindset and gave recognition to the cultural values and worldview of the local people in other parts of the world outside Europe. This recognition resulted in shaping the mindset of future missionaries from imposing their cultural background and mentality unto their Christian communities in local Churches during the colonial and Post-colonial periods. Butler, an European scholar, describes the mentality of early European missionaries before the Second Vatican Council in these words:

The missionary efforts of the early centuries at length led to the establishment of the Churches as one official religion of Europe... when Hilaire Billoe could coin his famous and regrettable dictum, 'the faith of Europe and Europe is the faith'. One result of this was, of course, that the gospel, whose origins were outside Europe, itself became deeply intertwined with Europeanism that Europe and the faith were, for many of us, practically indistinguishable, and the recent 'secularization' of European culture was seen as an unnatural betrayal of the very soul of Europe.<sup>66</sup>

In this regard, it is evident that the style of proclaiming the Gospel message as well as celebrating the sacraments before the Second Vatican Council was adopted to suit the mentality and lifestyle of the European and Western missionaries' cultural background. No wonder in spite of all the efforts of the early missionaries in Christianizing local churches such as Africa, the

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<sup>64</sup> Sarpong. *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 74.

<sup>65</sup> A type of silk and cotton traditional fabric made of interwoven cloth strips.

<sup>66</sup> Basil C. Butler. *The Synoptic Problem. In The New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*. (West Melbourne: Nelson and Sons Ltd. 1981), 178.

Christian faith has not succeeded to be deeply rooted in the life of the African Christian in general and the Akan in particular. This is so because the African Christians for instance, got the impression that the style of the European missionaries in their evangelization drive as an imposition of the European culture on the African who is being evangelized, in this case, on the African soil. In his analysis of the decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Butler writes again:

“Whereas the Christianity taken to ‘heathen’ countries by modern missionaries was usually heavily marked with the national or European culture of the missionaries, the Decree points out that the secular culture integument of Christianity is not part of its unchanging religious meaning, and that when it moves into a new culture it must willingly divest itself of the culture it brought with it and express itself in the culture it finds in its new situation. This process has been named indigenization, acculturation, or inculturation.”<sup>67</sup>

It is worthy to note that Vatican II was keen on the important role of culture as a way of incarnating the Gospel message into the cultural milieu of the particular peoples in local Churches. In a papal encyclical, the Pontiff writes:

“Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within.”<sup>68</sup>

However, Butler is of the view that the interpretation and application of the council's teachings on culture centers on ‘indigenization, acculturation, or ‘inculturation’. It is with this position of Butler that Shorter explains that, “The Second Vatican Council, in its liturgical constitution, only recommended acculturation in exceptional circumstances”<sup>69</sup> although a clear reference was made to the Eucharist and culture (which is the focus of this study) and this makes the liturgy as a privileged field for inculturation. For the sake of the missionary activity, the Church maintains:

Through preaching and celebration of the sacraments, of which the Holy Eucharist is the center and summit, missionary activity makes Christ present, he who is the author of salvation... So whatever goodness is found in the minds and hearts of men [women], or in the particular customs and cultures of peoples, far from being lost is purified, raised to a higher level and reaches its perfection, for the glory of God...<sup>70</sup>

It must be admitted that the concept of inculturation has been on-going in the life of the Church. And it is this on-going process of inculturation that Sarpong questioned how the Church could

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 179-180.

<sup>68</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, 52.

<sup>69</sup> Aylward Shorter. *Toward a theology of Inculturation*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1997), 194.

<sup>70</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 9.

ever progress in its evangelization activities in the world without inculturation. He thus referred to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts. 15) as another form of inculturation which happened in the history of the church.<sup>71</sup>

Based on this connection, Vatican II can be termed as the vehicle or the essential tool which resulted in the promotion of inculturation as part of local theologies. Therefore, it would not be out of order to recommend the Second Vatican Council as the Church's first official attempt in endorsing inculturation in missiological discourse and subsequently issuing documents as empowering local churches in other parts of the world to practice Christianity in their particular worldviews. However, Amadi states that it would be unwise to state that previous Church councils did little in solving the problem of inculturation because very council is provoked by current issues happening in its time.<sup>72</sup> Hence in the attempt of the Church of the modern age in responding to some pastoral challenges of its time that Vatican II commenced work in dealing with the Western cultural imposition in its evangelization work. Thus, the council for instance, recognized the contributions of the African Church and gave it a chance to promote the African perspective of their Christian worship.

Another instance of affirming Vatican II as the meaningful vehicle for promoting inculturation can be found in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World which states:

Nevertheless, the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. The church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission, it can enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.<sup>73</sup>

The bold attempt by Vatican II to accept the fact that encounter between the Gospel and culture enriches each other is worthwhile and this has become a landmark in the history of the Church, which is, 'opening the windows of the Church for fresh air to enter'. Thus, integrating the Gospel message and cultural values coupled with its expected outcome of this interaction is similar to what Arrupe calls, "...a principle that animates, directs and unifies culture, transforming it and making it so as to bring about a new creation."<sup>74</sup> In this regard, Amadi further states that though

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<sup>71</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Anthony I. Amadi. "Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe". (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2008), 162.

<sup>73</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

<sup>74</sup> Pedro Arrupe. *In Toward A Theology of Inculturation*. (New York: Orbis, 1997), 11.

Vatican II did not explicitly employ the use of inculturation as a word, its teachings and emphases on culture as well as its initiatives on the new method or shift in local Churches signaled the promotion of inculturation as well as ushering in positive signs towards the realization of inculturation.<sup>75</sup>

Also, the Second Vatican Council is to be recommended for the liturgical reforms embarked upon in making the relevance of the Gospel message as well as the celebration of the liturgy more meaningful to all people of the world by the usage of their cultural values thus giving the various local churches a new perspective in their Christian life. These new reforms resulted in the introduction of certain traditional practices such as dancing and clapping of hands during the celebration of the Eucharist among Africans. Furthermore, the use of musical instruments brought about a lively Eucharistic celebration in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Similarly, the use of vernacular instead of Latin, Sarpong writes, in the celebration of the sacraments as well as preaching the Gospel message has added another relevance to the daily life of the particular peoples in their different parts of the world<sup>76</sup> whereby the Akan, during the celebration of the Eucharist hears the Gospel been read in his or her own native language.

Indeed, all the above contributions and achievements in the preaching of the Gospel message and the celebration of the Sacraments among the local churches such as the African church make it significant to acknowledge the efforts of the Second Vatican Council in the recognition of local churches as the starting point for the process of inculturation.

### **2.3 Agents of Inculturation**

The Second Vatican Council has done its part in promoting the inculturation of Christianity. But for inculturation to achieve its expected purpose of presenting the Gospel message of Christ to the understanding of the people in particular local churches, it calls for an all-inclusive cooperation and active participation of all Christians in various local churches. This means that the contributions from bishops, priests and the laity are of paramount importance to the success of inculturation in the universal Church. Most especially the Christians in local Churches with diverse cultural background must be recognized in this effort of promoting inculturation. To this exhortation, the Council document remarks:

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<sup>75</sup> Amadi, *Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*, 163.

<sup>76</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana : Letters to my Ancestor*, 76.

“We must do everything possible to make all persons aware of their right to culture and their duties to develop themselves culturally and to help their fellows.”<sup>77</sup> “Although the Church has contributed largely to the progress of culture, it is the lesson of experience that there have been difficulties in the way of harmonizing culture with Christian thought.”<sup>78</sup>

This personhood of Jesus is the center of every aspect of Christian life therefore He stands as the perfect model of inculturation of Christianity in the universal church through his Incarnation. In line with this active participation, Amadi writes, for the “universal church” to realize its expected results with regard to inculturation, it calls for a conscious effort of all the people of God who form the membership of the Church to play a significant role in its promotion.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, in encouraging all Christians to play an active and conscious participation in Christian life, Pope Francis also urges people in mission to abandon the complacent attitude that says:

“We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking [about] the goals, structures, styles and methods of evangelization in their respective communities... The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishop, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.”<sup>80</sup>

Notably, it is in playing these roles that inculturation embraces the totality of Christian life (receiving Jesus Christ in an integral manner) through the faith, morality and the liturgy of the people. Culturally, the role of each member of the Akan household during a traditional communal meal is explicit where the father, mother, children and even visitors have a role to play till the meal is over. Therefore, the agents of inculturation, which comprise all the local people in Christian communities, must be bold and realistic in their contribution to the successful implementation of inculturation in their various Christian localities. Ultimately, the promotion of inculturation cannot be successful without the contribution from the members of the Christian community since the culture of the people is the life of the community. Hence, Kurgat in her article contends: “The community provides the criteria of authenticity and success, because it [culture] is the life of the community, which is in question.”<sup>81</sup> Aside the contribution of the local Christian leaders, Vatican II directed that, “Bishops, to whom has been committed the task of

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<sup>77</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 60.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Amadi, “*Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*”, 30.

<sup>80</sup> Orobator, *The Church We Want*, 190.

<sup>81</sup> Kurgat, “*The theology of inculturation and the African church*,” 90-98.

directing the Church of God... are to preach the message of Christ in such a way that the light of the Gospel will shine on all the activities of the faithful.”<sup>82</sup>

This implementation calls for a collaborative effort between priests and religious (whether missionaries or indigenous), laity, theologians (men and women), catechists (men and women) and Catholic youth groups as the agents of inculturation. The catechism to the neophytes must not be handled by only the catechists without the priests taking an active role in that period of catechumenate especially in Ghana where the study of theology is mostly undertaken by priests and those in formation houses. With this in mind, the African Catholic Bishops in the document, *Instrumentum Laboris* remark:

“The work of inculturation involves the entire Church community because it is the whole Church that must be missionary. Therefore, it must never be thought that inculturation falls under the responsibility of foreign missionaries or of a handful of experts. It is the responsibility of the whole community.”<sup>83</sup>

Amadi sees the above admonition of the African Catholic Bishops in two perspectives, firstly, as an advice and secondly as a warning. He further gives an explanation to these two perspectives by stating that, efforts of inculturation should not be left single-handedly in the hands of the foreign missionaries since their efforts are likely to be abandoned upon leaving their missionary communities.<sup>84</sup> The danger of this challenge of leaving their missionary areas which could be attributed to frequent transfers of priests from parishes results in the lack of continuity. Secondly, as a warning in the sense that if the work of inculturation is left in the hands of only experts, its final destination would be only in the classrooms as an idea without any practice. As an affirmation to this second perspective, McGarry supports this admonition given by the African Bishops by offering a profound implication of this warning aspect in these words, “If inculturation were the work only of experts, there is a danger that it would be a conceptual and technical inculturation coming from the outside and not affecting people’s lives [practically]”.<sup>85</sup> The reality of this observation expressed by McGarry is clear and obvious hence the main reason behind the soliciting of responses from not only the theologians and priests who have studied theology, but some selected laity which includes men and women whose lives have been touched

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<sup>82</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 43.

<sup>83</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris*. The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000. (Vatican Press, 1993). 49.

<sup>84</sup> Amadi, “*Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*,” 30.

<sup>85</sup> Cecil McGarry (ed.). *What Happened At The African Synod*. (Nairobi: St. Paul’s, 1995), 61.

by their attendance and participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and well-versed in culture respectively.

In effect, the era of passive involvement of the local people, and leaving everything in the hands of the people in formation houses, priests, theologians and bishops comes to an end through the active participation of the laity in propagating the Gospel message through their particular cultural values and worldviews. In this regard, Pope Paul VI reminded the People of God that priests are not the sole agent of evangelization since together with the laity, form the Body of Christ under the guidance of bishop who is the head.<sup>86</sup> This papal advice gives credence to the recognition of the meaningful contribution of the laity in the salvific mission of Christ in the world through inculturation of their local cultural values and symbols. Understood in this way, the people of God who are not in the clerical state are all required to offer their energy towards the growth of the Church of Christ on earth. The catechists, lay theologians and other men and women, who include societal leaders, traditional leaders and the youth who profess the Christian faith in the various cities, towns and villages in local church communities should all come out in contributing to the successful implementation of inculturation. Elaborating further on this joint effort in the promotion of inculturation, Schineller contends:

“The agent of inculturation is not the sole resource or the sole leader, but is perhaps best seen as the one who works with others, who complements his or her own talents and resources with the talents of others. Through community effort we are much more likely to achieve solutions that are more helpful and more lasting, because so much more collaborative input has gone into the formulation not only of the solution but also of the problem”.<sup>87</sup>

As a support to Schineller concerning a successful implementation of inculturation, Amadi emphasizes on the point that facilitators who show signs of preparedness to collaborate with the people at the grassroots, and their work must be seen as complementary to the efforts of others<sup>88</sup>. This is so because situating the sacramental liturgy within the cultural milieu of Africans as part of the inculturation process is an important but could be a difficult step in the Christian life which demands the efforts of all the People of God. Surely, this difficulty in the attempt of transforming people’s Christian lives within their cultural situations cannot be an easy activity. In responding to this task, McGarry writes, “This is the laborious process of inculturation, conversion from-within that must take place on the way to an African rite, involving liturgy, law

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<sup>86</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 31-33.

<sup>87</sup> Peter Schineller. *A Handbook on Inculturation*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>88</sup> Amadi, “*Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*,” 31.



and Church structures, which will then express the genius of African Christianity.”<sup>89</sup> In this vein, Sarpong writes, the expected response of this laborious task of inculturation must manifest itself in the daily activities of the people in the community, thereby achieving a new creation and a new people, and anything apart from this expected response, will not be inculturation.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, Pope Francis is right to state clearly that all the baptized are agents of evangelization therefore the *Magisterium* must pay attention to the fact that among the People of God, there is an “instinct of faith-*sensus fidei*- which helps them to discern what is truly of God ... even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression”,<sup>91</sup> thus making the laity, who are part of the People of God responsible through their contribution towards the growth of the Church. And the Pope continues, “Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a *locus theologicus*.”<sup>92</sup>

## 2.4 Scope of Inculturation

The evangelization mandate of the church employs both the Christological and pneumatological perspectives in its mission. It is understandable that the missionary character of the Church, to successfully preach the Gospel message and celebration of the liturgy in all local churches requires inculturation to achieve this primary aim. In view of this, the various elements in the traditional culture of the local people must be employed in order to enhance a profound understanding of their Christian life. That is the essence of inculturation but this is not as simple as it is hence several authors are of the view that the scope of inculturation must be explicit due to its wide nature. For instance, Pinto writes, “every culture and the total culture, comes within the scope of inculturation.”<sup>93</sup> Schineller also holds another view and states, “A whole range of areas of Church life calls for inculturation.”<sup>94</sup> Similarly, in agreeing to all of these, McGarry shares this opinion concerning the scope of inculturation and maintains that, “Inculturation includes the whole life of the Church and the whole process of evangelization.”<sup>95</sup> As a response to all these concerns expressed by these authors, Waliggo therefore sums up all these ideas and

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<sup>89</sup> McGarry, *What Happened At The African Synod*, 62.

<sup>90</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 48ff.

<sup>91</sup> *Evangelium Gaudium*, 119.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph P. Pinto. *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*. (Bangalore: F.M. Pais Asian Trading Company, 1985), 17.

<sup>94</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 83.

<sup>95</sup> McGarry, *What Happened At The African Synod*, 60.

remarks: “The scope of inculturation extends to the totality of Christian life and doctrine, the central ministry of Christ from which all other ministries derive, the very nature of witnessing to Christ, proclaiming his message and worship.”<sup>96</sup>

Still on the scope of inculturation, Sarpong hints that an identification of certain areas such as formation of the local people, art, architecture of church buildings, music, singing and clapping of hands at worship, dancing, preaching of homilies, the way theology is studied and written, catechesis among others are already undergoing a certain level of inculturation,<sup>97</sup> also falls under the scope of inculturation. In spite of the above, this study is of the view that the meal aspect of the Eucharist must not be taken for granted in this inculturation process, thus, the meal aspect of the Eucharist must be given the needed attention. Furthermore, Jesus established the sacraments (which included the Eucharist) as channels of grace through an encounter with the whole Christ under the species of bread as his body and wine as his blood in the Jewish cultural context of meal sharing.

Waliggo, in affirming this stance of wholeness, writes, “Everything must be done which destroys dichotomy in the lives of Christians and builds towards an integration of mind and heart.”<sup>98</sup> In effect, the scope of inculturation must include everything which assists the people of God in different communities to grow towards Christian maturity and for example, by appreciating the Eucharist as a traditional communal meal which brings vitality and spiritual nourishment to the people of God on the African soil. This position of Waliggo concerning wholeness was also supported by the Fathers of the African Synod of 1994 by declaring that inculturation must touch on all other aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ if it is to question and transform the African culture. This admonition of the Synod Fathers goes with Claude Geffré who maintains that:

“Inculturation must ensure that the Gospel message penetrates, assimilates or influences every culture without affecting its identity. The Church must also strive to include the whole culture-in all its values and lacks-in order to transform it out of the values of the Gospel. In this way,

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<sup>96</sup> Waliggo et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 73.

<sup>98</sup> Waliggo et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, 18.

inculturation must bring about mutual enrichment, which is usually the case when the Gospel and culture enter into a relationship.”<sup>99</sup>

In this statement, the totality of the particular cultural values must be touched by Christianity since this encounter is poised to bring mutual enrichment. Although there is an undeniable fact that the scope of inculturation is too wide to be exhausted, situating the liturgical rites especially the Eucharist in the context of communal meal, and especially in this case, the Akan cultural meal sharing which is the focus of this study, would lead to a joyous moment in the life of the Akan Catholics in the archdiocese of Kumasi and Ghana as a whole. By so doing, certain elements of the Akan cultural meal sharing could be incorporated into their celebration of the Eucharist to awaken the relevance of the Eucharistic meal in their daily Christian life. It is in view of making the African liturgy more meaningful that Sarpong for instance contends: “Isn’t it sad that [Akan] Catholics attend Mass nowadays and they still go back to some other places “to pray”? What they say is, “*ko mpaebo*”<sup>100</sup> in Akan while they say, “*Yereko asore*” (going to church).<sup>101</sup> The implication emerging from the statement of Sarpong is that because Catholics do not really understand what they celebrate, they regard attending Holy Mass as mere formality and rather visit other charismatic churches, Pentecostal movements as well as fetish shrines in anticipation of miracles, spiritual protection and others. Perhaps this view of Sarpong concerning this lack of understanding could be the rationale for their low participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Still on the scope, the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians cannot be overlooked in all efforts of inculturation. This theology of Pneumatology, for Kurgat, is where the presence of the Holy Spirit is felt among the people in their everyday activities.<sup>102</sup> It protects them from dangers and destruction by granting them constant guidance so also the African Christians in their bid of inculturation believe in the presence of their ancestors in their day to day activities. The role of this ancestor is to provide blessings such as fertility, good harvest and protection from misfortunes for the people. Thus, recognition of the Holy Spirit as a principal agent of inculturating the Gospel message is very significant. In affirming this role of the Holy Spirit, Dhavamony writes:

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<sup>99</sup> Francis A. Oborji. “*Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*”, in: Klaus Kramer und Klaus Vellguth (eds.), *Inkulturation Gottes Gegenwart in den Kulturen*. (Freiburg in Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2017), 125-126.

<sup>100</sup> Literally meaning; going to pray.

<sup>101</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 56.

<sup>102</sup> Kurgat, *The Theology of Inculturation and the African Church*, 090-098.

The Church is the body of Christ, perpetuating the redemptive incarnation in the world. Since inculturation has taken as its model the redemptive incarnation, the Holy Spirit works in making the Gospel incarnate in culture. It is so because the Church which inculturates the Gospel embodies the same principle of the redemptive incarnation and lives by the same life. The constitution of the redemptive incarnation must be defined as the presence of the spirit in the Church, for the presence of the spirit is the presence of Christ.<sup>103</sup>

This elaborative discourse of Dhavamony gives credence to the incarnation model of inculturation where the word of God assumed a human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (who is the Way, the Truth and the Life) and dwelled among his own Jewish people as He is still present among all his followers. He goes further to explain how the Holy Spirit assumes the position of a point of contact or a common ground for both culture and the Gospel message by stating:

The Holy Spirit is the ground between the Gospel and the culture because He is the one who makes us mutually aware of the other people and their cultures, opening our eyes to Christ and to our fellow humans in Christ, and to the cultural needs. The spirit of man (and woman) enables us to be mutually present to one another.<sup>104</sup>

Jesus even promised that the Holy Spirit whom God the Father would send in his (Jesus) name will [come to] teach all things [the scope of evangelization including inculturation] and complete his works on earth (John. 14:15-31). This Christological promise makes the Holy Spirit an important agent of inculturation, as well as a part of the whole process of inculturation. Therefore, the role of the Holy Spirit as the principal agent in the church's mission of evangelization leading every Christian to the truth by discernment must be stressed so that the Akan Christian who is aware of the role of the family ancestor in his or her daily activities especially during the moment of their meal sharing can come to this understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the Eucharistic celebration. The next section examines the attempts of several authors in offering different definitions of inculturation.

## **2.5 Definition of Inculturation**

For this study, it is important to assess different definitions associated with the term 'inculturation' as suggested by various scholars. The importance attached to these different definitions is to help us understand the various angles of several authors. For Appiah-Kubi, the urgency of African theologians, scholars and other Christians to answer the question of Jesus

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<sup>103</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony. *Christian Theology of Inculturation*. (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1997), 106.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Christ, “But you [African Christians], who do you think [that] I am?” has led many authors to define inculturation in their own perspective.<sup>105</sup>

These several reflections on this process of inculturation have resulted in many definitions of this single term. However, almost all the definitions regard inculturation as an on-going process of interaction or a continuous dialogue between the Gospel message and the Christian life with the cultural background of the local people to be evangelized. This continuous interaction is very important in the sense that there should be a mutual respect for the culture of the people to be evangelized by employing some of their common cultural values and symbols in promoting Christianity. In this regard, Shorter writes: the communication between human cultures can only realize its effectiveness through dialogue and participation as well as the readiness of both parties to listen and learn from each other.<sup>106</sup> This dialogue between culture and Christian faith has resulted in the message of inculturation which has been communicated to all local churches such as the African Church through several synods and papal exhortations after Vatican II.

Agyemang, a renowned Ghanaian liturgist, also defines inculturation as “the honest and a serious attempt to make [Christ] message of salvation evermore understood by people of every culture, locality and time.”<sup>107</sup> According to him, inculturation means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine that Christ and His Good News are ever dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. This is a continuous endeavor to make Christianity truly felt at home within the cultures of the people in different parts of the world just as God reveals himself in Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Phil 2:1-11). This position of Agyemang implies that for African (Ghanaian) Christians especially the Akans of Ghana to fully understand and appreciate the sacramental graces of the Eucharistic meal in their daily lives, these celebrations should be placed within their traditional cultural context of meal sharing.

Still on inculturation, Crollius also offers a good description as: “The integration of the Christian experience of a 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 so as to create a new unity and communion, not only

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<sup>105</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres. (eds.). *African Theology en Route* (Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, December, Accra 1977). 17-23. (New York. 1993). Cited in Oborji, “*Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*”, 123.

<sup>106</sup> Kurgat, *The theology of inculturation and the African Church*. 90-98.

<sup>107</sup> Pius Agyemang. *Inculturation: God's Culture*. A paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Synod of the Kumasi diocese (1994).

within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal”.<sup>108</sup> In this sense, the religion must speak to the local people within its cultural values by way of creating a strong bond between their culture and the ‘global church’. Crollius further states; “the integration of the Christian life of a particular Christian community into the culture of its native people as an important aspect of inculturation which must affect the entire life of those Christians in the designated local Churches”.<sup>109</sup> For the African, the presence of their ancestors can be experienced in a more familiar manner by way of fetching water from the river in the community, sowing seeds and harvesting their produce on the farm, attending the burial and funeral of a relative, sharing in a joyous moment with family by eating and sharing jokes together, and many among others which symbolize the totality of their life. In this case, whenever the Christian message and its liturgy are celebrated within the cultural context of the local people, they experience Jesus better in whatever activity the people are engaged in. Furthermore, this salvation “message [of Christ is] destined for every nation, different people belonging to different cultural backgrounds in which every Christian will remain authentic citizen of their own tribes, cultures and nations.”<sup>110</sup> In this light, the integration between the culture and Christianity in the form of a new perspective of celebrating the sacraments is not to sever the relationship between the Local Church from the Universal or ‘global’ Church, rather it is to make in this case, the Akan Christian in Ghana more Catholic and African, and at the same time sharing in the beauty of the ‘global church.’

The inculturation of the liturgy in the African local Church enriches the universal church’s celebration of the Eucharistic meal with her cultural values. This observation of Crollius is good news for all those who are afraid that inculturation could result in a division among the various local Churches and their form of celebrating its sacramental liturgy. Once again, I would like to state that the diverse celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist will bring about the expected unity between the local church (in this case, among the Akans of Ghana) and the ‘global church’ to affirm the popular saying, ‘unity in diversity’.

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<sup>108</sup> Roest Crollius. *Inculturation: Newness and Ongoing Process. In Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency.* (Nairobi: St. Paul’s Publications, 1986), 43.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Kurgat, *The Theology of inculturation and the African Church*, 90-98.

This idea of unity, Okoye contends: these various rites do not bring division rather co-existence in the sacramental life of the church.<sup>111</sup> He writes about the various rites which have existed in the ancient patriarchates between the fourth and sixth centuries hence the Roman rite which is a particular example of inculturation is only one among them. He quotes Gregory the Great (540-604) who declared, “*in una, nil officit consuetudo diversa*”<sup>112</sup> to describe the beauty in diverse liturgical rites. The researcher is of the expectation that assisting the Akan Christian to participating in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal as their traditional cultural communal meal will enhance a deeper understanding of this sacrament and cannot in any way bring division in the ‘World Church’ but rather a new perspective which would emerge. This perspective, the Constitution on the sacred liturgy has affirmed:

“... in faithful obedience to tradition... holy mother holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal rights and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in future and to foster them in every way....”<sup>113</sup>

This statement from the Constitution affirms the dynamism which emerges as a result of the inculturation of the Christian message as well as the sacramental theology in the church. It makes the salvation history of humankind through the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ clearer to the local people. So Pinto is right to remark that: “In short, inculturation is the dynamic relation between the Christian message and diverse cultures, an insertion of the Christian life into a culture...”<sup>114</sup> In effect, when the Christian message is well incarnated into the culture of the local people, Christ’s transforming power is realized and it becomes visible in what Paul echoes, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; behold all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

As a contribution, Oborji further cites Justin Ukpogon in his summation of the Constitution of the whole inculturation process in this statement: “It is the duty of theologians to give out the undiluted Christian message new perspectives and forms of expression in the cultural background of Africa. The purpose is to confront the Christian faith and the African culture with each other since the Christian faith illuminates the African culture.”<sup>115</sup> This moment is where the Church must examine the African cultural values and incorporate the practicable elements into

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<sup>111</sup> James C. Okoye. “*The Eucharist in African Perspective*”. In: *Mission Studies* Vol. XIX, n. 2 38, 2002, 159-173.

<sup>112</sup> Meaning: in the one faith there is no harm in diverse custom.

<sup>113</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 13.

<sup>115</sup> Oborji, “*Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*,” 124.

the Christian liturgy hence giving a new perspective to their worship. This new perspective is necessary for the salvation of Africans in their Christian life.

Penoukou is also of the view that Inculturation implies that the several cultures must be opened to the Gospel message and thereby get converted to Jesus Christ.<sup>116</sup> In this regard, the Gospel message must likewise be opened to the African cultural situations in order to realize the effective evangelization of the African people. This position of Penoukou is understandable in the sense of helping the people to understand what they celebrate in the context of their cultural background. In this case, helping the Akan to understand the Eucharist in the context of their traditional communal meal which also marks the presence of their ancestors increases their understanding, reverence, participation and commitment in the celebration of the Eucharist with the presence of Christ as the Saviour of the world.

A renowned Ghanaian emeritus archbishop and anthropologist, Sarpong, also defined inculturation as a way of evangelization which includes the entire Christian life as well as their thinking.<sup>117</sup> He is of the view that inculturation must not be limited to only liturgical adaptations such as the use of drums, dancing and clapping, but, it must also consider the "concepts, symbols, and a completely new way of thinking and acting [which] requires imagination, courage, and initiative."<sup>118</sup> This definition of Sarpong calls for an evangelization which affects the collective life of the African and in this case, the Akan Christian. Inferring from this position of Sarpong, it becomes obvious that it is not only the sacrament of the Eucharist which needs inculturation but all the other sacraments such as the sacrament of Baptism, Matrimony, etc. For instance, Marriage is also a treasured institution among the African people therefore inculturation of this institution could also help in solving the challenge of Christians in polygamous marriages, divorced couples, etc who cannot receive Holy Communion. Perhaps, a cursory look at the Rites for the Catechumenate of Christian Marriage to suit the African Christian could be in the right step in this new perspective.

Still, in contributing to the definition of inculturation, John Paul II gives a vivid explanation in this statement: "Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, it is the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and, on the

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<sup>116</sup> Julien E. Penoukou. *Eglises d'Afrique: Propositions pour l'Avenir*, (Paris: Karthala, 1994), 10ff.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Kwasi Sarpong. "Evangelism and Inculturation", in *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies* 2. 1, (1990), 8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



other hand, [it is] the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”<sup>119</sup> These two dimensions underscore the importance of inculturation towards the promotion of participation in Christian worship. In simple terms, and for the purpose of this study, Inculturation in my opinion becomes the interaction between Christianity and the Akan culture which takes into recognition the total religious, moral life as well as its social life especially their traditional cultural meal situation as it gradually takes a concrete form in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The above definitions of inculturation given by these different authors are to assist us in getting a broader understanding of efforts in situating the Gospel message and the liturgical reforms in the particular local cultural contexts. This will bring relief to local Churches as the liturgy which is celebrated in their cultural setting will impart on their cultural heritage. It is only when the Gospel message and the liturgical rites are celebrated in the African way of life so that the evangelized Africans can maintain their loyalty to the Christian religion and also, cease referring to Christianity as a religion of the ‘white people’. This understanding will also lead to total reverence, commitment and participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and authentically live their Christian life within their cultural milieu.

## 2.6 Meaning of Inculturation

As stated earlier, Inculturation as an ecclesial terminology did not exist in the vocabularies of the Catholic Church until the commencement of the Second Vatican Council. Treating Inculturation as a new concept was first introduced by Fr. Joseph Masson, (S.J) in 1962. It was Fr. Masson who wrote shortly before the opening of the Second Vatican Council that, “Today, there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is *inculturated in a variety of forms (d’une facon polymorphe)*.”<sup>120</sup> In explaining this new word as suggested by Fr. Masson, Ackah further writes that Inculturation as a term was later “coined by Catholic theologians in explaining the process by which the Church becomes rooted in a culture, without causing damage to the Church’s identity, sacred tradition and teachings.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Pope John Paul II. *The Church in Africa*, 164-165.

<sup>120</sup> James Y. Ackah. *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*. (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009), 40.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Although the term is new in theological studies, Waliggo writes, “the reality [the term] signifies has been present in various degrees in the Church since its foundation.”<sup>122</sup> To confirm the newness of this vocabulary to even African theologians after it was proposed by Fr. Masson, Oborji writes, inculturation only became dominant in contemporary African Theology from the mid-1970s but today, together with the theologies of liberation and reconstruction, African theologians are using these terms in calling for a new hermeneutical change in African Theology.<sup>123</sup>

In this regard, the African theology becomes a reaction towards a new perspective in the African church. This reaction has become necessary because the early European missionaries as well as the colonial system have been accused by secular authors, and not African theologians, of not appreciating the values of African culture.<sup>124</sup> The hostility portrayed towards the African Traditional Religion by the missionaries by way of tagging the African beliefs and practices as pagan or ‘fetish’ cannot be underestimated. Hence it was later in history that African theologians gathered the boldness and courage to speak out as their secular compatriots had already initiated the effort. This is the type of boldness been propagated by Pope Francis regarding the success of pastoral ministry.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, this term only gained popularity and acceptance in theological discourses due to the initiatory recognition of the Jesuits as well as those who contributed to its formulation as an expression of the dynamic relationship between the Church and the variety of cultures. These proponents and scholars had several other terms at their disposal in relation to the concept of inculturation. Some of these terms include: Adaptation, Contextualization, Indigenization, Enculturation, Acculturation and Incarnation. All these terminologies would be examined in order to trace its developmental stages, its relationship to each other, and discover their contributions in shaping the attempts towards the inculturation of the Gospel message as well as the liturgy.

### **2.6.1 Adaptation**

Adaptation is the first principle used by the Second Vatican Council in missionary activities in the history of the Church regarding the consideration of inculturation. Adaptation, according to

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<sup>122</sup> Waliggo et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Oborji, “*Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*,” 121.

<sup>124</sup> Bujo, *Africa Theology in its Social Context*, 50.

<sup>125</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 33.

Schineller, is to make something fit.<sup>126</sup> This idea of making something fit was also explained by Waliggo in this context: “It implies a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them with Christian rituals where there was an apparent similarity”.<sup>127</sup> But for Dim, adaptation “suggests that the Western missionary, for example, coming to Africa, would announce the Gospel in terms of his [her] own [European] culture, while the young [Africa] mission Church would adapt this message to its local situation”.<sup>128</sup>

Several ecclesial documents of Vatican II affirm the importance of adaptation in the proclamation of the Gospel in the particular Christian communities. For instance, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy sees adaptation as a basic principle in all liturgical reforms and therefore calls for a radical adaptation.<sup>129</sup> Although this document is not explicit or does not specify what radical adaptation implies, it makes a provision that encourages bishops of local Churches to make thorough studies of their respective cultures for a possible adaptation of the Christian faith to suit their situation. This Constitution empowers the conferences of local bishops to apply discretion in the selection of those aspects of their cultural values and traditions of the people suitable for adaptation.

The words of Pope John Paul II re-echoed the words of Pope Paul VI on the principle of adaptation that: “An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the church.”<sup>130</sup> This papal affirmation of adaptation as an essential tool in the evangelization mandate of the Church to different cultural backgrounds becomes a necessity. Though the process of adaptation was welcomed, supported and approved by African Bishops at the initial stages, it was later criticized by the African Bishops due to its Euro-centric connotations. Their concerns were based on the fact that taking the cultural background of the people into consideration in the evangelization activities, adaptation fell short of such an expectation. This principle which was to assist in the on-going process of inculturation was rather seen as an indirect or a subtle form of imposition on local churches which prompted Sarpong to refer to adaptation as an “imposition in disguise”.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Waliggo et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, 11.

<sup>128</sup> Innocent O. Dim. *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 266.

<sup>129</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37- 40

<sup>130</sup> Pope Paul VI in his address at the closing of all-African Bishops’ Conference given in Kampala, Uganda, July 31, 1969. The full detail of the address can be located in *Acta Apostolicatae Sedis* 61.573ff.

<sup>131</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 50.

In this same vein of the criticism against adaptation, Ackah writes that adaptation, “instead of getting inside and involved, it appears to remain outside or above and just on the surface and willing to allow mere extrinsic accidental or cosmic changes in ways of being a Christian.”<sup>132</sup>

Similarly, Sipuka asserts the rejection of adaptation was due to the fact that: “It [adaptation] selects only those customs that can make sense to the Roman liturgical rites without changing its structure and content.”<sup>133</sup> In this same vein, Pinto also offers another important reason regarding the rejection of adaptation because, “It [adaptation] expresses the external aspect of the encounter between Christian faith and the different cultures.”<sup>134</sup>

It was with these inadequacies and dissatisfactions in this principle of adaptation as an imposition that had no room for dialogue which prompted the African Bishops to reject its usage outright during the 1974 Synod in Rome. The African Bishops write: “Our theological thinking must remain faithful to the authentic tradition of the Church and at the same time, be attentive to the life of our communities and respectful of our traditions and languages, which is our philosophy of life.”<sup>135</sup>

This situation of rejection by the African Bishops rendered this principle of adaptation completely unfashionable in theological discourse and this spurred on the African Bishops in search of a better principle that would imply a sense of dialogue or coordination between African cultures and the Christian faith. For the Synod Fathers, the fact remains that inculturation must touch on all aspects of the mystery of Christ if it is to question and transform the African culture.<sup>136</sup> As Dim writes, “We can say that inculturation is open and it goes beyond cultural boundaries. It receives other cultural goods, appropriate them and make them its own.”<sup>137</sup> It is in this regard that the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, instructed his fellow Jesuits to work towards inculturation, a comfortable term for the African Bishops.

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<sup>132</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

<sup>133</sup> Sithembele Sipuka. “The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa: Towards an Inculturated Understanding of the Eucharist” (PhD Diss. University of South Africa, 2000), 240.

<sup>134</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 9.

<sup>135</sup> Synod of Bishops from Africa, “Issues Declaration”, in: AMECEA Documentation Service, n. 11/74/2, 23.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops, 1974 “Declaratio Synodaliun”, in: Giovanni Caprile, *Il Sinode dei Vescovi* (3rd General Assembly, 27 September-26 October 1974), Rome, 146.

<sup>137</sup> Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church*, 266.

## 2.6.2 Contextualization

This section examines the second terminology of contextualization which emerged after adaptation was rejected. Literally, contextualization means weaving something together and theologically, it maintains that the gospel message should be proclaimed in such a way that it takes the context as well as the situations of the recipients into consideration, Ackah writes.<sup>138</sup>

Since the emphasis over here is on the context instead of culture, Schineller points out one danger associated with this principle, namely that of “overemphasizing the present context to the detriment of continuity with the past.”<sup>139</sup> This point of Schineller became laudable because any theology that emphasizes only the present without connecting with the past and the future may not have a strong base. It is worthy to note that, while ‘culture’ refers to the total worldview of a people, ‘context’ refers to a specific situation or environment. In this case, the understanding between ‘context’ and ‘culture’ becomes explicit.

With this meaning of context, Pinto explains that, “Context is the sum-total of the significant circumstances.”<sup>140</sup> So with this understanding, the emphasis in relation to ‘context’ may not concretely take into consideration the culture of the people although this principle of contextualization addresses culture indirectly. This stance of Pinto prompted Schineller to remark about this principle of contextualization that, “Instead of speaking of a particular culture, whether traditional or modern, it [rather] speaks of contexts or situations into which the Gospel must be inculturated.”<sup>141</sup> In the midst of this confusion of meaning, Ackah then reveals the reason behind the agitations of these authors in relation to contextualization and declare that, ‘Contextualization’ is a type of chameleon which changes its colour at any time depending upon the situation and the circumstance.<sup>142</sup>

Though contextualization does not necessarily address culture directly, and hence cannot be a proper synonym for inculturation, it created a certain form of awareness. It reminds all those involved in efforts of inculturation that situations are not necessarily the same in terms of propagating the Gospel as well as celebrating the sacraments of the Church (in this case, the Eucharist) culturally. Thus, every particular context calls for its peculiar creative theological

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<sup>138</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

<sup>139</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 19.

<sup>140</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 10.

<sup>141</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

reflection. What seems workable in the European, Asian or American environment or context may not apply effectively in the African context. Even in Africa, the context that works perfectly in Ghana may differ in Nigeria, Togo, etc although these countries are situated in Africa. And better still, even in Ghana, what works among the Dagaaba, Ewes or Dagomba, Konkomba may not work among the Akans.

It is in this respect of diversity among cultures that Schineller advises, “One must again and again study the situation and contextualise the Gospel message for that situation as it changes.”<sup>143</sup>

This is the prime motive of this study so that the Akan context of communal meal could be studied in an attempt to make the celebration of the Eucharistic meal more meaningful to them through their cultural lens. In this case, the liturgical reforms under this principle, must therefore take into consideration not the whole Ghanaian Catholic population, but the Akan cultural situation as a social ethnic group. This is important because every tribe has a different cultural setting regarding communal meal notwithstanding the similarities pertaining to all the cultures.

Summarily, considering one cultural context and situation in making a general liturgical reform, in this case as regards the Eucharistic celebration, for the whole country will be dangerous to the anticipated results and success. In this instance, the danger of overemphasizing is apparent as already stated by Schineller. It is in view of this overemphasis that Sarpong advises everyone in the ongoing process of inculturation to always deal with issues in a given context and not regarding all situations in an ideal or abstract or imaginary way.<sup>144</sup>

### **2.6.3 Indigenization**

Another term which also took a center stage in describing inculturation of the Gospel message and the Christian faith is indigenization. This term, Ackah writes, comes or stems from the word ‘indigenous’ which refers to something having originality.<sup>145</sup> He further explains as something been produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment. In this sense, indigenization in this context refers to the process of conferring on Christian worship

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<sup>143</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 19.

<sup>144</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 50.

<sup>145</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 37.

a sense of cultural form which is native to the local people. It is with this understanding that Ackah contends: “Theology is done by and for a given geographical area, rather than by outsiders.”<sup>146</sup> Therefore the culture of the Akan social ethnic group should be taken into consideration in this endeavour of propagating the Gospel message.

For Emmanuel Martey, a Ghanaian theologian, this principle of indigenization or ‘Africanization’ were terms employed by African theologians (men and women) in an attempt to express the Christian message with African idioms and conceptual instruments.<sup>147</sup> This effort was made in order that the African Christian can understand the Gospel message and the Liturgy through its own cultural setting since “all human cultures manifest the human longing for fullness of life”<sup>148</sup> which is found in Jesus Christ who is always encountered during the Eucharistic meal under the species of bread as his Body and wine as his Blood.

Still on indigenization, Schineller also remarks: “The indigenization of theology means that the local community, with its own indigenous leadership, has the primary responsibility and task of developing the teaching, the liturgy and the practice of such local church.”<sup>149</sup> Therefore, the Church becomes indigenous when it has a well-formed and trained local clergy and vibrant laity.

However, Ackah expresses the belief that the church also becomes indigenous when “the Christian faith is fully incarnated in and enriched by the local worldview or philosophy of life, language, culture and aspirations of the people.”<sup>150</sup> It is in this direction that he disagreed with the stance of Schineller and pointed out that “the mere presence of local clergy is by no means a [realistic] guarantee that the culture of the people is going to be used in explaining and expounding the Christian teachings.”<sup>151</sup> His disagreement emanates from the possibility that every culture is bound to expose itself to a certain amount of change due to modernization, technology and education and bringing to mind traditional and modern cultures.

Although Ackah expressed this concern, Chupungco writes, “in imitation of Christ, who by virtue of the incarnation made himself one with the Jewish nation, the local Church should strive to identify itself with the people among whom it dwells.”<sup>152</sup> This means that the principle of

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<sup>146</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 37.

<sup>147</sup> Cited in Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 128.

<sup>148</sup> Bujo, *Africa Theology in its Social Context*, 57.

<sup>149</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 18.

<sup>150</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 38.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco. *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*. (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 17.

indigenization recognizes the immense contribution of local Churches in making the Church 'indigenous' since the growth of the community and the development of its theology depends on the application of the cultural values of the local Church.

In this regard, Kalilombe, a Malawian theologian also defines indigenization as "Africanize Christian teaching, worship, pastoral practices, and art by anchoring them in African culture and religious tradition."<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, in practice, he explains that the principle of indigenization calls for a gradual replacement of foreign missionaries by African personnel in order to allow the church in Africa to have an "African face" and not feel lost in a eurocentric culture. This position of Bishop Kalilombe is geared towards the local clergy using the local dialect of the people in the proclamation of the Gospel message as well as in the celebration of the sacramental liturgy instead of foreign languages such as English, French, etc. For instance, in Kumasi, the priests use the Asante Twi language in administering the sacraments to the people of God and this practice makes the Akan people encounter Christ in their native dialect. This is the reason why Dim reiterates the words of Archbishop Onaiyekan when he stated, "the Church is at home in our culture, and speaks our language so that we can hear the wonders of the Lord in our own tongues, and modes of expression."<sup>154</sup>

The danger in this attempt of indigenizing the Christian faith as stated by Schineller is foreseeing culture as too static.<sup>155</sup> But culture is always dynamic which is been affected by the on-going transformations and changes as a result of globalization, intra-cultural, technology, modernization, education and interculturality. Therefore, since indigenization as a principle could not give space for any form of communication among other cultures, it was rejected as a concept in the theological discourse of inculturation. It must be appreciated that, although understanding inculturation through indigenization helps to promote the local leadership, it can also lead to a situation where other cultures are excluded.

It is in this light that Tamba contends: "indigenization" should signal that the church has its homeland in Africa and that Christianity is a true African religion, therefore "indigenization"

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<sup>153</sup> Patrick K. Kalilombe. "Black Theology" in: *The Modern Theologians. An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Ford (New York: Blackwell Publishing Co., 1989), 202.

<sup>154</sup> Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese*, 268.

<sup>155</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 18.



must go beyond the marginal aspects of the African liturgy such as the irreplaceable liturgical texts, dance, drumming and among others<sup>156</sup> and avoid its association with nativism.

#### 2.6.4 Enculturation

Another word useful for our examination of the different terminologies associated with preaching the Gospel message as well as celebrating the liturgical rites in local churches is ‘enculturation’. This word is sometimes spelt as ‘inculturation’ hence some scholars use them interchangeably. Ackah states clearly that whereas “‘enculturation’ is of sociological or anthropological origins, inculturation is purely in the domain of theological studies”<sup>157</sup> hence this distinction is crucial to our study so that its usage by authors would not be analogous.

In this regard, Ackah also defines ‘enculturation’ as “...the cultural learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his or her culture.”<sup>158</sup> This definition of Ackah connotes the idea that, enculturation is a process by which an individual encounters his or her culture through education or by learning. This process of learning, which could be either through the formal or informal way, inserts the person into the said-culture. With this understanding, Shorter also contributes to this position of Ackah by writing: “To a great extent the individual teaches himself [or herself] through a process of adaptive learning, the rules of which are given by [the] society [in which he or she lives].”<sup>159</sup> This contribution of Shorter confirms the earlier position of Ackah that, ‘enculturation is related to socialization. It is in the light of the relationship between ‘enculturation’ and socialization that Herskovits affirms this position of adaptive learning in enculturation and writes, the term, ‘enculturation’ is used by anthropologists in reference to persons or individuals acquiring competency in their cultural domain.<sup>160</sup> It is clear from the discussion that inculturation becomes the insertion of Christianity into particular cultures which were not previously christianized. In this regard, Africans and for that matter, Akan Christians view inculturation as an insertion into their way of life.

For Schineller, the distinction offered by Ackah is important and emphasizes that, “inculturation is not the same as enculturation, because in the case of inculturation, the Christian

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<sup>156</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 128.

<sup>157</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Shorter, *Toward a theology of Inculturation*, 5.

<sup>160</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 129.

does not come empty-headed, but has a specific tradition to bring to the new situation.”<sup>161</sup> This primordial learning of one’s culture imparts on the individual as he or she encounters other cultures by way of enriching his or her understanding and growth. This understanding equips the individual with a sense of maturity to be able to dialogue properly with other cultures or religions. To this effect, Ackah contends: “Enculturation deals mainly with the individual [whereas] inculturation goes beyond: it deals not only with the individual but also with Christianity being inserted into a culture.”<sup>162</sup> Therefore, enculturation becomes an essential tool in learning about the culture of the local people in their various communities since this approach in one way or the other helps the individual to appreciate the culture of other people who are being evangelized. With this stance of learning one’s culture, Tempels also states, “In seeking to Christianize these cultures, missionaries must put aside their own western culture, repudiate it even, in order to adapt themselves to their people of adoption. This is the price they must pay in order to win the people to whom they are sent.”<sup>163</sup> This position of Tempels borders on the preparedness of evangelizers to learn and appreciate the culture of the people who are being evangelized if the mandate of effective evangelization of the Church could be achieved among local Churches.

### **2.6.5 Acculturation**

Another terminology or concept in relation to inculturation is acculturation. For Oborji, the reason behind why African theologians did not use this term often in their writings was due to its sociological and anthropological origins.<sup>164</sup> For him, acculturation is a principle where there is a cultural interaction between two or several cultures. But Shorter simply put acculturation as a meeting point of several cultures.<sup>165</sup> This encounter between these cultures could result in ensuring changes since each culture learns from each other. Anthropologically, this is a process by which people from different cultural backgrounds modify their worldview after coming into contact with other cultures. The result of such cultural encounters or contacts brings about a cultural change or adjustment.

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<sup>161</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 22.

<sup>162</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

<sup>163</sup> Bujo, *Africa Theology in its Social Context*, 57.

<sup>164</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 129.

<sup>165</sup> Shorter, *Toward a theology of Inculturation*, 7.

Still on acculturation, Pinto also makes a remarkable observation; “acculturation implies an element of aggressiveness and does not convey the aspects of dialogue and mutual fusion.”<sup>166</sup> This observation of Pinto must be considered seriously because when two or more cultures encounter each other, efforts must be put in place so that no one particular culture feels superior over the others such as the perception of the European and African cultures. Simply put, the dialogue between cultures, for Pinto must be mutual and not dominated by one single culture thereby forfeiting the motive of coming together. In other words, mutual respect should be the hallmark of the encounter between two or more cultures so that both sides benefit from this interaction. It is in light of this position that Ackah maintains, Acculturation is essential to our understanding of inculturation since it is more or less a ‘*conditio sine qua non*’ for inculturation.<sup>167</sup>

In expressing his opinion on the acculturation and inculturation, Oborji also writes, "acculturation" used analogously in theology refers to the process of propagating the Gospel message within the cultural milieu of the local Churches such as Africa.<sup>168</sup> For him, acculturation used in this context, has a much closer meaning to inculturation since it emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the process of encountering the Gospel with the cultures of the people who are the target of evangelization.

Ghana is a country with mixed cultures therefore there is the need for these cultures to encounter each other since culture is not static but dynamic. In this regard, much credit should be given to Shorter when he alerted the Church that, “Acculturation, the communication between cultures in a footing of mutual respect and tolerance, is a necessary condition of Catholicism, of a Church that claims to be universal.”<sup>169</sup> Truly, Christianity is a universal religion therefore it needs to have a valid theology which will be favourable to all cultures. This clarification of Shorter makes it evident that the initial culture contact between the missionaries and the African (Ghanaian) cultures was not a platform of mutual learning. This initial culture-contact was dominated by the Westerners to the detriment of the African or Ghanaian culture.

In the light of the necessity for inculturation, Fitzpatrick writes, local churches must “not lose the universal faith, but must be an expression of the essential of faith in a particular cultural

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<sup>166</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 10.

<sup>167</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 39.

<sup>168</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 129.

<sup>169</sup> Shorter, *Toward a theology of Inculturation*, 8.

style, thus avoiding secession or helpless isolation, but conscious of the unity it shares with the variety of other cultural manifestations of the faith.”<sup>170</sup>

Therefore, for an effective evangelization to be realized in the archdiocese of Kumasi in relation to the Eucharistic meal as part of the inculturation process, acculturation, as an encounter between two or several cultures is a necessary tool for the recipients as well as the priests and theologians from different cultural backgrounds. This is important because Kumasi archdiocese is a local church which ‘houses’ both indigenous and expatriate priests, religious brothers and nuns. Therefore, this encounter is to facilitate a good sense of communication between the evangelizers and those to be evangelized who are already residing on their local soil.

### **2.6.6 Incarnation**

Of equal importance to the understanding of inculturation is the consideration of the term “incarnation”. The “Incarnation” of the Christian message, which is often used synonymously with “inculturation”, emerged after Vatican II as stated earlier on. For Oborji, inspired by the incarnation doctrine of Vatican II as the theological basis for the understanding of different cultures and philosophies, the African theologians make reference to the incarnation as a perfect model for the inculturation of the Gospel message and liturgy in Africa today.<sup>171</sup> Flowing from the arguments of the African theologians<sup>172</sup> in a context of inculturating Jesus Christ in the African culture, Edward Tamba Charles explains the double usage of ‘incarnation’.

The first usage which talks about the presence of Jesus in the course of time, that is, Jesus becoming active among the people [Ghanaians] whenever the Gospel is propagated in every cultural setting or environment to the understanding of the people. The second meaning relates to the unique Bethlehem experience or event where Jesus, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John. 1:14) was born by the Blessed Virgin Mary.

For Tamba, this second meaning is the original basis upon which every process of inculturation derives its inspiration hence he gives a summary of the two meanings in relation to the doctrine of incarnation as follows:

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<sup>170</sup> Dim, Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese, 274.

<sup>171</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 130.

<sup>172</sup> Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians in Accra, Ghana. 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1977.

Inculturation stands in the broad sense of the word for the general, universal aspect: God became man, who is part of a certain people, and shares its peculiarities; he became this man in this people. The universal aspect of inculturation emphasizes "a man like all men", while the "inculturation" aspect emphasizes differences and peculiarities: a man, unlike all other men, because he belonged to a certain people and a certain culture.<sup>173</sup>

The prime task of this progressive development of this theological reflection is geared towards 'africanizing' the Christian message and its liturgy. It is with this profound theological understanding that Dhavanomy refers to the principle of 'incarnation' as "the archetype of inculturation of the Gospel."<sup>174</sup> Also, Pope Paul VI in writing about "The Word became flesh and made its dwelling among us" (John 1: 14) rightly states:

For by his Incarnation the son of God has united Himself in same fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human chance and loved with a human heart. Born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.<sup>175</sup>

Christianity has no alternative but to do the same in every culture and time in order to continue the salvation initiated by Christ. The continuity of this practice stems from the fact that if the Gospel message of charity, compassion, liberation, hope, justice and truth has not permeated the cultural environment or society, then inculturation has not taken place yet. It is in this same direction that Sipuka also offers a beautiful illustration of incarnation with the following lines:

Through incarnation, God in Jesus Christ was able to exist, act and speak in human form. The event, according to the Christian faith, occurred in history at a particular place and within a particular culture. Jesus weaved himself into the Jewish culture and through it communicated, ritualized and accomplished the salvation he had brought.<sup>176</sup>

In effect, the incarnation relates to the entire life story or event of Christ, the Son of God who is the Savior of the world. He came into the world to assume our human nature through his birth, upbringing as every child in the Jewish family setting, teenage and adolescent growth, struggles, and daily activities of his adulthood as teacher and healer among His people [Jews], which subsequently led to his passion, death and resurrection from the dead. Although He was God, he assumed the full human status so he could fit into that cultural influence to actualize his salvation of the world. With this grasp of Jesus' Jewish cultural upbringing, Shorter maintains that, "He [Jesus] accepts human cultures and expresses himself through them. He lives their way of

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<sup>173</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 131.

<sup>174</sup> Dhavanomy. *Christian Theology of Inculturation*, 95.

<sup>175</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

<sup>176</sup> Sithembele Sipuka. "The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa: Towards an Inculturated Understanding of the Eucharist" (PhD diss. University of South Africa, 2000), 241.

life.”<sup>177</sup> It is with this concern that the Church, likewise, must imitate this step of Christ and accept the various cultures she is sent to evangelize.

Jesus’ participation in the daily activities of the Jewish culture made him an active recipient of his culture. According to Archbishop (Emeritus) Sarpong, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the principle and the model of inculturation of the Christian faith because Christ is made welcome in our different cultures such as the Akan culture. Therefore, Jesus is able to even challenge some cultural customs and traditions of the Jewish people to which he is a part.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, the incarnation becomes a perfect model for the Church, in her effort in propagating the Gospel message in all cultures of the world. Hence, through inculturation, Sarpong remarks: “the Christian message and Christian life are implanted, incarnated in different cultures in such a way that the experience is expressed in elements proper to the culture and becomes the principle which animates, guides, and purifies the culture, transforming it in such a way that there is a new creation.”<sup>179</sup>

Furthermore, the incarnation model of situating the Gospel message as well as the liturgical reforms into the culture of the people is significant to the ‘World Church’ as well as the African Church. This is necessary because through this process of evangelization, the Gospel message as well as the celebration of the sacraments such as the Eucharistic meal could be understood better and deeply rooted in the life of those who participates in its celebration. Hence the Decree on the Church’s missionary activity also supports the essential nature of the incarnation model in these words:

“...If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men {and women} the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men {women} among whom he lived.”<sup>180</sup>

Inferring from the above quoted document, the incarnation model as stated is very significant in the Church’s efforts in propagating the Gospel message of Jesus Christ which is meant to impact the lives of the people of different race, tribe, nation and cultural background. In this regard, the Church’s liturgy should also become part and parcel of their daily lives so that their participation does not only be seen as obligatory and coercive but rather an inner craving to experience Christ

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<sup>177</sup> Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 80.

<sup>178</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 48.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 10.

through partaking in the celebration of the Eucharist and also, receiving the bread as Body and drink the wine as Blood of Jesus.

For Archbishop (Emeritus) Sarpong, inculturation of African theology is never meant to alienate the African Church from the ‘global church’; rather it is motivated in touching their (Africans) daily lives and as well as making the African Church as both Catholics and Africans at the same time.<sup>181</sup> This position of Sarpong supports the church’s efforts in making the whole exercise of inculturation as a meaningful step in proclaiming the Word of God as well as the celebration of the sacraments to the different Christian communities in different ways considering their worldview and cultural practices.

Oborji agrees with Sarpong on the above stance and further adds: “Inculturation is not limited to a specific area of Christian life and mission, but [it] includes all aspects of Christianity. [This position of Oborji implies that inculturation is not only meant for the African Church rather it is for all local Churches in the world since Christ commanded that the Good news be preached to the whole world (Matt.28:19-20; Mark.16:15)]. Therefore, even if inculturation aims at evangelizing a particular cultural context, it must be guided by the principles of compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church.”<sup>182</sup>

Corresponding with that of Oborji, Sarpong further elaborates that the incarnation of the Son of God is the principle and the model of inculturation of Christianity, since through inculturation Christ becomes part of our individual cultures<sup>183</sup> and become present among all his followers. Viewing Inculturation in this manner, it becomes clear that inculturation is much concerned with the local spirituality developed in the church, both in faith and practice in the sense that, the characteristics of a local developed Church is already rooted in social life and considerably adapted to the local culture. That is why the decree of Vat. II states clearly that:

“This work of implanting the church in a particular human community reaches a definite point when the assembly of the faithful, already rooted in social life of the people and to some extent conformed to its cultures, enjoy a certain stability and permanence; when it has its own priests, although insufficient, its own religious and laity, and possesses those ministries and institutions which are required for leading and spreading the life of the people of God under the leadership of their own Bishop.....”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 10.

<sup>182</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 133.

<sup>183</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 48.

<sup>184</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 10.

More importantly, the incarnation model of inculturation reminds all Christians as well as evangelizers not to forget integrating the Gospel message as well as the celebration of the sacraments into the culture of every particular Christian community. This integration of the Gospel helps the communities in acquiring a gradual understanding of the Christian message since it is expressed vividly in their various cultural settings.

In this regard, Oborji asserts that, “[the] incarnation theology itself unfolds the dynamics of the process of inculturation. [In effect] Inculturation is a constant process; it must take place because culture also develops.”<sup>185</sup>

The significant role of the Holy Spirit cannot be underestimated in the incarnation model. The result of the encounter between the Virgin Mary through the ‘Fiat’ and the messenger of God (Angel Gabriel) brought forth Jesus Christ who was conceived and gave birth at Bethlehem through the paternal guidance of Joseph (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-37ff). This meaningful role played by the Holy Spirit culminated into the assumption of the human nature by Jesus to become human just like us but without sin.

In sum, I hope that the systematic examination of the various terminologies associated with inculturation assists the study to assess the different developmental stages of theological reflections that have occurred until this present age. This assessment has proven that the concept of inculturation is an on-going process just as the theology of the Church has also evolved in different stages of the Church’s life and each of them has a connection with each other.

## **2.7 The Importance of an Inculturated Eucharist**

Having discussed extensively the concept of inculturation in this chapter, it is essential to examine its relation to the celebration of the Eucharist as a meal in a cultural context as the focal point of this study. Since the proposal of inculturation by Fr. Masson as a very important recommendation to be considered before the commencement of Vatican II, this concept of inculturation has in one way or the other, occupied the whole domain of sacramental theology in relation to theological discussions on areas such as the liturgy, catechesis, missiology, among others. These concerns have confirmed the stance as stated earlier by Sarpong that inculturation

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<sup>185</sup> Oborji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 133.



is an on-going activity in the Church as it tries to adopt new approaches in its missionary character in the world as regards the attention given to local Churches.

One may pose this question: what calls for this study to inculturate the meal aspect of the Eucharist in a cultural context among the Akans in the archdiocese of Kumasi? Sarpong gives a beautiful answer to the question posed with this statement: “How could Jesus Christ be the Universal Saviour of all [humanity], including the Asante [Akan], without him being found in some way in that Asante culture? The *Semina Verbi*<sup>186</sup>... are reality in Asante culture and language ....”<sup>187</sup> Also, each culture of the People of God, according to Bevans, already contains “seeds of the Word” which assists in the proclamation of the Gospel which employs the anthropological model as one of the six models of contextual theology.<sup>188</sup> In effect, catechesis on celebrating the Eucharist with the understanding of an Akan traditional communal meal sharing could in a way, assist the Akan to fully encounter God and his unique attributes in that cultural situation.

As I discussed my research topic with colleagues many wondered about this thesis topic. Their concern was why inculturation of the Eucharistic meal in the midst of the many current problems facing the African continent and Ghana in particular such as the canker of bribery and corruption, child-trafficking and kidnapping, civil and ethnic wars, political parties and their association with vigilante groups, struggle for gender inequality, liberation from abject poverty and famine, diseases (HIV-AIDS, Hypertension, cardiac related sickness, Corona virus pandemic, etc), among others. The basis of my defense was that, although many scholars are working on some of these pertinent issues, my sole preoccupation in this study is to assess the Eucharistic meal as a communal meal in connection with the traditional meal-sharing of Akans. It is to outline the spiritual benefits derived from participation in the celebration of the Eucharist in relation to the physical nourishment which is derived from participation in our cultural meal sharing which is lacking.

In my view, having a new perspective of an African Eucharist celebrated in the context of an African cultural meal will deepen the understanding of the people, enrich their commitment, and increase their loyalty in terms of participation, assigned roles for the laity and reverence in the

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<sup>186</sup> The Seeds of the Word.

<sup>187</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 73.

<sup>188</sup> Gerard Whelan. *Evangelii Gaudium as “Contextual Theology”*: *Helping the Church “Mount to the Level of its Times,”* 3.

midst of all the social problems they find themselves as Christians. It could also stop the increasing loss of the Catholic membership to the emerging new Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. This calls for the establishment of more Small Christian Communities in the archdiocese of Kumasi as early on adopted by the Eastern African Bishops in 1973.<sup>189</sup> This would be the starting point for such catechesis, ‘an instrument of inculturation’,<sup>190</sup> in their respective communities in assisting the local people in this endeavour. This formation of Small Christian Communities (SCC) as supported by Kurgat writes, “These basic Christian communities are manageable social groupings whose members can experience real interpersonal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging both in living and working” as in the form of their cultural communal meal sharing.<sup>191</sup> The catechesis given to these social groups in their various communities concerning the importance of the Eucharistic meal in their daily activities likewise their traditional meal stands to boost their participation and understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist.

Moreover, attaching a cultural touch in the context of a communal meal to the celebration of the Eucharist makes African Christians understand the importance of playing a full, active and conscious participatory role in its celebration. It is in this regard that the Synod Fathers of the African Synod in 1994 made an emphatic declaration of the urgent need for inculturation in African Christianity. Their declaration on the necessity for inculturation is expressed in the following statement:

It follows that inculturation does not only consist in transforming the mentality of human beings or groups of people, but also implies approaching cultures in such ways that they are enabled, from within themselves, to be fertile. Christianity becomes itself enriched when through inculturation it enters into dialogue with peoples and with their cultures. An inculturated evangelization will help people give flesh to evangelical values in their language and symbols, their history, politics, business life and own ways of developing.<sup>192</sup>

The urgency associated with the call for inculturation of Christianity in Africa today, a continent which is bedeviled with all kinds of social problems that are caused mostly by Africans themselves is enormous. It is the belief that some of these problems could be solved or avoided if the mentality of the people is transformed by resorting to our cultural communal understanding of living together. Sarpong is also of the same opinion that, “Inculturation should lead us

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<sup>189</sup> Kurgat, *The Theology of Inculturation and the African Church*, 90-98.

<sup>190</sup> Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese*, 286.

<sup>191</sup> Kurgat, *The Theology of inculturation and the African Church*, 90-98.

<sup>192</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris*. 1993. 43.

[Christians] to find ways and means of handling effectively [with] some of the many [social] evils of our present-day society such as abortion, individualism, bribery....”<sup>193</sup> The cultural practice of Africans including the Akan as regards meal sharing are moments to solve conflicts, bring people together, discuss the welfare of family members and friends, moments of solidarity are shared, a bond of unity is created, and among others aside the physical nourishment derived from food itself thereby exhibiting the significance of the family as the domestic church. In effect, inculturation of the celebration of the Eucharist in this context of communal meal sharing is very significant in Africa, where the Christians who form the majority of the population of the continent will come to appreciate their communal sense when they gather around the table to share meals together.

In this vein, inculturation of the Eucharist as a communal meal will transform the mentality of the people through eating the Body and drinking the Blood of Christ who came to save the world in his humanity. And as the doxology instructs: “Go, the Mass is ended...”, the Christians as children of God (as they sit at their various household tables to share meals) will also preach the message of salvation by their lifestyle to those family members, visitors, both Catholic and non-Catholic friends who do not participate fully in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this way, inculturation of the Eucharistic meal could transform the world through the local churches.

Secondly, it is in affirming the role of inculturation in transforming the world through its particular local Churches with different cultures that Okure contends: “Inculturation of faith in the Gospel [and sacramental liturgies] by Christians of different cultures will mean for the Church a new discovery of the Gospel, proclaimed authoritatively to all people and, therefore, an enrichment for the life of the Church.”<sup>194</sup> This position of Okure coincides with the position of Sarpong when he writes, inculturation of the Christian faith is not a simple matter so its efforts towards a useful inculturation must be approached in a multi-disciplinary manner in order to achieve ‘a new creation’ out of the local cultural people by taking away the non-essential parts of the Eucharist.<sup>195</sup> He further explains, “it is precisely when we utilize our cultural elements in worship that we express the type of unity of faith we are all expected to exhibit. We use different

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<sup>193</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 74.

<sup>194</sup> Teresa Okure. *Inculturation: Biblical/Theological Bases. In 32 Articles Evaluating Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*. (Nairobi: Gaba Publications, 1990), 103.

<sup>195</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 75.

symbols and arrive at the same end.”<sup>196</sup> In this regard, Archbishop (emeritus) Sarpong is right to advocate for unity of faith in our bid to inculturate the Eucharist, instead of uniformity since it does not automatically results in unity. This is so because for Sarpong, uniformity can also be disunity.

The successful inculturation of Christianity and the liturgical rites such as the sacrament of the Eucharist will also help the Akan Catholic in the Archdiocese of Kumasi to appreciate and value their cultural values which in a way were termed as *'fetico'*<sup>197</sup> by the Portuguese missionaries. Not only among the Akan is inculturation necessary in their liturgy, it is also important for all the various tribes such as the Nzema, Ewe, Ga, Dagomba, among others in Ghana to have a form of inculturation of their own worship. This will result to a proper understanding of the sacraments they receive and celebrate as Christians. Kumasi archdiocese has done a lot in relation to the inculturation of the Roman Mass in terms of blending culture with the Roman rubrics<sup>198</sup> concerning the celebration of the Eucharist but more emphasis need to be done especially on catechesis concerning the meal aspect of the Eucharist hence this study. We are of the view that their understanding will motivate the Akan Christians to participate fully in the celebration of this sacrament and yearn for the reception of this sacrament.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The main concern of this chapter is to trace the emergence of Christianity in Africa by the Europeans and highlight their disregard of the African worldview which could be a contributory factor to lack of understanding of the Christian faith by Africans. This rejection of the cultural values of the African did not help African Christians to understand and participate fully in the evangelization of the Gospel. This has prompted the need to study and understand the cultural worldview of local churches hence inculturation as proposed by Fr. Masson. This chapter also explored the meaning and definition of inculturation as well as the different terminologies associated with it. This historical development is offered to highlight the importance the Church, through the recommendation of Fr. Masson, attaches to inculturation as regards its missionary mandate to preach the Good News of salvation to all nations. Jesus' message of salvation is not

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>197</sup> This Portuguese word means fetish.

<sup>198</sup> A set of instructions or rules concerning the celebration of the Roman liturgy.

restricted to a particular group of people in any part of the world which is evident in his own statement. Jesus says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I command you. And remember [that], I am with you [always] to the end of the ages” (Matt. 28:19-20).

It is in this regard of reaching out to every corner of the globe that Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the Good News to all nations, be it African, European, American, Asian, etc. This missionary mandate of the Church cannot yield the expected ‘fruits’ if the cultural values and worldview of these particular people in all local Churches are not considered. It is with this understanding that Vatican II made frantic efforts in working on this recommendation by encouraging local Churches to be the starting point in this task of inculturation.

Inculturation, after going through these series of development with different terminologies has come to represent the attempt of Christians in particular places such as Africa to understand and celebrate their Christian faith in their dominant cultural setting, while still partaking in the faith of the Church in Rome. Although each of these terminologies had some form of association with inculturation and thus played significant role in facilitating the search for an appropriate word, the incarnation model has come to be accepted by the African Bishops as the perfect model for inculturation. While the scope of inculturation gives an idea of the enormous work which must be done in order to achieve an effective inculturation, the agents which includes both the clergy and laity must be instrumental in achieving this purpose.

The focus of this study is on the Akans of Ghana and their concept of communal meal in relation to the Eucharistic meal so it is suggested that every Akan Christian has a role to play by bringing his or her understanding of their traditional communal meal to bear on the significance of the Eucharist in their daily activities. By this effort, the inculturation of the Eucharist in the context of the Akan communal meal could be a reality in the evangelization of this social ethnic group in Ghana.

Furthermore, it is clear that the root of all these attempts of inculturating the Gospel message is found in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1: 14).

Therefore, the Second Vatican Council as well as Post- Vatican papal documents in supporting the recommendation of Fr. Masson on inculturation have taken bold steps in

affirming the urgency with which evangelizers need not impose their cultural values on the various local Churches in their evangelization drive. The Church must be recommended in making all these efforts in situating the Gospel message as well as the liturgy within the cultural setting of local Christian communities so that the local people could have a better understanding of what they celebrate through the use of some of their traditional practices. In this case, the Akans, by attaching importance to the Eucharist as that of their traditional communal meal will increase their understanding, reverence, participation, reception of the Eucharistic species. This attempt should make them active members of the Church without having one foot in the church and another foot elsewhere outside the church. It is in this vein that Archbishop (emeritus) Sarpong writes that Christians must distance themselves from the lukewarm attitude exhibited towards the Church and its celebrations such as the celebration of the Eucharist, and avoid the ‘hot and cold’ attitude towards the activities of the church<sup>199</sup> if the African Christians want to experience renewal in the African Church.

As an admonition to all African Christians, the proponents of inculturation helps African Christians to understand the incarnation of the Gospel values within their own African cultural milieu as one of the Church's most important task for the future of Christianity on the African soil. And it is in this line of thought that Jean-Marc Ela, a Cameroonian theologian, recommends that: “this task of inculturation requires that the Church in Africa reinvents itself. This task of reinventing the African Church requires boldness and courage since it calls for a fundamental revision of the entire theology and practice of the Church.”<sup>200</sup> Therefore, in my perspective as an African Christian, I am of the view that the plurality of cultures within the ‘global church’ calls for necessity for the local Churches to be incarnated differently in each of the cultures, and in this case a continuous inculturation of all local Churches is paramount. Therefore, by having an inculturated Eucharistic celebration would in no way take away anything from the universality of the Church but would rather enhance the understanding of the people to an active and full participation regarding what they celebrate.

Summarily, the Church in Ghana, as part of inculturation could only be motivated to a full and conscious participation in the liturgical celebrations when they are given the chance to worship in cultural elements familiar to them. Based on this preceding statement, the next

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<sup>199</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 33.

<sup>200</sup> Obojji, *Inkulturation im Wandel der afrikanischen Theologie*, 149.

chapter would consider the necessity to study and understand the role of culture in the study of theology.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AS A NECESSARY TOOL FOR THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Our discussion on inculturation in the previous chapter has revealed that the culture of the people is an essential part of evangelization or the new awareness of the reality and mission of local Churches. Jesus gave a command, “therefore go to [all] the nations and make disciples of all men” (Matt.28:19). This Christological command cannot be carried out without getting into contact with the people who originate from different cultural backgrounds. This divine instruction can be said to be in reference to inculturation which is primarily, the dynamic relationship between local Churches and their own way of life. The statement of Pope Francis that, “... not walking alone but relying on each other as brothers and sisters and a wise and realistic pastoral discernment”<sup>201</sup> becomes eminent at this point as all Christians search for God communally. This papal advice calls for an active dialogue between all local Churches to enable learning from each other in order to enrich our desire for unity in diversity.

The advent of Christianity which emerged from the Western world was introduced to Africa particularly North Africa between the second and fifth centuries as part of fulfilling the mandate of Christ in spreading the ‘Good News’ to all nations. Later between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, it was also introduced to the East and Western part of Africa, a continent with diverse cultures. Human beings make up the Church and every human person in a local Church belongs to a culture and this creates an intimate relationship between nature and culture in every community and with this, culture as the way of life of people becomes a human phenomenon which develops. Understood in this way, it is the culture of a social ethnic group which distinguishes them from other social groups but the missionaries did not respect the culture of the Black people due to certain reasons which has been outlined in the previous chapter by the critics of colonialism. Because culture develops, no particular social group of people can claim to have a pure, undiluted culture since certain factors such as globalization, modernity, migration, trans-cultural as well as inter-culturality processes and technology have influenced cultures to a certain extent. Since culture is a human institution, it is bedeviled with dynamism, diversity and fragility

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<sup>201</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.). *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 206.



of human existence which needs liberation from the existence of evil through the presence of religious symbols.

In effect, the discussion on inculturation has acknowledged that the culture of the Akan social ethnic group plays a significant role in the expression of their Christian faith. Admittedly, every culture (in this case the Akan) is made up of both positive and negative values therefore the Christian religious impact is to sanctify these negative traditional cultural values in the life of the people while the positive values can also be incorporated into the theology of the 'global' church. For instance, the presence of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist shapes the individual (Akan Christian) who partakes in this sacrament. Hence, it has become necessary in the sense of expressing the Christian message in elements which are proper to the Akan cultural worldview of meal sharing. This effort becomes a departure from the earlier notion of identifying European culture with Christianity and ceases judging whatever is non-European as 'unchristian'.

This chapter is focused on the Akan culture and how their positive traditional cultural values becomes the meeting point of the expected purification and transformation of culture in enriching the celebration of this sacrament as a part of the transmission of faith among the Akans. With this understanding, it becomes obvious that the culture of a social group of people becomes a necessary criterion for a sound theological discourse.

### **3.1 Approaches to Culture**

An attempt to study and understand the cultural experience of a particular social group of people must be approached in a more comprehensive manner. It is necessary to adopt this comprehensive approach because of the dynamism which culture is faced with. Margit Eckholt, a professor in Systematic Theology affirms that the approach to culture can be taken from a multidisciplinary perspective such as philosophical, theological, anthropological, etc.<sup>202</sup> In this regard, our study of culture must be done in a comprehensive sense because it is a form of realization which shapes the totality of human existence in all angles of human life. Thus culture affects the social, economic, religious, political and all other aspects of the human person.

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<sup>202</sup> Margit Eckholt. *Poetik der Kultur: Bausteine einer interkulturellen dogmatischen Methodenlehre*. (Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 108.

The world today has become 'small' due to globalization and this has resulted in several cultures interacting with each other. Globalization has warranted interculturality, that is, the need for an interactive, critical engagement and dialogic understanding of all cultures. In view of this, a study of culture must be considered holistically since not every aspect of culture is bad and fetish as the early missionaries thought about Africa. Due to the different encounters with a variety of cultures, the individuals discover themselves through transformation. As Shorter rightly puts it, "Culture is therefore not simply about [human] behavior."<sup>203</sup> Rather Culture made up of the total way of life of all human beings which comprises the social, economic, religious, political, etc worldviews. It is with this understanding that Geertz opined that human nature cannot be independent from culture since culture is that phenomenon which makes the human person complete. He writes, "We [human beings] are, in sum, incomplete, or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture."<sup>204</sup>

Understood in this way, culture becomes a fundamental 'gift' to humanity when the individual is born. This stance of Geertz affirms the necessity of not imposing different cultures on people aside their own native culture since the people become incomplete and are unable to determine their own way of life. Aside this position of Geertz, the imposition of different cultures is gradually, at the blind side of the people, gaining grounds due to certain factors. For instance, due to globalization, culture is always in motion hence intermingling with other cultures and thereby creating a gap or tension between original traditional and modern cultures. In other words, no single culture can claim to be superior and universal. For instance, in the United States, people normally wave 'hello' to greet each other whereas in Ghana, the people shake hands as a way of greeting each other. None of these cultural styles of greeting mark superiority and universality over the other.

Secondly, one of the fruits of globalization is that, cultures must co-exist in order to open itself for dialogue with other cultures because cultural boundaries continue to be crossed over by other cultures. For instance, the past two decades has seen a tremendous increase of Africans in Europe, America, etc and vice versa therefore a mixture of cultures coming together. It is this culture that shapes the individual and translates them through the various transitions from childbirth through to adulthood until death. Notwithstanding, there is always a form of

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<sup>203</sup> Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 4.

<sup>204</sup> Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 49.

dynamism and creativity whenever two or several cultures interact with each other. Culture therefore becomes a '*conditio sine qua non*' in the development of every human society since the world has become a 'global village'. In spite of the intermingling of the African culture (s) with other cultures and the diversity associated with it, the Church in Africa, in this case, the Akan Church in Ghana must be Akan oriented. The theology of the Church must be modeled on the usage of particular elements and symbols which are proper and familiar to the Akan Christian.

### 3.1.2 Definition and Anthropological Context of Culture

Under this section, an attempt to define culture as well as its anthropological context offers a better appreciation of the term to this study. Although there are no specific accepted universal definitions of culture due to its multidisciplinary approach, efforts are made to examine few definitions. Keteyi explains the reasons behind the differences in terms of not having one universal definition for culture. He writes: "In part, the differences [in definitions] are due to the fact that there are many disciplines that study the life of the people [which is culture]. Each [of the disciplines] approaches culture in a different way placing stresses that are important for its interest."<sup>205</sup> In this same vein, Crollius sharing in the same agreement with Keteyi concerning the universal definition for culture also contends:

"It is difficult to see how one single concept of culture could satisfy all those who speak about it. Any attempt to clarify the term 'culture' on the level of this 'interdisciplinary no-man's land' would almost certainly fail to gain the approval of most of the participants in the discussion, in so far as they choose to remain immured in their own, particular conception of their own, particular discipline"<sup>206</sup>

These two attempts of Crollius and Keteyi display the difficulty in having one definite universal definition for culture due to its multidisciplinary nature. But etymologically, 'culture' is derived from the Latin word, '*Colere*' which means 'to till the ground' and the Latin verb '*Culturare*' meaning 'to cultivate'.<sup>207</sup> This derivation has a relation with '*Cultus*' for example [from which the term cult emanates] which "refers to religious worship, which might be seen as [a] way of bringing up ("cultivating") people in a religious way."<sup>208</sup> However, Raymond Williams traces the

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<sup>205</sup> Bernard X. Keteyi. *Inculturation as a Strategy for Liberation: A Challenge for South Africa*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1998), 19.

<sup>206</sup> Crollius, *Inculturation: Newness and Ongoing Process*. 47-48.

<sup>207</sup> Raymond Williams. "A moving target: The illusive definition of culture", in *Redefining culture*, ed. John R. Baldwin, Sandra L. Faulkner and Michael L. Hecht, 27-50, (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

term ‘culture’ from the German word ‘*Kultur*’ which refers to agricultural development. He further gives the three broad categories of the usage of ‘*Kultur*’ but for the purpose of this study, only the first category will be considered. Williams refers to culture as the ‘cultivation’ of individual and groups of people in terms of the “general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development.”<sup>209</sup> This definition of culture portrays the individual as being nurtured intellectually, spiritually and aesthetically within his or her cultural development. This process of ‘cultivation’ makes the human person to learn and come face-to-face with the traditional dictates of the community or society in all aspects of life. In simple terms, culture becomes a way of life which represents the worldview and philosophy of a social ethnic group in a given society, and in this case, the Akans of Ghana.

One of the earliest anthropologists whose definition of culture is widely quoted by several scholars is Edward Burnett Tylor. As the founder of modern ethnology, he defined culture in a more subject-oriented way. His definition has therefore become the basis or foundation upon which all other attempts of defining culture by several authors is derived. In a broadest ethnographic sense, he defines culture as that complete whole which includes an ‘epitome of knowledge, belief, art, morality, law, custom and all other abilities and habits that men and women as members of a society has acquired’.<sup>210</sup>

This definition of Tylor recognizes the special role played by human beings in the society in which they reside. Hence, culture is conclusively said to be what the human being learns or acquires as members of such societies. This act of learning shapes the worldview of the people in those societies or communities. It is in this light that Azevedo also defines culture as “... the deepest code to reveal a human, social group and to make it understandable. On the other hand, it is culture that gives a concrete human group the meaning of life.”<sup>211</sup> We can conclude that the definition of culture by Azevedo focuses on the identification of the human person because every individual is known by his or her cultural heritage or affiliation.

Understood in this way, Shorter agrees with Azevedo’s identity mark of the human person and writes: “According to this way of thinking, it is what human beings share culturally, their customs, values and distinctive way of living which constitutes them as a recognizable distinct

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>210</sup> Eckholt, *Poetik der Kultur*, 109.

<sup>211</sup> Carlos M. Azevedo. *Inculturation and Challenges of Modernity*. (Rome: Gregorian University Press 1982), 10.

human group or society.”<sup>212</sup> In effect, it is culture which distinguishes a particular group of people or society from the other by way of recognition. To buttress this point, Azevedo offers further explanatory statement on the mark of identification pertaining to groups of people or societies. He writes:

To summarize, what I am suggesting here is that we eventually take culture proper as the set of meanings, values and patterns which underlie the perceptible phenomena of a concrete society, whether they are recognizable on the level of social practice (acts, ways of proceeding, tools, techniques, costumes and habits, forms and traditions), or whether they are the carriers of signs, symbols, meanings and representations, conceptions and feelings that consciously or unconsciously pass from generation to generation and are kept as they are or transformed by people as the expression of their human reality.<sup>213</sup>

By this quotation, Azevedo talks about the whole component of culture which goes beyond mere meanings and values, but also as a social practice as well as a vehicle which transmits essential cultural worldview from one societal generation to another. The ability to pass this cultural worldview from one generation to the other sustains the activeness of such cultures and keeps them alive. In this way, every human person must learn and live their cultural heritage in order for that culture to survive from one generation to the other without fading away or been overshadowed by other external cultural values due to globalization. The concept of enculturation as one of the several terminologies associated with inculturation as already discussed in the previous chapter becomes very significant in this case of preserving the cultural heritage of the people.

Going beyond the usual definition of culture in the social dimension, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also defines culture from the context of four dimensions (physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional) which is the composition of the human person. In line with this definition of culture by UNESCO, George contends:

“In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex or distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, value systems, traditions and beliefs... It is culture that gives man [woman] the ability to reflect upon himself [herself]. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that a man [woman] expresses himself [herself], becomes aware of himself [herself], recognizes his incompleteness,

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<sup>212</sup> Shorter, *Toward a theology of Inculturation*, 4.

<sup>213</sup> Azevedo, *Inculturation and Challenges of Modernity*, 10.

questions his achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he [she] transcends his limitations.”<sup>214</sup>

By this definition of culture employed by UNESCO, Amadi further writes, “... culture enhances [the] four dimensions of [human] life through arts, value systems, traditions, beliefs and fundamental rights of [the individual]...everyone has a right to his or her culture, which can never be denied him or her.”<sup>215</sup> For an individual to be responsible to the society in which he or she finds himself or herself, the task lies on such a person to develop himself or herself by way of making sound judgments between societal conformity and deviancy in order to meet the societal expectations expected from its members.

The whole idea of culture is to make the human person learn the cultural values which are inherited from previous generations, preserve them and pass them on from the current generation to the future generation in spite of encounters with other cultural experiences. This makes the individual unique among other people in other cultures as they encounter each other when they interact and in this way, culture develops. In light of the fact that the emergence of culture is prompted by human needs, Rappaport in writing about the significance of the development of culture to human beings contends:

“The behaviour and social organization of men [women]... are almost completely unspecified by their genetic constitutions. While men [women] are born with needs comparable to those of other animals, they are not born with genetically programmed ways of fulfilling them. They are born, rather with a capacity to acquire cultures, sets of beliefs, conventions, knowledge, techniques, and artifacts dependent upon the inventions and use of symbols...

Through symbols the subject matter of communication is freed from what is immediate and present, and through symbols an enormous amount of information can be stored and transmitted.”<sup>216</sup>

Summarily, all the above definitions portray society or the spatial community as playing an essential role in the definition of culture. This connotes the idea that culture and society goes hand-in-hand with each complementing and transforming the other. In this case, culture does not develop in a vacuum or in isolation. Culture develops in the community and it is on the relationship between culture and society that Ogden Vogt contends that culture “manifests features from many sources within itself, and each is laden with traits assimilated from other

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<sup>214</sup> Francis E. George. *Inculturation & Ecclesial Communion*. (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1990), 153.

<sup>215</sup> Amadi, “*Inculturing the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*”, 72.

<sup>216</sup> Roy A. Rappaport. “*Nature, Culture and Ecological Anthropology*,” in *Man, Culture, and Society*: Harry L. Shapiro (ed.). (London: Warner Modular Publications, 1971), 240.

cultures.”<sup>217</sup> Vogt admits that several causes within the society are responsible for the development of culture but however, he identifies geography and religion as the principal sources of these causes. Therefore, the religious dimension of cultural development becomes our focus in this study.

The society is a key component in the study of culture therefore society in the description of Pinto is, “a permanent organized aggregate of persons sharing a common way of life and group consciousness.”<sup>218</sup> This description of Pinto emphasizes the earlier assertion that culture does not develop in a vacuum but in the society and it also develops through its interaction with other cultures. With this understanding, it becomes clear that every human society possesses the idea of culture within their setting through inheritance, and its conscious nature of transmitting such cultural values and elements from one generation to another hence becomes an obligation. This is the only way of preserving the culture of any social ethnic group from not fading away as well as opening itself to positive encounters from other cultures since no particular culture is ‘perfect’. Secondly, it becomes clear that due to civilization and globalization, the already inherited cultural elements and values transform themselves through the encounters with other cultures thereby getting away with certain archaic and negative traditional practices by the current generation.

In other words, for instance, the African encounter with other cultures such as the Western worldview shapes the thinking and worldview of the people concerning some inherited cultural experiences. This encounter with other cultures has become a necessity because of the fast rate at which the world is growing together hence the diversity and changeability of cultures must be acknowledged by all and sundry.

### **3.1.3 Culture in its Anthropological Context**

Flowing from our discussion so far, it has become obvious that culture is an anthropological phenomenon since to be human means to have a culture. Therefore anthropological studies have always stressed on the importance of culture to the human person with the understanding that culture is a significant feature in the lives of every individual. For instance, cultural anthropology

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<sup>217</sup> Ogden V. Vogt. *Cult and Culture: A Study of Religion and American Culture*. (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 20.

<sup>218</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 5.

is poised to shape the individual through the behaviours, ideas, social and physical environment around him or her. Thus, Geertz affirms, “A cultureless human being would probably turn out to be not an intrinsically talented though unfulfilled ape, but a wholly mindless and consequently unworkable monstrosity.”<sup>219</sup> He stresses further that, since “the homo sapiens brain... [has] arisen within the framework of human culture, [it] would not be viable outside it.”<sup>220</sup>

In reacting to the view of Geertz, Gakpe-Ntsri is of the view that Geertz presents the fact that culture is a major distinguishing characteristic between humanity and other animal genera, and between one human community and the other.<sup>221</sup> By distinguishing humans from other animals, Gakpe-Ntsri maintains that culture serves as a unique phenomenon in that direction, and by setting the difference between one community and other, culture reveals the depths or the deepness of diversity within the various human families.

Notwithstanding the necessity to study culture, the discussion has also become clear that the study of anthropology is equally important in the study of theology. For instance, Ghanaian theologians need to acquaint themselves with knowledge of the cultural influence on the Ghanaian Christians in their Christian journey since faith comes through the proclaimed word of God. In this regard, the culture of the African people (Akan social ethnic group) should not be overlooked by theologians and present-day missionaries who are seen as ‘transcultural actors’ as supported by the African Bishops in the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*<sup>222</sup> but rather respect the cultural values, priorities and concerns of the local people.<sup>223</sup> This recognition for the culture of the people becomes a major characteristic in getting the word of God firmly rooted in the culture of local churches since religious doctrines are aimed at guiding the behaviour of all manner of people in their communities. Understood in this way, this creates a clear relationship between faith and culture.

Moreover, culture also gives a sense of identification to every human person and this identity makes the individual proud of belonging to a particular human society. Without cultural distinction among human communities, the individual person would sojourn in this world unnoticed, unidentified and without a sense of belongingness. Furthermore, culture makes human

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<sup>219</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 68.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Theodore Gakpe-Ntsri. “*Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Traditional Worship of the Akans of Ghana: A Theology of the Eucharist in the Context of an Indigenous African Traditional Religion*” (PhD diss., Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1989), 48.

<sup>222</sup> A papal encyclical marking the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*.

<sup>223</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 62.



life meaningful and worth living. Secondly, culture protects the well-being of every individual who belongs to that culture in the society and gives a sense of satisfaction to the human person involved. In this regard, culture creates a human family which points to a common ancestor in the society through the medium of myths. This common ancestor, it is believed marks the initial existence or the beginning of such social group of people.

Archbishop (emeritus) Sarpong writes, upon the death of this ancestor, the spirit goes to inhabit a special world of ghosts and spirits.<sup>224</sup> This world of ghosts or spirits, it is believed, becomes the place where the spirits of deceased relatives reside when they die. This cultural belief of life after death reminds the people to lead lives worthy of emulation if they want to be regarded as ancestors. Upon death, the ancestor therefore serves as a link between the people on earth and God and they (ancestors) are always remembered during the meal sharing of the Akan people.

In this regard, religion as part of culture gives the people of a community a sense of the origin of their lineage, a belief in the Supreme Deity<sup>225</sup> who is the Creator and life after death. Sarpong further contends, "... the African is open to the idea of God, the Creator, from his traditional life and religion"<sup>226</sup> before the coming of the missionaries. The mention of the name of God is commonly on the lips of the Akan in proverbs and wise sayings such as '*Obi nkyer3 akwadaa Nyame*'.<sup>227</sup> Christ, although divine, is also believed to be human who belonged to a human culture known as the Jewish society and He was brought up within this cultural setting. This Christological association with culture portrays that one's world of culture is also important to Christianity and to this position; Vatican II clearly affirms this position in this statement:

"[The good news of Christ] takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ. In this way the Church carries its mission and in that very act it stimulates and advances human... culture."<sup>228</sup>

Culture, therefore in line with the Council's admonition, becomes "one of the properties of the human person [by which] he can achieve true and full humanity."<sup>229</sup> The Council advises that all

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<sup>224</sup> Peter Kwasi Sarpong. *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*. (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 38.

<sup>225</sup> Akans refer to God as a Supreme Deity.

<sup>226</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 43.

<sup>227</sup> Literally means nobody need show God to a child.

<sup>228</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

men and women are called upon, together with all people to work in building a more human world since the human culture has an eminent place in the integral vocation of humanity.<sup>230</sup>

In spite of the Council's efforts in hailing culture, it does not conceal the cultural imperfections and negative values such as, "the practice of killing of a human person who accompanies a dead king or chief and who acts as an aide or servant" among the Akan ethnic group. This is one of the reasons behind the call for a genuine encounter or dialogue between the Gospel and culture so that the Gospel could heal instead of compromising on the imperfections found within the cultural milieu of the people in local Churches. The religious presence of God should reconcile the people and do away with these negative traditional cultural values in the society. In support of this, Gakpe-Ntsri rightly states, "For the Gospel neither seeks to destroy nor condone the culture of sinful human beings, but to renew and sanctify it."<sup>231</sup> This position connotes the belief that the structures of evil have rendered human nature as sinful which is in search of salvation and healing through the Gospel message as well as the celebration of the sacraments. This renewal and sanctification of culture by the Gospel message is also affirmed by Vatican II in these words:

The good news of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the permanent allurements or the ever-present attraction of sin. ... It strengthens perfects and restores them in Christ. The Church therefore stimulates and advances the human and civic culture of the people.<sup>232</sup>

In this regard, it is explicit that the human society which is bedeviled with social evils, conflicts, quarrels, etc must be redeemed through their coming into contact with the Gospel. To this, Archbishop Sarpong maintains: some cultural values of the people (Akan) which are not worthy of emulation should be redeemed or not incorporated into the doctrines of the Church<sup>233</sup> in the name of inculturation. This position of the revered archbishop supports the earlier calls for a genuine and conscious dialogue between Christianity and culture in realizing this expected response and not regarding everything about Africans as negative.

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<sup>230</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 57.

<sup>231</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, "Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice", 51.

<sup>232</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

<sup>233</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 45.

### 3.2 Culture and Symbolisms

Every culture has symbols which permeates every aspect of the life of the social group of people. A symbol pertaining to a social group of people is only acceptable, significant and meaningful to the ethnic group of people who affirms its usage. This connotes the idea that the usefulness of a symbol depends on its importance to the community of people therefore cultural symbols become understandable to the members of such social group and they give meaning to their life. In line with the function of symbols to communities, Guzie writes, “A real symbol always brings us [humankind] into touch not just with a memory but with a living presence, and indeed, a presence which contains a hope for the future and which helps to carry us [men and women] into the future.”<sup>234</sup> Therefore, the usage of a symbol of a particular society or social ethnic group must not only recall past events but also, lead the people to the present anticipating the living hope of the future.

For instance, certain Akan cultural symbols can be reformulated to reflect the traditional Akan cultural symbols in their Christian life. The reformulation of these traditional symbols such as the meal sharing is meant to make the Eucharistic celebration more meaningful and attractive to the Akan bearing in mind their own cultural meal. For instance, the symbol of bread and wine is essential to the celebration of the Eucharist as it marks the memory of the Paschal mystery of Christ who died on the Cross, and whose death portrays the victory over the evils, violence and negatives cultural values of the world. So also, the Akan meal sharing as a communal gathering is poised to overcome physical hunger and bring nourishment to the people and other benefits.

In this regard, Archbishop Sarpong as an anthropologist argues that symbolism is significant in attaining a better insight into the pattern of thought in the culture of every people.<sup>235</sup> He further writes that a symbol has a meaning but not everything that has meaning is a symbol. In line with this expression of Sarpong, a careful study of symbol in a particular culture such as the Akan gives an appropriate meaning to the people.

Symbolism therefore is indispensable to our study and understanding of culture within the context of the celebration of the Eucharist as a communal meal. Hence an examination of symbols as a paramount feature of the Akan would be discussed under the history of the Akan

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<sup>234</sup> Tad W. Guzie. *The Book of Sacramental Basics*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 49.

<sup>235</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, 105.

ethnic group. Are there some Akan cultural symbols that can be employed in relation to enriching the celebration of the Eucharist?

The etymology of the term ‘Symbol’ comes from the Greek word ‘*Symbolon*’ which means “to put together.” Dhavanomy sees symbolism as “... is something regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. A symbol is something that stands for something else.”<sup>236</sup> In the same regard, Crockett also defines a symbol as, “... is something that represents, signifies or points to something in experience while not being identical with what it represents.”<sup>237</sup> Whereas Crockett regards a symbol as a pointer leading to something, Dhavanomy is of the view that it is the people who employ the use of the symbols in their daily interactions and as well, determine its meaningfulness and value for their setting. In short, a symbol represents a truth or an abstract reality that otherwise is difficult to conceive of in concrete terms. This is the reason behind the Asantes of Kumasi having a symbol depicting God’s power, ‘*Gye Nyame*’.

To elaborate the view of Dhavanomy as a revered anthropologist, Sarpong explains that for instance, Africans think of the world in which they live in, in symbolic rather than scientific forms. This symbolic way of thinking, according to Sarpong, must not necessarily conform to the strict rules of inductive reasoning or inference.<sup>238</sup> Notwithstanding, it is right to say that symbolism plays an effective role in the culture of the people in local churches. This, perhaps, could be the source which inspired Geertz to define culture in relation to the concept of symbolism. Geertz writes: “culture denotes a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of men [women] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.”<sup>239</sup> African (Akan) usage of symbolism is also used to explain certain meaningful words and thinking in their communities. For instance, if a person is likened to a lion does not necessarily mean that individual is an animal, rather, such a person possesses some qualities of a lion such as bravery. In this sense, understanding symbolism outside of a particular language and culture, according to Sarpong makes it “irrational and nonsensical.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Dhavanomy, *Christian Theology of Inculturation*, 52.

<sup>237</sup> William R. Crockett. *Eucharist: Symbols of Transformation*. (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1989), 79.

<sup>238</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, 105.

<sup>239</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89.

<sup>240</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, 105.

Additionally, Geertz, in justifying the role of sacred symbols in the culture of a society, writes:

“sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character, and their quality of life, its moral and aesthetic and mood- and their worldview- the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life.”<sup>241</sup>

Geertz is of a firm belief that sacred symbols shape and direct the life of individuals in a given society. This formation of the person through these religious symbols affects the moral norms of the society, thereby making religion a unique source of authority among the people. It is in this direction that Mbiti, a renowned African Christian theologian writes, “To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes, practices and symbolic values can only lead to a lack of understanding of African behaviour and problems.”<sup>242</sup> Moreover, it is within the context of African symbolic value system that one could ask a question as: What is actually the place of communal meal sharing in the African Traditional Religion in relation to the Eucharistic meal? Thus, culture as a social heritage or inheritance from previous generations possesses a set of beliefs, meanings and values which are expressed and transmitted through traditional symbols.

### **3.3 Culture as Medium of Theology**

Following from the previous chapters, it has revealed that the culture of a people provides a platform leading to the knowledge of God. This connotes the urgency with which dialogue between faith and culture is unavoidable since culture makes the invisible God visible through the beliefs, rituals and practices of the said-culture. For instance, the Akan believes that the Supreme Being (God) reveals himself in his immanent nature through the ‘*abosom*’<sup>243</sup> or the intermediary gods who serves as the mediators between the Supreme Being and human beings. Some significant mountains, stones, rivers and trees that are identified with these ‘*abosom*’ are considered to be the abode of these ‘*abosom*’. Hence, such trees, rivers and mountains are revered and considered as sacred in these cultures. In the light of this assertion, culture becomes

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<sup>241</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89-90.

<sup>242</sup> John S. Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (New York: Praeger, 1969), 1-2.

<sup>243</sup> Akan reference to smaller deities or gods.

very necessary for the study of theology and Kraft offers a beautiful illustration pertaining to the role of anthropology in the concept of culture. He contends: “The first area in which anthropological insight could be of help to [the study of] theology would be ... the understanding of culture.”<sup>244</sup>

This statement of Kraft confirms the essential nature of possessing a deeper knowledge of culture in order to study theology effectively. And for the study of theology, Gakpe-Ntsri is of the view that, the various stages of culture lead the individual to the presence of the Transcendent, the Divine Light,<sup>245</sup> therefore culture is important to Christianity.

Examining the definition of theology by St. Anselm, *fides quarens intellectum*,<sup>246</sup> theology becomes a rational approach to faith and its contents. Thus, faith can only be expressed by the people through the religious symbols created by the native society or community. These religious or sacramental symbols sanctify the negative cultural values and purify them as a source of healing in the Christian life of the people. Culture therefore provides the space within which the people’s aspirations, visions as well as their thoughts find fulfillment.

In this light, the ideas possessed by a group of people concerning God becomes significant to theology only when these ideas are shared by the local people in the community through the spoken word otherwise known as language. In this case, the use of language becomes a significant medium of communication and an essential tool to both culture and religion. It is in language that most of the values, beliefs, symbols and concepts are passed on to the people as well as the subsequent generations. Therefore to understand the language of people belonging to a certain cultural group creates the ability of relating with such group of people. Gakpe-Ntsri contends: “...before a people can apprehend a new concept, they have to find a concept from their own language that comes closest in comparison to this new concept.”<sup>247</sup> This means that the usage of the language of the local people or mother tongue is very significant in the Christian worship of the Church.

The success concerning this usage of the local language of the people is evident when the Catholic Church granted permission for the use of vernacular or mother tongue of the local people in the celebration of the Holy Mass in local churches such as the African Church. For

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<sup>244</sup> Charles H. Kraft. “Cultural Anthropology: Its Meaning for Christian Theology.” *Journal of Theology Today*. Vol. 41 n 4: (1985), 390-400.

<sup>245</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 69.

<sup>246</sup> Latin terminology meaning ‘Faith seeking understanding’.

<sup>247</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 71.

instance, the Roman liturgy in the archdiocese of Kumasi is celebrated in the Akan (Asante) language which is known as 'Twi'. This shift from using Latin in the celebration of the Mass to the native language of local communities has rendered the celebration of the Eucharist lively.

Therefore the use of language as a medium of communicating the 'Gospel' message is significant as Paul exhorts: "Faith comes through hearing; and hearing comes through the spoken word of Christ preached" (Rom. 10:17). This Pauline exhortation has already been confirmed by Pinto when he stated: "So faith is lived, clothed, enveloped, [and] expressed in a culture. A lived faith always has a cultural character. [Based on this] Faith cannot exist in a culture-free state"<sup>248</sup> as earlier indicated. With this expression, he concludes that believers express their faith in the culture familiar to them and thereby emphasizing on the relationship between faith and culture. It is therefore clear that the "living language" of a cultural group is important to Christianity since the individual gets initiated into the mystery of existence through its culture. Pope Paul VI also stressed on the use of language in the propagation of the Gospel with this papal statement:

"... today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. "The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another". There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another."<sup>249</sup>

This assertion clearly shows the deep relationship between doctrine and culture especially language since the use of language in proclaiming the Gospel message of Christ is indispensable in Christian worship. Secondly, it is also important because language plays a significant role in every culture and also in the development of doctrines in every religion.

In this connection, the Africa (Akan) culture(s) which includes its religion although hitherto referred to as pagan and weird by the early European missionaries could have been used in bringing African Christians closer to God by the early missionaries. Sarpong affirms this position and writes: "... had early missionaries been aware of the potency of your [Traditional African Religion] religion and taken it seriously, Christianity would have taken a turn among your [African] people for the better."<sup>250</sup> So for Archbishop Sarpong, the Church's formal systematic theology on inculturation is right to state that every person, in imitation of the incarnation, has

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<sup>248</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 20.

<sup>249</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41.

<sup>250</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 22.

the right to become a Christian and express the tenets of Christianity through their indigenous spirituality, customs and rituals.<sup>251</sup>

Arguably, the recognition of culture as an indispensable tool for theology has attracted a certain kind of spirituality among Christians in local Churches. For instance, after Vatican II and the Post-Vatican II, there seems to be a ‘fresh air’ which is gradually blowing in the Church with the acceptance of theologies which is deeply rooted in the culture of local Churches. On this same position, Kasper writes, the neo-scholastic theology emerged ‘fusty’ and ‘stale’ due to the lost of touch with the cultural values of the people which nurtured it.<sup>252</sup> For example, sitting through a Christian liturgical celebration devoid of spontaneity by the African makes the worship boring and dull. This is so because in their traditional African worship, spontaneous prayers to god and ancestors were permissible hence they were not regarded as passive spectators.<sup>253</sup> This is a typical example of cultural practice which eluded the missionaries in their evangelization style in both the colonial and post-colonial periods.

In the nutshell, it is affirmed that the culture of the people is a great avenue or a necessary medium for any theological discourse since through culture, the sacramental symbols would sanctify the negative cultural values or the social evils of the community who have embraced the Christian lifestyle.

### **3.3.1 The Role of Culture in the Transmission of Christian Faith**

For the perpetuation of every culture, its beliefs, values and rites must be transmitted from one generation to the other. The transmission of these cultural values is to enable new members of such social ethnic group to learn and appreciate their traditional values. Understood in this way, the Gospel message of Christ must also be kept alive among Christians in general and particularly among the Akan Catholics in the archdiocese of Kumasi. It is an affirmation that culture has a significant role as Christians experience the transmission of faith in their Christian life. Pope Paul VI offers a beautiful teaching on the relationship between the Gospel, the evangelizer/evangelized and the culture. He explains:

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is

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<sup>251</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 22.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Joseph Osei-Bonsu. *The Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 13.



lived by men [women] who are profoundly linked to a culture or cultures, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures.<sup>254</sup>

This document emphasizes on the different cultures of both the evangelizer and the evangelized and declares that, these cultures must be expressed differently in making the Gospel message meaningful. This means that the evangelizer must respect the culture of those to be evangelized and should not impose his or her culture on them. It is these impositions which lead to the rejection of the principle of adaptation as a terminology of inculturation by the African Bishops during the synod in Rome. The Eucharistic celebration of the Akan must be characterized with the expression of their faith through their cultural symbols such as arts, dancing, poetry recitals, drumming, etc. In this way, the Church is incorporating certain positive cultural values into the regulations guiding the celebration of this sacrament. The healing and liberation of cultural values brings about newness of life in union with Jesus Christ as Vatican II Decree on missionary activities admonishes:

“They must give expression to the newness of life in their own society and culture and in a manner that is in keeping with their own land. They must be familiar with the culture, they must purify it and guard it, they must develop it....” (AG 21)

This admonition encourages the Akan to manifest themselves in their religious activities such as the celebration of the Eucharist in elements proper to their culture. The result of this manifestation would be acquiring a deeper knowledge, meaningfulness, reverence and commitment of the Eucharistic celebration which leads to an active participation.

It is worthy to note that since culture is a necessary criterion for theology, the necessity of a dialogue between the Gospel message and culture significant. In this direction, the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II teaches:

“There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In this self revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each.” (GS 58)

This teaching also affirms the position that God speaks to his followers through their various cultures and these local people experience the transcendental presence in such cultures. The recognition of the presence of God among the people in their own traditional cultural setting brings the expression of satisfaction in their Christian life to the fullest. And this expression of

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<sup>254</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20.

satisfaction affirms the stance of Pinto that, “One cannot respond to [the] Christian message in his [her] total life, if it is presented in another cultural form.”<sup>255</sup>

The African (Ghanaian) Church must move away from its old style of Christianity towards a new approach which calls for recognition of their traditional cultural values. If the Akan is not participating actively in the celebration of the sacraments especially the Eucharist, then Greinacher, a pastoral theologian, is right to state: “That is because without these conditions of integrity and participation, the culture that the faith is inculturated into is fundamentally alienating to the people and so cannot speak to their hearts and minds.”<sup>256</sup>

Respect for the culture of local Churches assists the local people to experience Jesus through their own cultural worldview. The inference therefore is that, people in local Churches must continue to respect their cultural values, preserve them and transmit them to their future generations. Thus, the culture of the Akan must be guarded so that they do not fade away since the pride of every social group of people is the culture which gives them a sense of identity. This advice to the local churches to guard their cultures beckons on all those in the work of evangelization especially in this era of globalization to adhere to this advice and not impose their foreign cultures on those to be evangelized who are already residing in their local communities. With this understanding, and since culture is dynamic, theologians through their reflections should assist to reconcile these cultures in consonance with the Gospel message.

This reconciliation of the culture of the people takes the cultural imperfections or the structures of evil away and brings healing and purification to the people due to the transcendental presence.

It is these cultural implications on the transmission of faith which prompted Archbishop Sarpong to encourage the ‘global church’ to accept unity in diversity. He writes, “The fact that we have the same faith does not mean that we should express that faith in the same way. That would be uniformity but uniformity is not unity [because] uniformity [in fact] can be against unity”, as stated by the archbishop.<sup>257</sup> Sarpong is of the view that every local church such as the African church (Akan) could be permitted to use their traditional values and elements proper to their culture such as the Zaire Rites popularly known as Roman Rites for Zaire in expressing their Christian faith. This position of Archbishop Sarpong confirms the significant role of the

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<sup>255</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 27.

<sup>256</sup> Norbert Greinacher. *Christianity and Cultures: A Mutual Enrichment*. (London: SCM Press, 1994), 21.

<sup>257</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 47.

incarnation event in the process of inculturation. The incarnation theology serves as the basis of the close relation between the Gospel message and the culture of the people. For this reason, African Bishops see the principle of incarnation as the perfect model for inculturation since, “The Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This teaching of the Church must not be taken on a lighter note since the understanding and acceptance of the culture of the local Church is important in the transmission of the Christian faith.

### 3.3.2 Relationship between Culture and Theology

In considering culture as a necessary criterion for theological development, the importance of culture to theology must be discussed. As part of the contribution towards the importance of culture to Christianity, the encyclical of Pope Paul VI on evangelization in the modern world affirms:

“The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture. The concept of culture is valuable for grasping the various expressions of the Christian life present in God’s people. It has to do with the lifestyle of a given society, the specific way in which its members relate to one another, to other creatures and to God...”(EN 115).

With this affirmation, it is clear that culture embraces the wholeness or totality of the life of a social ethnic group in every local church and develops as a response to the needs of the people in a particular society. Since culture is a human development, the existence of certain societal evils cannot be overlooked hence the role of theology. Kraft offers a significant reason:

“For not only do the biblical and historical data with which theologians work come from other cultures, the world at our doorstep is increasingly multicultural in its makeup. And the problems it generates—problems to which theologians are expected to speak—are increasingly the result of relationships between peoples with differing cultural maps and agendas in their needs”.<sup>258</sup>

Kraft accepts the fact that most mistakes committed by some of the missionaries in continents such as Africa, were partly due to their disregard for the culture of the local people although the emergence of Christianity in Africa also resulted in the provision of educational, health, economic and political benefits. Nonetheless, the ignorance they exhibited towards the local people as having a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) regarding the notion of God created a major challenge in respect of their religious worldview. This situation, Pinto describes as unfortunate and the main problem for inculturation today since there are some missionaries who are in this

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<sup>258</sup> Kraft, *Cultural Anthropology: Its Meaning for Christian Theology*, 391.

mandate of evangelization in some parts of local churches today such as Africa. Notwithstanding, there are also some African priests who, due to the western mentality imbibed within them through their formation outside of the African continent also commit this same mistake of the missionaries. He contends: “The problem of inculturation today is not with regard to faith and its contents as such, but with regard to the imposition of the cultural form it has acquired during the course of history, upon people, who have different cultures.”<sup>259</sup>

Pinto writes, “A believer expresses his [or her] faith in the culture [that] he [or she] belongs to.”<sup>260</sup> Thus, this expression of faith in their traditional cultural milieu assists the individual to overcome the evils or negative values in their culture. It is worthy to note, having a deep understanding of the Akan culture in relation to communal meal will empower the Akan Catholics to view the Eucharistic meal as a form of their cultural meal which demands their attendance, participation and commitment because of the spiritual and physical bond it creates among them. In this regard, the principle of incarnation demands Christians in local churches to integrate the Gospel message with the cultural values of the particular social ethnic groups who form part of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Thus, this cultural heritage of a social group of people renders a sense of identity to the said people. This heritage can be ‘real’ culture which reveals what people actually do or ‘ideal’ culture which also talks about what individuals belonging to a particular culture profess they should do.<sup>261</sup> In this regard, an individual is who he or she is, due to that cultural heritage attached to his or her personhood. It is the cultural identity (real or ideal) which differentiates a Ghanaian from European, American from Spanish, among others. More also, it is this cultural affiliation that this study is selecting the Akans of Ghana and not the Akans in Cote d’Ivoire as the target social group.

Culture becomes the worldview of the people associated with it hence it is the culture that makes an individual to behave in a certain manner. This cultural orientation, according to Sarpong, is not static but dynamic hence it is open to different forms of transformations as well as deviations from the *status quo*. This description of culture by many anthropologists such as Sarpong means that culture, “is the integrated sum-total of behaviour traits that have been learned, and have not only been manifested and shared by the members of a society, but also

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<sup>259</sup> Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities*, 21.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>261</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, viii.

been passed on (consciously and unconsciously) from one generation to another in an uninterrupted succession”<sup>262</sup> mostly through oral traditions. For Gakpe-Ntsri, the basic meaning of culture is “the acknowledged behaviour pattern [of people] within a given society. This behaviour is based upon one’s relation to this [world] and the other world.”<sup>263</sup> This pattern of behaviour of the people within such cultural community cannot be changed for personal convenience. Therefore, a person’s attempt to despise his or her cultural pattern of behaviour becomes a sign of betrayal to the cultural upbringing of such individual.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter has tried to explain the urgency with which the culture of the people must be studied, understood and accepted in the face of theological development. Obviously culture is dynamic hence it develops as it encounters other cultures due to many factors such as globalization, technology, education, etc. The purpose of these encounters with several cultures should be mutual, not that of superiority and must result in knowledge acquisition among the people. These encounters assist the individual to shape his or her horizon in accepting other cultures not forgetting his or her native cultural values. Secondly, using their cultural symbols in the expression of the Christian faith helps the people to have a profound understanding of Jesus who is present among themselves through their cultural beliefs. This understanding sets the path for increase in participation, reverence and commitment in the Christian worship and in this case, the celebration of the Eucharist among the Akan. By this, the Akan would appreciate the significance of the cultural meal sharing among themselves therefore each person plays different roles effectively in order to have a meaningful meal at home. It is with this understanding that this thesis wants the Akan in the Kumasi archdiocese to comprehend in order to increase their participation in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

In this direction, the necessity to have a dialogue between culture and the Gospel message is paramount to the evangelization approach of the ‘global Church’. This new approach of evangelization sees communication as an essential medium. Thus, presenting Jesus to the local people in their native cultural worldview, especially in their local language and the use of cultural symbols assist them to possess adequate knowledge of Jesus who came to save them.

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<sup>262</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, vii.

<sup>263</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 28.

With this mindset, the use of cultural symbols of the Akan becomes meaningful in their Christian life and with this understanding, purifying some of these cultural symbols which expresses the transcendental presence among the Akan becomes a stepping stone in their Christian life.

In sum, every individual has a culture that gives a sense of identity and such identity must be preserved. However, encounter with other cultures must be encouraged in the wake of globalization in which the knowledge acquired should shape their worldview. As Christians continue to transmit the Christian life from one generation to another, so also every social ethnic group is concerned about transmitting its cultural values, practices and lifestyle to its new generations. This transmission becomes necessary to keep the culture from fading off although culture is dynamic due to transcultural and intracultural processes, however evangelizers must not impose their culture on the evangelized either on grounds of uniformity or superiority.

Therefore, the people in local churches and in this context, the Akan, are strongly encouraged to preserve their cultural values, respect, defend and transmit them to new set of generations. Notwithstanding, the Akans must allow Christian principles such as teachings and doctrines to shape the negative cultural values. As the celebration of the Eucharist was given to the Church by Jesus Christ through the apostles at the Last supper, the Church has also preserved and celebrated this 'special gift' from centuries and it is this same celebration that the Akan celebrate in the archdiocese of Kumasi in their native language. In fact, it is the source and summit of the Catholic worship since Jesus instructed: "Do this in memory of me". With this understanding, the culture of the people, just as the sacrament of the Eucharist, must also be preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. Hence, culture becomes an important criterion for theological development in the context of expressing the Christian faith in the cultural worldview of the people. The next chapter will focus on the history of the Akan social ethnic group, their traditional values of communalism and commensality.

## 4 BRIEF HISTORY OF AKANS AND THEIR TRADITIONAL VALUES OF COMMUNALISM AND COMMENSALITY

Ghana is a country with several ethnic groups and one of such groups is the Akan ethnic group. Akans, like any other ethnic group may share some characteristics with other ethnicities across the world such as meal sharing. They nonetheless have peculiar ways that distinguish them from other social ethnic groups. Moreover, in the extant literature, there exist both fixed and fluid concepts of culture,<sup>264</sup> of which the latter suggests indigenous ways of being evolve with time.

Due to several oral tradition accounts concerning the origin of the Akan social ethnic group, there is hardly a common consensus. One of such accounts is attributed to Crentsil who states of a mysterious origin of some Akan groups.<sup>265</sup> Some scholars are also of the view that Akans may have emerged from Sudan, the Ancient Mali Empire but Danquah, a doyen of Ghanaian political history is one of the proponents who traced the origin of Akans to the Sahara.

Similarly, Tiekou, a renowned Ghanaian historian also traces the origin of Akans to the old Mali Empire as well as deriving the Akan language from a language close to modern Arabic.<sup>266</sup> Akans presently can therefore be put into two broad categories, namely the “traditional” Akan, and the “conventional” or “neo-Akan”. The former refers to Akans who till this day maintain the ways of their ancestors of the pre-colonial era who can be said to be in the minority today. Rural and largely illiterate folks who remain unaffected by western lifestyles form the majority of this category of Akans. The neo-Akan on the other hand constitute urbanites who have embraced western lifestyle although adhere to basic Akan norms and customs<sup>267</sup> such as meal-sharing. This chapter therefore gives an insight into Akans as an ethnic group of people, their belief systems, cultural background, religion and traditional social values of communalism as well as commensal practices. Hence a synthesis of existing literature on the foregoing themes regarding the Akans of Ghana remains the focus of this chapter.

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<sup>264</sup> Terence Milstead. “Housing and Heritage: Perceptions of “Culture” and its Influence among Policy-Makers and Housing Professionals in Southern and Central Appalachia.” *Housing, Theory and Society*, 29(1), (2012), 92–113.

<sup>265</sup> Perpetual Crentsil. ‘*Death, Ancestors, and HIV/AIDS among the Akan of Ghana*’. (Academic Dissertation Research Series in Anthropology. University of Helsinki, 2007), 32.

<sup>266</sup> Augustine Kofi Tiekou. “*Tete wo bi Kyere*”: *History & facts about Asante Kingdom and Ghana*. (Kumasi: Schrodinger’s Publications, 2016), 118.

<sup>267</sup> Gakpe-Ntsir, *Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 91.

## 4.1 The Akan Ethnic Group of Ghana

The term ‘Akan’, etymologically, is believed to have been coined from the Asante word “*kan* (*e*)” which means ‘first’ or ‘foremost’ as a way of asserting their place arguably as the first settlers of Ghana<sup>268</sup> formally British Gold Coast. As an ethno-cultural group of people, the Akans are however not found only in Ghana<sup>269</sup> but also in countries such as Ivory Coast. They are nonetheless the largest ethnic group in Ghana according to recent population and housing census, making up 47.5% of the total population of the country<sup>270</sup> which is approximately thirty one million people and above.

Religiously, according to the Ghana Statistical Service, about only 5.2% of Ghanaians today identify themselves as practicing the African Traditional Religion<sup>271</sup> and this connotes the fact that, majority of Ghanaians including the Akans are Christians however, according to Agana and Prempeh, “indigenous religion nonetheless exerts a significant influence on how the Ghanaian Christians [which includes Akan Christians] engage with their religious faith.”<sup>272</sup> This is a good reason why inculturation is necessary in the African Church and Ghanaian theologians must always assist in situating the Christian faith within the context of the Ghanaian culture.

Geographically, the Akans are predominantly located in the southern and middle parts of the country, inhabiting the Central, Western, Ashanti, Bono, Ahafo and Eastern Regions of Ghana. For Tiekou, the movement of the Akans from the south of the Sahara to their present settlement in Ghana was due to their quest for religious freedom, avoidance of war and arable lands for farming activities.<sup>273</sup> The Akans are however not a homogeneous ethnic group as they are further divided into linguistic groups called tribes based on dialectical differences of which the *Ashantis*, the *Fantis*, the *Bonos*, the *Kwahus*, the *Akims*, the *Akuapims* and the *Nzimas* are widely notable. The two major forms of the Akan language are however *Twi* and *Fanti*,<sup>274</sup> commonly spoken by

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<sup>268</sup> Andrew P. Fofie-Nimoh. *Akan Rites of Passage and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: A Theological Enquiry*. (Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, Portugal, 2014), 39.

<sup>269</sup> Hasskei M. Majeed. *On the Rationality of Traditional Akan Religion: Analyzing the Concept of God*. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 25, (2014), 127–141.

<sup>270</sup> Ghana Statistical Service. *Population and Housing Census: National Analytical Report*, (Accra, 2021), 61.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>272</sup> Agana-Nsiire Agana and Charles Prempeh. *Defiling the Church: The Impact of Mmusuo in Akan Conception, in: Transformation: an international journal of holistic mission studies*, London, Bd. 37. 1, (2019), 3-17.

<sup>273</sup> Tiekou, “*Tete wo bi Kyere*”: *History & facts about Asante Kingdom and Ghana*, 119.

<sup>274</sup> Paul Appiah-Sekyere. “Traditional Akan Ethics and Humanist Ethics: A Comparative Study.” *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 3(6), (2016), 110–120.



the sub-groups located in the non-coastal (middle and upper regions) and coastal regions of the country respectively.<sup>275</sup>

*Twi* is particularly very popular and is in widespread use among non-Akans partly due to the wide geographical locations occupied by the Twi-speaking sub-group of the Akans. Presently, majority of popular radio and television stations (stations with great number of listeners) are those which uses the Akan language as the medium of expression although English is the *lingua franca* of Ghana. Appiah-Kubi emphasizes that “of the three [major Akan languages], Twi is the commonest among the Akans in Ghana as a whole and has almost become Ghana’s *lingua franca*.”<sup>276</sup> Located in the tropical rainforest belt and coastal regions of Ghana, traditional Akans are mainly farmers (including hunting), fishermen and craftsmen (weavers, carvers etc) by occupation, making the most of the natural endowments in their geographical settings such as fertile soils, forests and water bodies. However, as highlighted in the introductory section of this chapter, neo-Akans just like any civilization exposed to western culture live a comparatively modernistic way of life and hence many modern day Akans are found in white-collar jobs such as teachers, medical doctors, lawyers, nurses and many other jobs typical of contemporary societies.

## **4.2 The Socio-Political Structure of Akans**

The reality and evolving dynamics of the lived world of Akans is largely shaped by how individuals are structured within the broader Akan society, along the lines of lineage (family and kinship), chieftaincy, and generally ties with wider spaces of influence.<sup>277</sup> Some of these are highlighted next, beginning with the family.

### **4.2.1 Concept of Personhood, Kinship and System of Inheritance**

The Akan concept of ‘Onipa’ (human being) remains one of the fundamental underpinnings of their worldview. In Akan culture, the human being is believed to be composed of three parts,

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<sup>275</sup> Helena M. Tuomainen. *Migration and foodways: continuity and change among Ghanaians in London*. PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2006), 84.

<sup>276</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi. *Man Cures, God heals: Religion and Medical Practice among the Akans of Ghana*. (New Jersey: Alanheld, Osmun & Co., 1981), 1.

<sup>277</sup> Kobina T. Hanson. “Rethinking the Akan Household: Acknowledging the Importance of Culturally and Linguistically Meaningful Images.” *Africa Today*, 28, (2004), 27–45.

namely 'okra' (the soul), 'mogya' (blood) and 'ntoro' (spirit). Accordingly, a child is believed to be formed from the blood (mogya) of the mother by virtue of which every Akan born becomes a member of their mother's lineage and not their father's in Akan culture. This is because blood is considered the basis of a biological person and since it is the mother that gives the child this component, it goes without saying that the child's lineage is traced to the matriline. By extension, every Akan by birth becomes a member of the 'abusua' (family or clan) and chiefdom to which the mother belongs.<sup>278</sup>

Every Akan therefore belongs to one of the eight 'mmusuaban' '(clans) of Akan. The eight matrilineal clans of Akan are namely: *Oyoko, Bretuo, Asona, Asenie, Aduana, Ekuona, Asakyiri* and *Agona*. These clans serve as the basic unit around which the Akan social organisation is built. Akans therefore operate a matrilineal kinship system<sup>279</sup> where with few exceptions such as the Akuapim of Larteh and Mampong sub-groups, succession and inheritance among passes through the female line. Here, matrikin (specifically a man's sister's child) customarily becomes the rightful heir to a man's property in the event of his demise and not his own children or spouse. In relation to this, Acheampong points out that:

family members belonging to the female line of the original owner of the property, who are not necessarily his/her children but are, for example, nephews, could become shared owners as the property is bequeathed across generations. Second, the original owner may first bequeath the property to his/her children either by will or through the Interstate Succession Act, 1985, of Ghana after which the property may be passed down through the female line (i.e. to daughter(s) of the original owner) in line with customary law.<sup>280</sup>

Therefore Tuomainen asserts that among the traditional Akans, it is the mother's brother who plays most of the roles typically reserved for a father in a patrilineal system although some key roles are still reserved for the father in the Akan matrilineal system, some of which include naming of children and the responsibility of a child's moral upbringing and training. Quite differently, Akans believe a child acquires from his father's 'ntoro' and 'sunsum', both interchangeably used as Akan words for spirit. Accordingly, the father-child relationship is viewed as a spiritual rather than physical or biological one and from such a bond, a child

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<sup>278</sup> Samuel Oduro-Sarpong. *Examining the Concept of Participation in Traditional Societies: A Case of the Akan Traditional Society of Ghana*. (University of Massachusetts) Available at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie\\_capstones/129](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones/129). (2003). 26.

<sup>279</sup> Sjaak Van Der Geest. 'I want to go! 'How older people in Ghana look forward to death. *Ageing & Society*, 22.1 (2002), 7–28.

<sup>280</sup> Ransford A. Acheampong. "The family housing sector in urban Ghana: exploring the dynamics of tenure arrangements and the nature of family support networks." *International Development Planning Review*, 38(3), (2016): 305.

becomes a part of his father’s spiritual ‘*ntoro*’ group just as blood binds an individual to their mother’s ‘*abusua*’. Twelve of such *ntoro* groups exist in Akan societies, who are known to share common surnames and taboos. The various ‘*ntoro*’ groups with their distinctive characteristics are presented in table 4.1. The father is therefore held accountable for a child’s moral behaviour, particularly that of sons although they belong to their mother’s lineage.<sup>281</sup>

Clan	Totem Vernacular Name
1.Bosompra	Tough
2.Bosomtwi	The Human
3.Bosommuru	The Distinguished
4.Bosompo	The Audacious
5.Bosom-Dwerebe	The Eccentric
6.Bosom-Akom	The Fanatic
7.Bosomafi	The Chaste
8.Bosomayensu	The Truculent
9.Bosom-Kosi	The Virtuoso
10.Bosomsika	The Fastidious
11.Bosomafram	The Liberal
12.Bosomkrete	The Chivalrous

Table 4: The 12 Akan Ntoro Groups and their respective distinctive characteristics Source: Adopted from Opong (2002:100)

The third and final component of ‘*Onipa*’ (human being), ‘*okra*’ or ‘*honhom*’ (soul), is a form of divine and immortal spirit given to every human being right from conception by ‘*Onyame*’ (God). Akans consider ‘*okra*’ as an immortal component of a human being and one that joins its ancestors upon death beyond the grave. Unlike the Christian viewpoint and belief in eternal damnation for people who die in sin, such idea of eternal punishment for sinners does not exist in Akan belief system. Quite to the contrary, a person who dies in sin is given multiple chances through reincarnation<sup>282</sup> to ameliorate the bad lifestyle he/she may have led on earth.

#### 4.2.2 Chieftaincy

The various Akan families, clans and societies at large are governed by the chieftaincy institution led by a combination of Kings and chiefs as well as queen mothers. The Kings and chiefs become the custodians of the family and its properties such as lands, infrastructure, shrines, etc. The Akan chieftaincy institution is hierarchical. The Asante King for instance has sub-chiefs and clan heads who help him in governing the Asante Kingdom. Similar hierarchical systems are also

<sup>281</sup> Gakpe-Ntsir, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” 17-18.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 17.

evident in other Akan tribes. The chieftaincy institutions express the Akan religious worldview, leadership and governance system. As traditional leaders of Akan communities, chiefs are viewed as custodians of their people and everything that is considered sacred to their ancestors. Based on a royal Kingship system, one must emerge from a royal family in order to be enstooled as a chief in the Akan culture. Customarily, the queen mother nominates the candidate to be enstooled as a chief and this assignment is done in consultation with the head of the family.<sup>283</sup>

As a representative of the ancestors, Akan kings and chiefs are accorded a divine status and accordingly revered for their role as living intermediaries between ancestors, divinities and the living. They wield political, social and spiritual power and control over their communities and accordingly are expected to govern in line with the cultural dictates and norms of the Akan ethnic group. They are responsible for the welfare of the people entrusted to their care in their various communities. In crisis situations, Akan kings and chiefs are therefore expected to be the one to salvage their people and the communities through battles. This forms part of their responsibilities as commander-in-chief of '*asafo*' (warrior companies or divisional chiefs). As the traditional leaders, Akan chiefs usually have an ancestral shrine known as '*Nkonnwafie*' where libation is poured.

In addition to that, they indulge in and spearhead many traditional rituals and sacrifices that contravene Christian doctrines hence making it difficult for a chief or king to be a true Christian<sup>284</sup> in the true traditional setting. Furthermore, chiefs and kings in Akan culture also serve as the final arbitrator in all cases of dispute among the people. Again, the queen mother plays the role of a special adviser to the chief in the discharge of such roles.

#### **4.2.3 Communalism among Akans-The Akan as a Social Person**

For the Akan and the African in general, the framework of human thought has always been a communitarian thought. This value of communalism is very important to this study because of the attempt of presenting the Eucharistic meal as a communal meal to the Akan Christian. This explains the proposition that the concept of society or community comes first before the individual who make up the membership of the community. This is the reason behind the

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<sup>283</sup> Edwin Kwame Eshun. *Religion and Nature in Akan Culture: A Case Study of Okyeman Environment Foundation*. (Masters diss., Queen's University, 2011), 15.

<sup>284</sup> Andrew Kwasi Opong. *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*. (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2002), 252.

willingness of a single individual to die for the wellbeing of the whole community or village. This worldview is boldly expressed in the words of Mbiti that, ‘I am because you are and you are because I am’.

The concept of communalism also emerges due to the concept of family life in the African perspective. The African idea of family seems to be different from the western notion of family which comprise of father, mother and children. As a recommendation to this concept of family life among Africans, Peter Doyle, a bishop of Northampton after the Synod of Bishops on “Family and Marriage”<sup>285</sup> pointed, “... the richness of family life in other parts of the world [such as Africa]. Here [England], marriage has become very much a privatized industry. What the immigrant community can bring is the fact that marriage is more than Jack and Jill but it is about their families, their extended families, about the community ... and that’s the sort of richness that our immigrant communities are already bringing in our parishes. There’s much more life, colour and joy in their celebrations than there can be in ours [British White communities].”<sup>286</sup>

Understanding this position of Bishop Peter Doyle, the African idea of family goes beyond the nuclear description. In this light, the idea of family life is an important component among the Akan social ethnic group since it promotes communalism. Buah, a renowned Ghanaian historian contends:

While in the non-Ghanaian perspective of the word family includes only the parents and the children of the home, in typical Ghanaian society it embraces a whole lineage. Among the Akan, the family includes all the maternal; with the other groups, the family takes in all the members of the paternal lineage. Yet it is also true that in both the Akan and the non-Akan societies, both the paternal and maternal relatives are, in a loose sense, also accepted as blood relations, enjoying and accepting some mutual rights and duties. Thus, inasmuch as blood relations in Ghana embrace many more persons than in the western and other civilizations, it is usual to refer to members of the blood relations as the ‘extended family’.<sup>287</sup>

Buah is of the view that the lineage and clan system of the Akan social ethnic group of people provides an important platform for their communal life. In the Akan social ethnic group, communal interests far outweigh individual parochial interests as regards acceptable conducts. In this way, the membership of a person in that community, for Opoku, is emphasized more than

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<sup>285</sup> This synod was held in Rome in 2015 at the request of Pope Francis on family life and evangelization.

<sup>286</sup> Orobator, *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, 210.

<sup>287</sup> Francis K. Buah. *A History of Ghana*, (rev. ed.) (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), 43.

his or her individuality.<sup>288</sup> Admittedly, the communal nature of the Akan society can never be overlooked in studying about the Akans.

In his comparative study of traditional Akan and humanistic ethics, Appiah-Sekyere, a moral theologian, highlights communalism as one of the profoundest ethical values of the Akan. The Akans are therefore described as being collectivist rather than individualistic in their orientation. This however follows from the recognition and understanding among the Akans that the individual is limited in his capabilities whereas a collection of individuals are relatively unlimited in their ability to impact society or the broader good of society. The symbol of a 'broom'<sup>289</sup> is usually used to emphasize Akan collectivism or communality. Therefore although some modicum of individualism exist and accepted among Akans, traditional Akan ethics stresses on the need for the 'more' fortunate individuals (wealthy people) in society to use their riches for the greater or common good of the whole clan, family and societies to which they belong.<sup>290</sup> Nonetheless, Gyekye, an astute Ghanaian emeritus professor is of the view that ethics in the context of the Akan ethnic group is defined in terms of what promotes the good of the society (common good), for instance, harmony, solidarity and social welfare in human relationships. For him, this is what is good.<sup>291</sup>

As an extolled traditional Akan ethic, collectivism permeates Akan societies ranging from decision-making to participation in family and communal activities. The common good is almost always prioritised over individualism in Akan societies<sup>292</sup> and the clan system provides the basis for communal living among Akans. In pointing out the communal orientation of Akan social norms and values, Kissi notes that:

The communal orientation of the Akan society finds expression in the way they practically go about some of their customs. In this respect, the solidarity demonstrated on some particular occasions are instructive. On such occasions as funerals, all the members of the family and indeed the entire community see their participation as obligatory. The fulfilment of their obligation finds expression in solidarity expressed in mourning the dead and the sharing of funeral expenses.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Kofi A. Opoku. *West African traditional religion*, Accra: FEP International Private Ltd., 1977), 11.

<sup>289</sup> It is a cleaning tool made from the leaves of palm trees bundled together for sweeping which symbolizes communalism.

<sup>290</sup> Appiah-Sekyere, "Traditional Akan Ethics and Humanist Ethics". 110-120.

<sup>291</sup> Kwame Gyekye. *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme*, (rev. ed.) (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 132.

<sup>292</sup> Samuel Oduro-Sarpong. *Examining the Concept of Participation in Traditional Societies: A Case Study of the Akan Traditional Society of Ghana*. (Masters diss., University of Massachusetts). Available at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie\\_capstones/](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones/) (2003), 129. 53.

<sup>293</sup> Seth Kissi. *Social Identity in Hebrews and the Akan Community of Ghana*. (PhD diss., University of Pretoria,

The author further asserts that, some of the etiquettes taught the Akan child from infancy is done for the sake of their communal significance. These include the popular saying, ‘mourn with the sorrowful and rejoice with the joyous’, act of greeting, respect for the elderly, the show of compassion to the vulnerable, readiness to assist the helpless, etc. In this case, there is a chain of responsibilities by each member and a good sense of communalism in traditional Akan societies where the individual has a strong connection with the rest of the society he/she belongs to. Therefore even the pursuance of individual interests is viewed as appropriate if it is done in cognisance of the larger community interest. Social identity is therefore considered as an integral part of an individual’s self-concept in Akan culture.

Indeed, the Akan proverb ‘*Aninguase mfata Okanniba*’ which literally translates as disgrace should not be a bedfellow of the Akan exemplifies the shared and common identity Akans aspire to achieve. Akans therefore believe that an individual’s conduct may have communal wide calamities and hence commonality towards desirable communal behaviour is maintained through taboos, laws and other customs.<sup>294</sup> Therefore as a sign of solidarity towards the good of the society, each individual is obliged to the accepted sets of forms of moral behaviour which constitutes the moral code of the society.

### **4.3 Akan Religious Worldview and Belief System**

In Africa, the extent of religiosity and religious practice varies from one culture to the other although some elements of religion transcend cultural boundaries. For Akans, their social ethnic religion lies at the heart of their culture and social lifestyle. This makes it impossible to deal with Akans without reference to meal sharing which part and parcel of their culture and religion. Before the emergence of Christianity in Africa which dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Akans are known to practice polytheism, a concept that connotes the belief in and worship of multiple divinities- with a clear distinction between the Supreme Being (God) and many other lesser gods who are generally considered to be intermediaries between the Supreme Being (God) and human beings. The two categories of supernatural beings are therefore considered to work hand in

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2017), 69.  
<sup>294</sup> Ibid, 67.

hand<sup>295</sup> although whether or not the nature of the relationship between such divinities is hierarchical is highly contested within the broader discourse on Akan belief system.

The relationship between the deities and humanity is purposely for divine or spiritual protection through the intermediaries. Nonetheless, Parrinder ranks the spiritual beings acknowledged by the Akans in the following order:

The Supreme God (nyame), the deities (*abosom*) ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*) and the lower spirit powers (amulets and talisman) which is worn around the waist, ‘*asuman*’, a power believed to be obtained from small forest beings (*mmoatia*) with feet facing backwards, witches and wizards and the use of magic).<sup>296</sup>

An insight into the following Akan belief systems is expressed in this section, which begins with the Akan idea of God as the Supreme Being.

#### **4.3.1 The Concept of God in Traditional Akan Thought**

A culture’s perception of God informs the majority of the rest of its beliefs and practices. Arguably, it provides the broader framework within which a community is constructed, undertake its activities and live life in general. A well-known attribute of the Christian God is omnipresence, pointing to the ubiquitous nature of God. It follows therefore that, if God permeates all cultures and humanity, it is inappropriate to say that outside of Christianity, people are not aware of God or cannot conceive of His existence as this will put to question the universality of God. Therefore according to Opong, many African religions, Akan traditional religion inclusive, believe in one Supreme Being who is perceived not as one among equals but rather as a creator of the lesser deities.<sup>297</sup> Correspondingly, Akans do not consider God as their tribal god but instead viewed as the one true omnipresent God variously experienced in different cultures and whose benevolence extends to all humankind regardless of race, ethnicity or the particular geographical location a civilisation is found.<sup>298</sup> This is often embodied in the Akan saying that “if you want to speak to God, talk to the wind.”

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<sup>295</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 67.

<sup>296</sup> Eshun, *Religion and Nature in Akan Culture: A Case Study of Okyeman Environment Foundation*, 87.

<sup>297</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 67.

<sup>298</sup> Robert O. Agyarko. “God of life: Rethinking the Akan Christian concept of God in the light of the ecological crisis.” *The Ecumenical Review*, 65(1), (2013), 51–66.



### 4.3.2 Akan Traditional Names of God

It is argued that an idea of the conception of God or at least what he ought to be, native to a particular people or culture hinges foremost on how he is referred to in such a culture, which is the meaning of his name within such a culture.<sup>299</sup> In no culture is this more prominent than among Akans. Among Akans, there exists both a binary and triad nomenclatural conception of God, where he is known or referred to as *Nyame-Nyankopon* or *Nyame-Nyankopon-Odomankoma* respectively. However, of the two, the binary is in common usage among contemporary Akans, where the third element ‘*odomankoma*’ is largely perceived by many as one of the many attributes of the binary.<sup>300</sup> *Nyame* and *Nyankopon* are regarded synonymous and hence often used interchangeably although some Akan scholars argue that they are conceptually different.<sup>301</sup>

Whilst the names ‘*nyame*’ and ‘*nyankopon*’ have been the subject of divergent etymological interpretations, a widespread commonality exist that the name ‘*nyame*’ is derived from the Akan phrases ‘*nya*’ (get) and ‘*me*’ (satisfied) which translates as the one whom when you have, makes you completely satisfied. This is indicative of the nature and reputation of the Akan God as a God of satiation, such that anyone who has God in their life or abide in him would be fulfilled.

Moreover, found in the name ‘*onyame*’ is the word ‘*nyam*’, an adjective for honorable, respectable and dignity in Akan language and serves as a derivate that embodies the personification of God as a reputable being and further as the one able to bestow honour and glory unto his people. Similarly, the name ‘*nyankopon*’ is made up of the words ‘*nyame*’-‘*kopon*’, where the suffix ‘*kopon*’ is described as an epithet meaning one-great or supreme. The suffix ‘*Kopon*’ is argued to have been added to the stem ‘*nyame*’ to distinguish him from other deities with the obvious implication has been that Akans acknowledge only one supreme God who has no equal.<sup>302</sup> Indeed, the suffix ‘*pon*’ is commonly attached to many Akan words to signify how great a human being or a thing is such that, a huge and tall tree is referred to as

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<sup>299</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 96.

<sup>300</sup> Gakpe-Ntsir, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” 78.

<sup>301</sup> Joseph B. Danquah, “The Culture of Akan,” *Journal of the International African Institute*, 22 (1952): 4. In this paper, he acknowledged the triad Nyame, Nynkopon and Odomankoma as the rulers of the universe in Akan culture and distinguishes them as representing matter, the *kra* (vital force of life) and consciousness /intellect respectively. Majeed, (2014) further notes that Danquah makes a distinction between the two, where *nyame* is described as a ‘feeling entity’ and *nyankopon* as its metaphysical or intellectual goal.

<sup>302</sup> Kwame Dankyi Ansong. *The Influence of Indigineous Akan Cultural Elements on Christian Worship in the Kumasi Metropolitan Area*. (Diss., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2012), 109-110.

'*odupon*' in Akan. The foregoing names therefore indicate an acknowledgement of God among the Akans and how he is ranked above and superior to all creations.

### 4.3.3 The Nature of God through Akan Traditional Appellations

Beyond the proverbial binary and triad Akan names of God, he is further described and discerned using titles and appellations purported at expressing widely held notions of his divine nature, handiworks and potency in the Traditional Akan culture. Such titles and expressions serve as markers of the identity and character of God and used as devices to paint a vivid picture of who God is in the best way possible.

First, the Akan God is widely addressed as the 'Creator' and this finds exemplification in some of the Akan appellations of God such as "*Oboadea*", "*Odomankoma*" and "*borebore*" all of which mean the creator of all things. Indeed, the term "*borebore*" refers to the art of carving, moulding or hewing in Akan and often used to suggest that God created the earth by carving or hallowing (*borebore*) it out of an inert substance. The foregoing terminologies are therefore used in acknowledging the belief in the Akan God as a divine craftsman and by extension, the creator. Viewed from different lenses, God is also viewed as one that creates through birth. From this perspective, he is personified as a woman who gives life by giving birth. Accordingly, he is often addressed as "*Obatanpa*" (the ideal mother) by Akans. Therefore among Akans, "*odomankoma*" is considered the creator of bodily aspects of creatures whereas '*nyame*' and '*nyankopon*' are credited for the creation of spiritual beings and the animation of bodily objects by giving them souls or life-giving spirits.<sup>303</sup>

Beyond the foregoing, the nature of God among Akans is further made clear in numerous attributes used to describe God as the Supreme Being. The Akan God is therefore variously referred to as "*Otumfo*" (The Powerful One), "*Tweadumpon*" (Dependable One), "*Odomankoma*" (The Eternal One).<sup>304</sup> He is further referred to as *Tweredumpon*, the truncated form of '*dua a wotwere no a, wompon*', which translates as 'the tree one leans on and does not fall down'. This is meant to attest to the dependable nature of God such that he can be leaned on for support without experiencing any disappointment. Again, he is addressed as '*Awurade*' (Lord) and often used to qualify his name '*Onyankopon*' such that he is commonly called

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<sup>303</sup> Gakpe-Ntsir, *Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 68.

<sup>304</sup> Fofie-Nimoh, *Akan Rites of Passage and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation*, 45.

'*Awurade Nyankopon*' which is translated as the 'Lord God'. He is also known as '*Nyansaboakwa Nyame*' (the God who is the citadel of all wisdom), *Teteboakwa Nyame* (the One who has existed in the past, who exists now and will continue to exist as the Eternal God). Accordingly, it is therefore posited that if traditional Akans address the transcendent as '*onyame*' in the following ways in addition to calling him '*Ohuntahunu*' (the all-seeing God), and '*Nyansabuakwa*' (the all-wise), it is apropos to conclude that Akans have a somewhat similar conceptualisation of God just like the Jews or Christians.<sup>305</sup>

#### 4.3.4 God as a spirit being

Just like in many cultures, Nyame or Nyankopon is considered a spirit being in Akan metaphysical thought and one that is believed to be the highest among the pantheon of spirits. As a spirit being, God is essentially invisible to humankind in Akan culture and believed to have a metaphysical presence everywhere. He is therefore likened to the wind or air, which is invincible in nature and present everywhere. The Akan maxim '*Wo pese woka asem kyere Nyamea, ka kyere mframa*' (If you want to speak to God, talk to the wind) is indicative of this<sup>306</sup> belief. Correspondingly, God is never depicted in images nor worshipped through them as it is the belief of Akans that no one has ever seen God to be able to give an accurate description of how he looks like. Therefore, unlike other deities, it is rare to find a temple or shrine dedicated to '*Onyame*' (God) in Akan culture as it is believed that he can be called upon anywhere since he is actually present everywhere.<sup>307</sup> '*Onyame*' is further considered as a sky God although he is also known to be omnipresent. This is however not to be considered contradictory since a legitimate argument could be made that, the sky covers every part of the earth.

Some Akan scholars argue that, the idea of '*Onyame*' as a sky God is found in the proverbial Akan maxim '*Wo dwa ne nyame a wo hye n'ase*', which is translated as, 'if you try to run away from God, you walk under his canopy'. Similarly, the Akan proverb '*Adom wo wim*', which means there is abundant grace in the skies further buttresses such a viewpoint since it is a widespread belief among Akans that all help or grace they need naturally comes from the sky where God resides. It is however posited that just because Akans associate God with the sky as

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<sup>305</sup> Hendrik M. Vroom. Do all Religious Traditions Worship the Same God? *Religious Studies*, 26(1), (1990), 73–90.

<sup>306</sup> Agyarko, God of life: Rethinking the Akan Christian concept of God in the light of the ecological crisis. 51–66.

<sup>307</sup> Majeed, "On the Rationality of Traditional Akan Religion: Analyzing the Concept of God". 127–141.

other cultures do, does not suggest that the Akan God is a sky God in the actual sense of the Akan phrase, but rather as a manifestation of God.<sup>308</sup>

#### 4.3.5 Veneration among the Akans of Ghana

A widespread commonality shared by almost all forms of religion is worship. The act of worship broadly involves devotees showing reverence and adoration of some sort to the object of their worship usually through appellations- where titles and names that speak to the nature of the deity are expressed. Such a practice finds exemplification in various manifestations of Akan traditional religion.

The Akan word for worship, '*osom*', is said to be derived from the verb '*som*' which means to serve. In a generic sense, the word is used to express service to a higher authority such as to God or a deity. Accordingly, the Akan phrase '*osom nyame*' and '*osom bosom*' means he/she worships God and worships a deity respectively. The Akan idea and act of worship constitutes an expression of their religiosity in words or deeds whereby their dependency on a superior power is reaffirmed.<sup>309</sup>

Evident in all forms of prayer in traditional Akan religion is the recognition given to deities such as '*Asaase Yaa*' (mother earth) as it is believed that Akans owe their existence partly to her benevolence. In a somewhat hierarchical order, '*Nananom Nsamanfo*' (ancestors) follows next and are also acknowledged and adulated for their part in granting a thriving community.<sup>310</sup> Although Akans consider '*Onyame*' (God) as the greatest of all, His worship is nonetheless limited in the true sense of the word compared to the numerous Akan deities. It is rare to find a religious setting dedicated solely to the worship of *Onyame* (God) in the Akan ethno-cultural community yet shrines are built for lesser gods or deities and priests and priestesses are dedicated to take care of such shrines, doing the bidding of the deities in the form of sacrifices and worshipping them both communally and personally. This puts to question whether or not '*Onyankopon*' (God) in the Akan culture is worshipped or not.

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<sup>308</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 158.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>310</sup> Kwame Dankyi Ansong, Asante, E.A. and Kquofi, S. Eulogising God in Christian Worship through Akan Traditional Appellations: A Case of Kumasi. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 1 n.8, (2014): 1–11. DOI:10.14738/assrj.18.622.

Indeed, scholars such as Majeed argue that ‘*Onyankopon*’ is not worshipped in the Akan culture, since a religious service is not performed in his honour as done in Christianity. The author further posits that, in Akan culture, what come close to such religious gatherings are festivals or key landmark events. Even in such events, the emphasis is on commemorating the benefits or relevance of such events to the people and also to acknowledge the key role played by their ancestors and deities (lesser gods) in their achievement. For instance, the priests and priestesses would pour libation and offer sacrifices to the family deities for wellbeing on behalf of the people since the African hold the belief that every misfortune is as a result of the wrath of the deities or spirits.

The limited nature or the lack of a direct evidence of devotions to the Supreme Being in the culture of Akans has led many scholars to conclude that ‘*Onyame*’ (God) is not worshipped and conveys the idea that deities are more revered than God. This is however not to be misconstrued as the other deities been more important or revered than the Supreme Being (*Onyame*) but rather speaks to how unique of a Being he is in terms of his omnipresence and the difficulty of devotees to completely discern his ways compared to the various Akan deities. Indeed, the Akan proverb “*Se wokom Onyame a, wobekom nkomtro*” , means if you try to divine for, and on behalf of God you will fail, suggesting the people’s perception of the unpredictability and elusiveness of ‘*Onyame*’ (God) unlike the lesser gods. The Supreme Being (*Onyame*) is accorded uttermost prominence and often called upon during times of great need and during the celebration of Akan rites of passage. He is therefore called upon and made the over-arching focus of prayer during traditional festivals such as *Adae*. Moreover, in Akan worldview, deities are viewed as intermediaries between ‘*Onyame*’ (God) and human beings and therefore it can be said that, any form of worship or veneration to such deities is by extension veneration to ‘*Onyame*’ (God).

Beyond the foregoing, individual veneration of ‘*Onyame*’ (God) among Akans may take the form of a libation ritual.<sup>311</sup> Akan idea of worship is therefore both communal and individual in nature and hence it is not limited to solely cultic activities of group of individuals. It is therefore carried out during ceremonies such as marriage, puberty rites, naming ceremonies, enstoolment or enthronement of chiefs and queen mothers, funerals, and harvest seasons in Akan culture in

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<sup>311</sup> Agyarko, “God of life: Rethinking the Akan Christian concept of God in the light of the ecological crisis”, 51–66.

the form of sacrifices, libations, and offerings.<sup>312</sup> Food and drinks form an essential component of communal sacrifice among the people in the Traditional African Religion.

#### 4.3.6 Symbolism in Akan Veneration

In the preceding chapter on culture, the use of symbols was discussed in a broader perspective. In many Akan homes, the display of traditional symbols is visible. The visible nature of these symbols is one important way by which Akan children are educated since these symbols portray values cherished by the Akan social ethnic group. The religion of the African (in this case, the Akan) is well stocked with these traditional religious symbols and varied systems. Therefore the element of these symbols plays a significant role to the understanding of its nature and unique place in the worldview of the African.

These symbols have been described as handiworks of craftsmen passed on from ancestors and convey specific information unique and known to members of a particular culture or society and further serve as tools of communication among themselves.<sup>313</sup> Through such symbols, many cultures, particularly Africans express their beliefs, values and socio-political philosophies of life. Accordingly, symbols remain one of the major ways through which Akan socio-political and religious philosophical thought is expressed. Akan symbolism takes various forms notably in the form of colours, material objects and designs.

In terms of colours, Akans, particularly the Asantes of the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana use colour symbolism in expressing different sentiments or moods. The colour white is used in moments of joy to express or celebrate happiness. The colour white therefore serves as a marker of positive or good happenings in Akan society and as such often wore or used upon the birth of a child, naming and traditional marriage ceremonies as well as during puberty rites. On the other hand, the colours red, black and brown generally signify something sorrowful and hence are used during distressed moments such as during the demise of a person, wars or when calamity strikes.

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<sup>312</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 158.

<sup>313</sup> Ebenezer Anohah and Jarkko Suhonen. "Conceptual Model of Generic Learning Design to Teach Cultural Artifacts in Computing Education: An Analysis Based on Akan Culture in Ghana." *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design*, 8(4), (2018), 50–64.

Commonly, they are used during funeral rites in Akan culture. Additionally, the colour green denotes youthfulness, vitality as well as growth in Akan culture.<sup>314</sup>

In addition, Akans also have traditional symbols known as ‘*Adinkra*’ which are used to portray their beliefs, cherished values and social expectations within the Akan society. These symbols are commonly printed on cloths used for funeral and festivals in Akan societies. The symbol known as ‘*Etinta*’ (two heads symbol) represents the wisdom in seeking for counsel or two people reasoning together. It is more or less a symbolic equivalent of the English proverb of two heads been better than one<sup>315</sup>. Again, the symbol ‘*Gye Nyame*’ (Except God), the commonest of the Adinkra symbols speaks to the omnipotence of God and that only God is able to do all things and may also imply or use as fearing nothing except God. This symbol is so common that it transcends the Akan ethnicity and widely considered a national emblem. Similarly, the Akan ‘*adinkra*’ symbols, ‘*Dwennimen*’, ‘*Sankofa*’ and ‘*Akoko Nan*’ literally signifies “humility”, “patience and mercy” and “build the future on the past” respectively among the Akans.<sup>316</sup> (see pictures of some of these Akan Adinkra symbols in figure 1).



Some examples of Adinkra symbols

Moreover, each of the eight traditional Akan clans and chieftains has symbols of clan totems where various Akan tribes have a form of sacred relationship with some animate or inanimate object. This is derived from the Akan cosmic harmony with nature, particularly animals. Accordingly, each of the Akan clans is represented by a specific animal which is carved as sculptures and commonly found on the linguist staffs and umbrellas chiefs and heads of the clans.

<sup>314</sup> Ansong, *The Influence of Indigeneous Akan Cultural Elements on Christian Worship in the Kumasi Metropolitan Area*, 86.

<sup>315</sup> Kissi, *Social Identity in Hebrews and the Akan Community of Ghana*, 81.

<sup>316</sup> Anohah and Suhonen, *Conceptual Model of Generic Learning Design*, 55.

A somewhat symbiotic relationship is believed to exist between the clans where the totem protects the people and the people reciprocate by showing respect to the totem by refraining from killing or eating it. It is therefore a taboo for a member of a clan to kill its totem in Akan culture. Specific animals were chosen by clans as totems based on the qualities of the animals they find desirable and seek to emulate. Indeed, ‘*Akyeneboa*’, the Akan word for totem literally means ‘an animal leaned on or relied upon for spiritual inspiration or protection’. Moreover, Akan legends suggest these animals have been adopted as totems based on the important role they played at one point in the history and development of these clans. For instance, legend has it that a dog with fire in its mouth led the people of the ‘*Aduana*’ clan out of a dark hole hence the adoption of dog as the clan’s totem and their common appellation being ‘offspring of fire’. The various Akan clans with their respective totemic symbols and meaning are displayed as indicated in table 4.2.

<b>Clan</b>	<b>Totem Vernacular Name</b>	<b>English Name</b>	<b>Symbolic Meaning</b>
Oyoko	Akroma	Falcon	patience
Bretuo	Osebo	Leopard\Hawk	Aggressiveness
Asona	Kwaakwaadabi	Pied crow	Wisdom
Asenie	Apan	Bat	Diplomacy
Aduana	Okraman	Dog	Skill
Ekuona	Ekoo	Buffalo	Uprightness
Asakyiri	Opete	Vulture	Cleanliness
Agona	Ako	Parrot	Eloquence

Table 4.2: The Clans of Akan with their respective totemic symbols and their meaning  
Source: Adapted from Eshun (2011:34)

Additionally, Akan symbolism extends to substances such as water, trees, stones, mountains, etc. In Akan culture, water is considered and used as a symbol of purification. Apart from its everyday usage, water is used in undertaking ritual cleansing and annual purification rites among Akans. During Akan puberty rites, where young girls are ushered into adulthood, the young girls are sent to a stream at dawn where they are traditionally bathed, covered in white cloth and brought back to town. Similarly, a ritual known as “*kradwaree*” (soul washing) is held in Akan societies where chiefs and gods etc are washed in streams as a way of cleansing their souls. Despite the diverse forms of symbolism in Akan culture, evidence from the extant literature



suggests existence of no symbolic representation of ‘*Onyame*’ (God) among the Akans. It is argued that, the closest thing to a symbol of God in Akan culture is the triadic altar known as ‘*Nyame dua*’ (God’s tree) which is often found in shrines and palaces.<sup>317</sup> This tree (*Alstonia boonei*) often contains water places in its forked branches, which is used to bless inhabitants of the palace or traditional houses where the tree is located. It serves as a symbol of the Akan dependence on God.

#### 4.4 Commensality in the Akan Ethno-cultural Society

A meal sharing is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love, and unity in all human societies. In this way, food and drink taken in common are signs that life is fully shared and lived together and not in isolation. According to Ackah, African life is that of communality that explains the reason why the African (Akan) eat, drink and share life together. This activity of sharing life together brings about peaceful coexistence, cohesion, care for each other and love in the community.<sup>318</sup> This act of hospitality expressed in meal sharing by the host towards the visitor or guest brings togetherness among the people with the Akan community and this same hospitality brings the people of God together as reiterated by Pope Francis in the celebration of the Eucharist. In Africa, it is rare for people to eat alone because meals are termed as a communal activity. The practice of eating and drinking is designed to keep human beings healthy, give strength to humankind and keep them mobile as well. Hence, communal meals are a common place in our societies and families which bring satisfaction, solidarity, encounter with different peoples, friendship and fellowship with each other. Just as food is common to all cultures, commensal practices remain a shared norm among many groups of individuals across the world. It constitutes all members of a commensal unit, a profound act of human interaction<sup>319</sup> that strengthens cohesion by serving as an interactive space and granting them a sense of belonging.<sup>320</sup> In effect, sitting in a meal together with others is a very important activity or event

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<sup>317</sup> Opong, *A comparative study of the concept of the divine in African traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho*, 90.

<sup>318</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 135.

<sup>319</sup> Fernanda B. Scagliusi, Pereira P. da Rocha, R. F. Usain and P. de Morais Sato. “Eating at the table, on the couch and in bed: An exploration of different locus of commensality in the discourses of Brazilian working mothers.” *Appetite*, 103, (2016), 80–86. The authors broadly define commensality as the practice of either eating food together or with other people, where the group of individuals who gather at a given point in time or place constitute a commensal unit.

<sup>320</sup> Claudia Giacoman. “The dimensions and role of commensality: A theoretical model drawn from the significance

which makes the Akan, and for that matter the African as a communal person. Consequently, the insistence on collectivity in African families or societies teaches even children not to eat alone but eating together with other children as a sign of expressing their togetherness or unity.

Okoye writes; the communal nature of the African beckons on the African not to sit in a meal alone but together with others as a way of expressing family unity, friendship, eating as a source of vitality and nourishment, encounter with different people which bring togetherness, among others.<sup>321</sup> The moment we are together in a meal, it portrays a sense of connectedness among the people seated together and there is always an act of thanksgiving after sharing in a meal. That notwithstanding, there exist diverse eccentricities shaped by values and social context.

Accordingly, Tuomainen for instance posits that the social context of eating in Ghana is better understood along the lines of traditional set-ups of the people.<sup>322</sup> The concept of family which is composed of both nuclear<sup>323</sup> and extended families<sup>324</sup> are widely respected among the Akan social group than in western societies. In this light, this practice of family life makes the Akan a communal person hence meal sharing becomes an obligatory communal activity. The importance of eating together, aside the physical nourishment, is to create a spiritual bond of unity among the people themselves and the ancestors and thus make them communal people. The format of meal sharing among Akans usually begins with a prayer to the deities for provision of the prepared food by the father or the head of the household during festivities. It is later followed by the sharing of food by the woman (wife) beginning from the eldest to the youngest and everyone is supposed to wash his or her hands before taking his or her share of the food.

In fact, in a typical Akan home, everyone sits around a common dish of *fufu*, cassava, maize, or plantain which is arranged according to gender and age. The purpose for this arrangement is not a mere practice but to acknowledge respect for the elderly in the community. Each person takes a portion, shapes it into a ball, and then dips it into a single dish of relish, soup, or greens. If there is meat, the best portions are first offered to visitors or elders in the group. Drink, also, is often served from a common bowl or cup, which is passed from one to another.<sup>325</sup> The meal

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of communal eating among adults in Santiago, Chile.” *Appetite*, 107, (2016), 460–470.

<sup>321</sup> James Chukwu Okoye. “*The Eucharist and African Culture*.” *African Ecclesial Review* 34 Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, (1992), (eds.), F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone ISBN 978-0-19-280290-3, article *Eucharist*, 4. (2005).

<sup>322</sup> Tuomainen, Eating alone or together? Commensality among Ghanaians in London. 1–15.

<sup>323</sup> Akan concept of Nuclear family composes of only parents and children.

<sup>324</sup> Extended family is made up of grandparents, parents, children, uncles and aunties, cousins, etc.

<sup>325</sup> Frances Boston. *Preparation for Christian Initiation*. (Kampala, Uganda: Gaba Publications, 1973), 53.

concludes with another hand washing. Eating a meal together within this setting therefore becomes the most fundamental way of sharing a common life and this activity restores what has been lost and gives strength for what lies ahead. Understood in this way, the African Christian (in this case, the Akan Christian) must see the communal aspect of the Eucharistic meal in consonance with their cultural concept of collectivism. The communal nature of the African gives way for the traditional value of commensality and the next section highlights on commensality among the Akans of Ghana.

#### **4.4.1 The Social Context of Commensality among Akans**

It is in this social context of commensality that, Bachl, a dogmatic theologian contends that food is part of a system of life that supports, strengthens and makes the human body healthy.<sup>326</sup> This means that every human person as well as every living creature needs an amount of food to exist in order to avoid starvation which could result in physical death. Taking into account the need to situate meal-sharing among Akans in its proper context, I highlight broadly in this section the frameworks within which commensality occurs within the Akan ethno-cultural society.

In Akan societies, the term household generally conjures up fluid notions of what constitutes a home with varying implications on the preparation and sharing of meals. The traditional African (Akan) household unlike the German household reserves the obligation to only women (wives) to cook and share meals by dishing out the food to each member of the household in his or her own plate. Sometimes the children according to their age are made to eat together in the same bowl showing their relatedness to each other as blood relations, friends, and as members of the community. Quite opposite to western models and notions of a household, the living arrangement within the Akan ethno-cultural community is best delineated along lines of “*bokyea*” (cooking-hearth and eating group).<sup>327</sup> Multi-habitation, involving fostered children of relatives, in-laws, friends in addition to core family members is very common among the Akans, characterised by varying living arrangements such as:

“(a) a group of individuals who live, eat, and sleep together under one roof; (b) a group of individuals who live and eat together, but sleep in separate residences under different roofs; (c) a group of individuals who eat together, but live and sleep in different residences; and, (d) a group of

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<sup>326</sup> Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 11.

<sup>327</sup> Hanson, Rethinking the Akan Household: Acknowledging the Importance of Culturally and Linguistically Meaningful Images, 27–45.

individuals with a constituent member living, eating, and sleeping in a separate place, yet with all aspects of this person's livelihood taken care of by the group."<sup>328</sup>

Accordingly, Hanson contends that in Akan culture, occupants of a house rarely constitute a single family, particularly in traditional compound houses. However, a key element within such a fluid living arrangement that binds all members is the act of "eating together" and "cooking for someone" as members of such a household as a collective whole usually share in a common meal prepared by the same person. Outside the confines of home, communalism among Akans finds expression in the sharing of food. Indeed, the Akan proverb "*Onipa baako didimee a ekuro mu nnyede*" which means 'if only one person has food to eat in a village, there is no joy in the said village' is a testament to the level of importance attached to 'sharing with others' in general and specifically food which is a basic human need. Accordingly, a time-honoured phenomenon among many Ghanaian ethnic groups with the Akans inclusive, is the sharing of festive meals at social gatherings and inter-household exchange of meals. Such a practice is known to engender convivial social relations and further functions as a platform through which women in Akan societies established and expressed their social positions.<sup>329</sup> The traditional Akan woman sees the kitchen as her place of authority because she is the person in charge of the cooking in the house. She can therefore cook for the entire household as a sign of her preparedness to contribute to the wellbeing of the community as well as portraying her responsibility to the society.

#### **4.4.2 Meal-Sharing in Akan Homes**

The family regardless of how it is defined in different cultural contexts maintains its status as the commonest commensal unit since eating with family members appears to be comparatively more frequent and recurring than eating with other known acquaintances.<sup>330</sup> Tuomainen posits that, in the traditional Akan societies, men ate alone in separate spaces or in the company of other men as a way of bestowing on them respect and honour since they are considered as the heads and authoritative figures in an Akan home. Accordingly, the author adds that commensality among the Akans takes place more along lines of kinship than it does based on marital relations,

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>329</sup> Helena M. Tuomainen. *Migration and foodways: continuity and change among Ghanaians in London*, (PhD diss., University of Warwick. 2006), 86.

<sup>330</sup> Fernanda B. Scagliusi et al. "Eating at the table, on the couch and in bed: An exploration of different locus of commensality in the discourses of Brazilian working mothers", 80–86.

particularly in duo-local Akan living arrangements. This is because in Akan duo-local system, couples live separately but the husband receives food from the wife which he eats alone or in the company of other men in his family. Whilst this might not seem to fit western notions of a ‘proper’ family meal requiring company, in the African context, Akan households inclusive, what counts is the sharing of the same food cooked by the same person or group of persons and not necessarily the physical sharing of a meal together from one bowl or eating space. It is therefore in agreement to maintain that meal sharing within the traditional Akan home is reflective of Murcott’s concept of the ‘plateful’, where the author suggests that:

“the concurrent eating of meals by all household members is not the only way in which a meal may be shared but also the dinner’s familiarity and the firm establishment of its rules provides the reassurance, commonality and communality felt by all household members including the temporally absentees the point of serving such meals who may have their meals whatever time they return home.”<sup>331</sup>

This goes to show that in such a context, everyone having their share of a single household meal regardless of the varying times and location of consumption is just as good a commensal practice as having a family meal together. However, besides male household heads eating alone and in separate locations, people rarely eat alone in a traditional Akan home, typical of many Ghanaian households. This earlier point in the view of Tuomainen is attributed to the fact that multi-habitation in compound houses<sup>332</sup> is the commonest form of living arrangement among families and hence there is normally always someone in the house, be it members of the extended family or other close acquaintances established through co-tenancy among others to share a meal with.<sup>333</sup> Indeed, Dei notes that often members of households eat in groups where groupings were largely based on sex, age and generation. He emphasizes that:

“the familiar eating groups observed in the households and compounds include husbands alone, male adults, female adults, male children, female children, all children together, wife and children, and grandmother and grandchildren. It is also rare, although not unknown, to see a married couple sitting together at the same table and eating from the same dish or plate. Certain variations in the composition of the eating groups of households and compounds may also be attributed to the type of food being served (snack or heavy meal like fufu).”<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Anne Murcott. On the social significance of the “cooked dinner” in South Wales. *Anthropology of food*, 21(4/5), (1982), 693.

<sup>332</sup> Compound houses are a type of vernacular housing in Ghana that consists of many small rooms opening to a central courtyard with common facilities such as toilets, bathrooms and kitchens shared by multiple households (Ghana Statistical Service 2014)

<sup>333</sup> Tuomainen, *Migration and foodways: continuity and change among Ghanaians in London*, 91.

<sup>334</sup> George J.S. Dei. The dietary habits of a Ghanaian farming community. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 25(1), (1991), 42.

A child sharing a meal with their mothers is often viewed as an opportunity to teach children table manners and eating etiquettes such as minimizing talking while eating, not talking while food is in the mouth, taking in portions that fit one's mouth at a time and how to properly wash hands before eating. This embodies one of the proverbial Akan sayings that, "a child who knows how to wash his hands, dines with the elderly". Meal-sharing, such as that between mothers and their children doesn't only strengthen the bond between them but also serves as a platform for the children to be groomed in decent way of eating.

#### **4.4.3 Meal-Sharing beyond the Home**

According to Asamoah-gyadu, a major approach in realizing a strong sense of community in many African societies is through communal meal-sharing.<sup>335</sup> In her study of commensal practices among migrant Ghanaians in London, Tuomainen posited that large social functions serve as platforms through which many ethnicities in Ghana engage in meal-sharing. This is particularly true for the Akan ethnic group of Ghana as meal-sharing among Akans is not confined to only the familial setting. Meal-sharing forms an integral part of many Akan social functions notably festivals and also rites of passage such as child naming ceremonies, traditional marriage rites, and funerals. These rites are considered significant and acceptable markers of both physical and spiritual transition of a person from one stage of life to another among Akans.<sup>336</sup> And these rites serve as initiations into the normative ways of being at each particular phase in the Akan culture and traditional thought on the finite nature of life through the inevitability of death. During such ceremonies, the initiates are taken through customarily well established tasks purported at enlightening them about the transition they are about to make, the challenges that lie ahead and educate them on how to be discerning enough to navigate through such new terrains of life both spiritually and physically.<sup>337</sup> This more broadly takes place when a child is born, when a transition is made into adulthood (puberty and marriage) and finally when a person passes on into the ancestral or spiritual world.

As the first of all the rites of passage in Akan societies, '*abadinto*'(naming ceremonies) are carried out to initiate infants into the human world as it is believed that, the baby is a spiritual

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<sup>335</sup> Johnson K. Asamoah-Gyadu. "United Over Meals Divided at the Lord's Table: Christianity and the Unity of the Church in Africa." *Transformation*, 27(1), (2010), 22.

<sup>336</sup> Fofie-Nimoh, *Akan Rites of Passage and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation*, 61.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

visitor until he is given a human identity in the form of a name. This ceremony is customarily carried out on the eighth day after the birth of a child. It commences with an opening prayer by way of the pouring of libation and making the purpose of the event known to the congregants (typically made up of families of the spouses, friends and close acquaintances) who have all gathered at the house of the father of the newly born child. First, the child is made to taste drips of gin and water separately accompanied by the speeches: when we say that it is gin, say it is gin (*se yeka se nsa a ka se nsa*) and when we say that it is water, say it is water (*se yeka se nsuo a ka se nsuo*) respectively. Symbolically, this is to admonish the child truthful in all his/her dealings on earth and also help him or her discern between truth and falsehood. The child is then given a name and welcomed into the fold of humanity. Following the foregoing, the child is presented with a cutlass if male and a broom if female, which are emblematic of inculcating into the male infant the values of hard work and the responsibility of protecting his family when he comes of age. The broom in the case of the female infant symbolically evokes in her the values and responsibility of taking care of the home. The child is then outdoored proclaiming that he or she epitomizes virtue in his/her communal life. Food is shared among all the people who attended the event as a sign of solidarity with the family of the newly-born child.

In a different fashion, customary marriage ceremonies are held to bind two families together since marriage among Akans is not viewed narrowly as a union between just couples. The marital process commences with a formal request of the woman's hand in marriage by the man's family after having done some background checks. The woman's family request for some time to give a feedback where they undertake a background check of their own to establish the suitability of the man and his family using such window. Some of the things typically looked out for are the presence of diseases or curses in the family, issues of impotency, a sense of responsibility, among numerous others. Upon satisfaction, the request of the man's family is accepted by the woman's family and they proceed to make known the bride price required for them to give the hand of their daughter in marriage. They give their daughter for marriage upon the successful payment of the bride price which in the past could be clothing, providing labour services for the bride's family etc. However money is commonly accepted or used as bride price. The bride price customarily serves as a ritual symbol that legitimizes and seals the sacred union and not to be viewed as a purchase price for the woman. Payment of the bride price occurs concurrently with the presentation of gifts like drinks, clothes, etc to the bride's family as a token

of appreciation of the groom's family to the bride's family.<sup>338</sup> During such functions, meals and drinks are shared among all the members who participated in the ceremony.

Finally, the Akan believes that death is not the end of a person's existence as it is merely transition into a spiritual world where they continue to positively or negatively influence the lives of living relatives based on how they were treated by the living<sup>339</sup> including their burial. A great deal of importance is therefore attached to funerals in Akan societies. In the event of the demise of a family member, the normal funeral process in Akan societies entails three phases, namely: planning and resource mobilization, durbar/ceremony and appraisal stages. A meeting of family member chaired by the "Abusuapanin" (family head) is held to among other things to determine the budget for the funeral, how to raise the money, fix a date for the burial of the corpse and when to hold the durbar as well as assigning roles and responsibilities. The ceremony or the day of the durbar is usually fixed on a Saturday and marks the climax of the burial rites. Invitations are sent out prior to the day so that the people who intend to come and mourn with the family can be well prepared in order to attend the event. The corpse is usually buried before the day of the durbar or is laid in state in the night prior and buried early in the morning before the commencement of the durbar. The durbar begins once the "Abusuapanin" and his family sit in state at the durbar ground, dressed in funeral costumes which are generally black and red attires symbolizing a sorrowful moment. Community members, visitors among others also take their seats when they arrive at the funeral ground after they have shook the hands with those seated on the front row of the arranged seats. Using public address systems, the identities of every new arrival to the funeral premises is announced emphasizing the family names, towns or organizations such people belong to. This is an undertaking for the bereaved family to identify their sympathizers who have come to support them. This continues throughout the event, intermixed with music (dirges), dancing and drumming and most importantly, group and individual donations mainly cash (referred to as *nsabode3*). Individuals who offer funeral donations are given receipts and their names and donations announced followed by a procession of family members (mainly adult females) towards where the generous donors are sitting to express their appreciation through handshakes. This activity goes on until the event is brought to

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>339</sup> Oduro-Sarpong, *Examining the Concept of Participation in Traditional Societies*, 32.



a close followed by an assessment of the previous day's event the next day where accounts are rendered and necessary actions taken afterward.<sup>340</sup>

A common theme, that cuts across the above rites of passage is 'meal-sharing' amidst merry making (in the case of naming ceremonies and customary marriages) and also out of the need to cater for the food needs of sympathizers who have travelled from far and near in the case of funerals. With respect to customary marriages, Fofie-nimoh notes that after the family of the bride has accepted the bride price and other gifts, a traditional prayer is said, followed by a session where pieces of advice are offered to the couple on how to have a thriving and happy marriage. Finally, food and drinks are shared among the guest and the families from both families amidst traditional music and dancing. Same applies to naming ceremonies with respect to the sharing of food. Correspondingly, Oduro-sarpong stressed that during traditional Akan funeral rites, visitors or sympathizers are often taken to a different location from the durbar premises (funeral grounds) where they are served with food and drinks to eat prior to going back to the durbar grounds to give their donations. According to the author, customarily, it is required of sympathizers or donors to give far more than the cost of the food and drinks they are served as a way of helping the family not to incur cost in undertaking the ceremony. Such a requirement is however noted to be fading out of existence. However, whilst many eat together and make merry at the premises of such ceremonies, others prefer to take their food home and in modern times, they are often packed in 'take-away' packs and given to such individuals. This again adds empirical weight to Murcott's concept of the 'plateful', highlighted earlier in this work. Such social functions therefore engender food-based sociability with largely 'non-kin' folks within the Akan community enriching the commensal element of Akan ethnicity at the communal level.

#### **4.4.4 Meals of Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution- "*Etor*" Communal Meal**

"*Etor*" is an Akan dish prepared from mashed cooked yam (with occasional variations involving the use of plantain or cocoyam instead of yam), palm oil and boiled eggs. Its status as a 'sacred' meal among other things comes from the fact that it is one of the few meals believed to be shared by the dead/spirits and the living.<sup>341</sup> This sacred meal is also offered as a meal for both the living and the dead by the Ga ethnic group in Ghana. Accordingly, it is often served to the living and

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid, 32-37.

<sup>341</sup> Fran. Osseo-Asare. "We Eat First With Our Eyes": On Ghanaian Cuisine. *Gastronomica*, (2002), 49-57.

the dead (by sprinkling it on the earth) at various ceremonies and occasions in the Akan ethno-cultural community. Otu provides an in-depth insight into meal-sharing as an integral part of the indigenous strategies for conflict resolution among the Akans through the study of ‘Etor’ as a communal meal among the people of Worawora, an Akan community in the Volta region of Ghana.<sup>342</sup> As a climax to the indigenous conflict resolution and management approach, the ‘Etor’ communal meal is used as an alternative in amicably addressing disputes that are by nature difficult to be resolved through adjudications in the courts of law or at police stations.<sup>343</sup> It is used in addressing all forms of disputes including land litigation and dishonesty in marriages. A notable example of such issues solved through the ‘Etor’ communal meal ritual cited in the work of Otu is:

“the case of two brothers from the same parents who fell out of speaking terms because they both became sexually involved with the same young lady. The younger brother was in a relationship with the girl first. The elder brother returned home after his study abroad and also got involved with the young lady sexually without knowing the young lady was already involved with his kid brother as she never disclosed that amorous relationship with his younger brother with him. The younger brother got wind of it and decided to no longer talk to his elder brother. All attempts by their parents to get them talking again proved futile and hence resorted to using the communal ritual meal as an intervention mechanism.”<sup>344</sup>

The dispute between the brothers or sisters as well as many others within the Akan community and specifically the Worawora people is resolved using the ‘Etor’ communal meal ritual operationalized through a number of processes that proceeds along the following lines: summoning of the parties involved in the dispute by the head of clans locally called “Abusuapanin” (and referred to the chief of the town if necessary but seldom goes beyond the “Abusuapanin”) and his elders; swearing of the “oath of ancestors” by the parties involved including any witnesses to speak the truth; parties involved express their viewpoints and witnesses cross-examined by opposing parties where necessary; an intensive interaction between the parties involved and elders followed by education and revealing of what went wrong by the elders; passing of verdict in consultation with ancestors and finally the sharing of the ‘Etor’ communal meal in acceptance of the verdict and reconciliation.

According to Otu, the sharing of ‘Etor’ communal meal at the end indicates a restoration of what has been lost and reinforces togetherness towards what lies ahead. This is because Akans

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<sup>342</sup> Edwin K. Otu. *The Religious and Philosophical Perception of Communal Meal “Otor” as a Strategy for Conflict Resolution*. (PhD diss., University of Ghana, 2013), 111.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

have a proverb that says ‘I love you to the extent that I am willing to taste your saliva’. Saliva is generally considered something detestable and therefore for a person to be willing to come into contact with another person’s saliva in any shape or form takes love of great proportion. Whilst the sharing of the ‘*Etor*’ meal by the disputing parties from the same bowl might not at a glance or perhaps directly involve the exchange of saliva, for the Akans, eating from the same bowl using the hands instead of using a spoon or a set of cutlery involve the indirect exchange of saliva since it involves the back and forth movement of the hand from the food into the mouth and also licking of the fingers and their insertion back into the food. Indeed, Otu compares such a practice to the amorous act of ‘kissing’, which involves the generally detestable act of saliva exchange yet shared and cherished by lovers and people have good rapport with each other. Love therefore becomes a common denominator in both cases because it is rare to eat or share a meal with one’s enemy. Sharing in the meal is therefore used to seal a covenant of love and friendship.

It must be emphasized that, the ‘*Etor*’ meal is not only shared between the disputing parties but also the larger community to which the disputing parties belong as well as the divine/supernatural members of the Akan community-“*nsamanfo*” (spirits), all of whom share in the meal in renewal of their commitments to oneness and advancement of the common good of the society. In view of this, during events such as the “*Akwantu tenten*” festival (the major festival of the people of Worawora), only community members who are ready to reconcile and settle their differences with others by engaging in the ritual meal arbitrations are allowed to partake in the ‘*Etor*’ communal meal. Refusal to do this prior to sharing in the common meal is considered a breach of ancestral oath believed to spell doom for such partakers. Unlike modernistic forms of dispute resolution, the sharing of the ‘*Etor*’ ritual meal is interwoven with story-telling, drumming, traditional and ancestral singing, dancing, prayers (called “*apae*” in the local parlance) and also pouring of libations. Libations are often poured as a way of breaking off the contact established with the supernatural beings of the community before and during the event. Beyond dispute resolution, Ansong observes that during Akan festivals such as *Akwasidae*, devotees of Akan deities and shrines convene to share in communal meals<sup>345</sup> and this is a way of sealing one’s communality with his or her brethren in devotion to the deities.

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<sup>345</sup> Ansong, *The Influence of Indigeneous Akan Cultural Elements on Christian Worship in the Kumasi Metropolitan Area*, 89.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The chapter gives an insight into the Akans of Ghana as a people, their way of life, values of communalism and commensality as well as worldview. The intent is to highlight the many eccentricities that characterize the Akans and how such peculiar ways of being might inform subsequent chapters of the study and broadly affect the Eucharistic meal in the inculturation process within such a context. From the synthesized literature, traditional Akan religion shares some similarities with Christianity. For instance they believe in an omnipresent God. However, they differ in the sense that they worship lesser gods (*abosom*) who are believed to be the creations of the supreme God and serve as intermediaries between God and human beings. Their concept of a person also suggests human beings consist of a body, spirit and soul. But whereas Christians believe in the eternal damnation of the souls of sinners, the Akans believe such individuals have many opportunities to redeem their souls through reincarnation. These peculiar belief systems therefore make inculturation necessary if a culture as Akan will gravitate, comprehend and participate fully and wholeheartedly in Christian doctrines and worship. Admittedly, Akan symbolism and traditional commensal practices remain two key elements of Akan culture that can enhance the inculturation process of the Eucharistic meal. From clan totems to the belief in water as a symbol of purification could be used to enhance their understanding of the bread and wine is symbolic of the body and blood of Christ.

Meal-sharing is also native to Akan culture and serves as a binding force between kinfolks, community members and also ancestral spirits and lesser gods. Just as the Eucharistic celebration brings all the devotees together, meal-sharing among the Akan is also a communal event which brings the people together. Understood in this way, aside the physical nourishment evolving from meal sharing, it also marks the present of the divine Transcendence among the people. Such elements of the Akan culture provide the foundation for making the Eucharistic meal celebration more native to such a culture. With this understanding, the following chapter will focus on Eucharistic theology and its development.

## **PART III**

### **5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY AND ITS RELATION TO AFRICAN CONCEPT OF MEAL-SHARING**

The previous chapter looked at the Akan social ethnic group and their traditional values of communality and commensality which form the basis of referring to the Eucharist as a Christian meal in a communal sense. The Eucharist is regarded as a sacrificial meal offered by Jesus Christ for the salvation of humankind through the Calvary experience. It must be noted that the Eucharist has its roots from the Last Supper as a farewell meal or a Jewish Passover event for Jesus and his disciples, but Jesus Christ, after celebrating this meal with his disciples, instructed them to celebrate this meal in memory of him as a prelude to the eternal banquet. Because of this instruction, the Church, through its historical developments has continued this practice and it has become part of Christian worship. Due to the memorial nature of this event, Christians are bound to celebrate it always as Christ commanded, “Do this in memory of me.”

The agenda in calling for the inculturation of the sacrament of the Eucharist is very necessary due to the Church’s position of an active, full and conscious participation in the celebration of the Eucharist which is the ‘source and summit’ of the Church’s life. For instance, almost all the Church’s sacraments such as Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders are always celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist. This fact requires the total participation of all Christians and Akan Christians in particular in this study. For, it is in the sacrament of the Eucharist that Jesus Christ, the High Priest offers himself to the world as a gift of salvation by his presence in the church through this sacrifice. Also, it is in this Eucharistic meal that the atoning death of Jesus is celebrated as the foundation upon which the Church draws its life and secondly as a pledge of immortality. This clarifies the significance of this sacrament in Christian doctrines hence it must be inculturated so that all people in different cultures can understand and play an active role in its celebration. The attempt of inculturating the meal aspect of the Eucharist is aimed at benefiting local Churches such as the Ghanaian Church and especially the Kumasi archdiocesan Church in promoting participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist as a communal meal.

In the light of the above, the focus of this chapter is to examine the Eucharist as a communal meal of the Church, its historical development in relation to the African (Akan) concept of communal meal-sharing. It is aimed at bringing the ‘People of God’ together around the table of the Lord in elements familiar to their various local communities since this celebration is ‘part and parcel’ of their Christian life hence must not be divorced from their cultural worldview.

## 5.1 Church and Sacraments

The Church, in order of accomplishing the works commenced by Jesus Christ, has through the liturgical celebrations such as the sacraments, reflected on the presence of Christ in his Church (SC 7). The teachings of these sacraments do not fall within fundamental theological topics but the reason for its recognition is meant to solve the crisis in its pastoral care. According to Faber, sacraments are the celebrations of worship in the very core area of the Church.<sup>346</sup> It is in the celebration of these sacraments that Christians encounter God. The sacraments therefore serve as a mode of mediation between humanity and God where God opens himself up in a humanly way to the world. It is in the light of this, that the Church recognizes the seven sacraments which include the Eucharist.

Notwithstanding, the Church in itself is a sacrament: it is the visible sign of God’s redemptive work on earth. It is the Church that celebrates the suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ in his memory. Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* has referred to the Church as a sacrament, “Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament- a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men [and women]” (LG 1). Thus, the doctrine of the sacraments plays a pivotal role in the Church. Thus, although the Church is a sacrament, it also administers the sacraments as a mark of the “effective signs of God’s nearness” to the world and as well, empowers the faithful who forms the “Body of Christ.” For instance, the initiatory sacraments which are composed of baptism, Eucharist and confirmation are meant to initiate an individual into the Christian community and make the person as a “full grown” member of the Church. The transition of this neophyte into a Christian comes to the belief that Jesus is found in the Church and it is in the church that credence to the divine invitation to share in the life of Christ, who is the head of the Church is found. Hence

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<sup>346</sup> Eva Maria Faber, *Einführung in die katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 19.

there is a human encounter with the divine, Christ, in the reception of the sacraments in the Church which brings a new form of life to the person who receives it.

Furthermore, Sarpong is of the view that; the Church is the visible outward sign of the redemptive love and mercy of God; the place where men and women respond through word, work and worship to the divine initiative in Christ.<sup>347</sup> This form of salvation, according to him, is attained through an active participation in the Church's liturgy such as the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The main thrust in the view of Sarpong gives a clear indication that the celebration of the sacraments is essential to the church and therefore calls for full participation by all Christians. Due to the importance attached to the celebration of the Sacraments by the Church as pointed out by Sarpong, teachings in relation to the sacraments must be given a profound attention.

But the question posed in this thesis is: Do Christians still hold on to this opinion of Sarpong in this world of today? This question could be in the right direction since some Christians of today see the sacraments as mere public celebrations and adornments which may not possess its initial liberating and healing effects when conferred upon them. It is with this understanding that this study is geared towards emphasizing on the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist as a communal meal.

The Church in the celebration of the sacraments declares its faith that Christ the Redeemer is present and active, and humanity through their involvement in this liturgy discovers an encounter with the living God who comes to us in this symbolic sacrament. Hence, man can respond with the whole of his being, senses, mind and body in words, songs and movement and this means that, it is through these liturgical practices like the celebration of the Eucharist through which Christians and for that matter Catholics express their genuine faith in God who makes himself present in the Holy Spirit through these sacramental signs.

The acknowledgement of the seven sacraments as well as its order in Catholic Theology only emerged in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the view of Faber, the order of the seven sacraments also presented a direction concerning the understanding and form of these sacraments.<sup>348</sup> Faber is of the view that scholastic theology presents different phases and modes of institution of these sacraments by emphasizing that, some of the sacraments were instituted directly by Christ while

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<sup>347</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 113.

<sup>348</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 69.

on the other hand, some of them which were earlier practices were only accented to by Jesus Christ and given a new efficacy.<sup>349</sup>

These sacraments are visible signs or rites embedded with inward graces to all the persons who receive them with the proper disposition and administered by legitimate ministers. Understood in this way, the purpose of the sacraments is to turn a recipient of these sacraments into a new creation by becoming holy, turning away from sin and embracing Christian values, building up the body of Christ and empowered to assume a total new way of life. In this case, sacraments mark the effective signs of God's closeness to humanity in search of salvation. Admittedly, the Eucharist which is the main focus of this study is one of the seven sacraments which form an integral part of the Church as Hoping writes:

There is an inner connection between the Church and the Eucharist which makes clear the threefold meaning of the expression '*corpus Christi*'. The composition of the '*corpus Christi*' denotes both the historical body of Jesus Christ, the Eucharistic body as well as the ecclesial body of Christ, and these compositions underline the connectedness of the Eucharist to other sacramental signs. In other words, the sacrament of the Eucharist plays a central role in the others sacraments of the Church.<sup>350</sup>

In sum, Christ has entrusted these sacraments to his Church as a gift, a medium of nourishment for the people who form the membership of the New Covenant as one Body of Christ and as the mark of the eschatological promise of communion with God for all humanity irrespective of cultural background. Thus, the meaning of '*corpus Christi*' must be celebrated with a full conscious participation by all members of this New Covenant which includes both the clergy and the laity in union with their bishops. It is within the Church that the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and the mystery of the Lord's Supper which includes everybody (sick, poor, weak, widow, etc) is also celebrated which marks the symbol of fraternity, love and unity in the Mystical Body.

## 5.2 Eucharist as Sacrament

As already indicated above, the Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments recognized by the Church through which divine life is bestowed on the recipients.<sup>351</sup> Based on this, "The Church

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>350</sup> Helmut Hoping. *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben: Geschichte und Theologie der Eucharistie*. (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2015), 415.

<sup>351</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 224 (cf. Canon 1113-1131).



receives the Eucharist as a gift from the Lord [Jesus Christ].”<sup>352</sup> It is worthy to note that the sacrament of the Eucharist occupies a very central position in the life of the Church since it is from this sacrament that the Church lives, in which God's promise of salvation is achieved, and in which communion with Jesus Christ and with one another is constituted in the execution of the sacrament. Thus, it is in this sacrament that Christ gives out his whole self as atonement for the salvation of the world.

Primarily, the Church teaches of the sacrament of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, a meal, an act of thanksgiving, a covenant, a communion, a memorial and all these references form part of the Church's teachings. Therefore, the Church, in emphasizing the integral nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist contends:

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers, they are doing with devotion and full collaboration (SC 48).

In this regard, participation by all the faithful in this sacrament is important since it is in this sacrament that Christians celebrate in communion with one another the communion of the kingdom of God promised to us by Christ. In virtue of this fact, Schneider affirms the Eucharist as the “ultimate and deepest reality of the Church.”<sup>353</sup> It is in the sacrament of the Eucharist that the Church realizes the special way through which the God-human encounter takes place through Jesus Christ on the sacrifice on the Cross. It is worth noting that “the sacrifice of the self-giving of Jesus Christ” becomes present and realized in the celebration of the faithful and under the form of the reception of the sacrament. As Hoping writes: “The mass is not a new bloody sacrifice, but an *oblatio sacramentalis*, a sacrifice in *mysterio*, a spiritual sacrifice in relation to the *oblatio corporalis et realis* on the cross. [Thus], the celebration of the mass is a sacramental *memoria* or *repraesentatio passionis Christi*.”<sup>354</sup>

In contributing to the Eucharistic controversy, Eck draws the difference between *memoria* and *repraesentatio*. He explains that, *memoria* or *recordatio* has to do more with human memory

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<sup>352</sup> Lima Document, Eucharist No. 1/16: 557). The Lima Document is a Christian ecumenical document adopted by members of the World Council of Churches in Lima in January 1982 which attempted to express the convergences that have been found over the years. Ecumenical theologians refer to the approach employed in this document as ecclesiology of communion which is geared towards greater Church unity.

<sup>353</sup> Theodor Schneider. *Zeichen der Nähe Gottes. Grundriß der Sakramententheologie*. (Mainz. Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1987), 128.

<sup>354</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 262.

whilst *repraesentatio* is linked with the sacramental reality of the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>355</sup> Understood in this way, the Church repeats in constant and daily representation the one sacrifice that was offered on the cross for the salvation of the world and which alone is a fully sufficient godly offering. As frequently as we celebrate the memory of this sacrifice in the Eucharist, the work of the redemption of the world is performed.

The contribution of Scholasticism regarding Sacramental theology is very important to the Church especially the Church in the West, i.e. the Latin Church. Until the Middle Ages, the number of sacraments was determined differently due to the open concept of the patristic in relation to what can be designated as a sacrament. In spite of the fact that the Council of Trent defined the seven sacraments for the Church, Tertullian, in writing at the end of the second century used the word, ‘sacrament’ in reference to baptism and Eucharist.<sup>356</sup>

The Eucharist as a Christian sacrament is reenacted in accordance with Jesus’ instruction at the Last Supper, as recorded in the books of the New Testament, that his followers celebrate in remembrance of him. During the Last Supper, nearing to his death, he gave bread to his disciples, saying, “This is my body” (Matt. 12:26), and additionally gave the wine to them as well saying, “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:28). It is in the commemoration of this celebration that we recall the self-gift of Jesus Christ in the forms of bread and wine that are offered as his body and blood and which also marks his presence among us. In this direction, the Eucharist becomes an event in memory of Christ’s life, death and resurrection from the dead as well as his presence in the world.

Notwithstanding, the word ‘Eucharist’- thanksgiving- may not only refer to the rite but also to the consecrated bread and wine used in the rite. In this sense, communicants<sup>357</sup> may speak of been part of the celebration of the Eucharist as well as receiving the Eucharistic species. Due to difference in denominations, variety of names and understandings such as transubstantiation and sacrifice are given in reference to the Eucharist as a sacrament.

Earlier sources such as the *Didache*, 1 Clement and Ignatius of Antioch provide glimpses of what Christians were doing in their Eucharistic celebration. Therefore, the term ‘Eucharist’ is the

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>356</sup> Michael Schmaus. *Dogma 5: The Church as Sacrament (Vol.5)*. (London: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1975), 29.

<sup>357</sup> A term which refers to persons who partake and receive the Eucharistic species of bread and wine.

name given to the rite in the *Didache*,<sup>358</sup> however according to LaVerdiere, the Lord's Supper is a name used in the early 1950s of the first century as witnessed in the First Epistle to the Corinthians(11:20-21).<sup>359</sup>

Etymologically, the term Eucharist, according to Clark, is derived from the Greek noun *eucharistia*, which means “thanksgiving”, or the verb *Eucharistein*, meaning “to give thanks.”<sup>360</sup> It is important to note that “Eucharist” as a word is not explicitly used in the New Testament accounts. Rather it is the verb form, “to give thanks” that is often used instead in the institution reports. Horton gives a profound explanation of the role of thanksgiving in the culture of the Jews just like the Akans of Ghana. He writes, “Thanksgiving had a central place in Jewish piety, responding to the sense of triumphant and adoring gratitude experienced in the divine creation and in human history.”<sup>361</sup>

To buttress on this concept of thanksgiving, Deiss also recounts the place of thanksgiving in the Passover experience by contending the Jewish belief that, “To celebrate the Passover was, first of all, to give thanks for the marvels of creation.”<sup>362</sup> The Jews express their appreciation to Yahweh for saving them in Egypt and bringing them miraculously out of the land of slavery. This connotes the idea that “Thanksgiving” was a significant value in the Jewish traditional society. It is not surprising that Jesus Christ was full of appreciation to God the Father throughout his lifetime on earth. With this cultural understanding of thanksgiving, Jesus taught his disciples to always give thanks, especially at table, each time they gather for meals.

Secondly, in Jewish communities, writes Emminghaus, “...meal, especially...the meal on the Sabbath, characteristically began and ended with a thanksgiving (*berakah*), that is, with a prayer of praise over the bread and at the beginning of the meal and over the wine at the end.”<sup>363</sup> From this practice, it becomes imperative to give thanks for whatever a person is given and as well receives, hence Christians as a community give thanks to God in the personhood of Christ for

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<sup>358</sup> Robert Benedetto and James O. Duke. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, Vol.2, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2008), 231.

<sup>359</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere. *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 1-2.

<sup>360</sup> Stephen B. Clark. *Catholics and the Eucharist: A Scriptural Introduction*. (Michigan. Servant Publications, 2000), 8.

<sup>361</sup> Davies Horton. *Bread of Life and Cup: Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist*. (London: Eerdmans Comp. Publication, 1993), 19.

<sup>362</sup> Lucien Deiss. *It's the Lord's Supper*.(London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1986), 51.

<sup>363</sup> Johannes H. Emminghaus. *The Eucharist, Essence, Form, Celebration*. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1978), 24.

giving us his body and blood for the salvation of the world. The Church mandates only the priest as the only person who presides over the Mass together with all Christ's faithful in memory of Christ.<sup>364</sup> The priest confirms the significance of thanksgiving in these words:

“Father, it is our [the assembled community] duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks through your Son, Jesus Christ....”<sup>365</sup>

The importance of meal and eating to the human person is fundamental in every society because it serves as a ‘fuel’ for the human being. Aside serving as energy for the person, it has a social implication of bonding and friendship. The invitation to eating, according to Isaiah is to quench our hunger and satisfy our needs, “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat: ...” (Isa 55: 1-3). Food and drinks play a major role in banquets and feasts hence Jesus often participated in meals during his ministry and his miracle of changing water into wine took place during a marriage feast (John 2: 1-12). Also, Jesus often used the image of a heavenly banquet<sup>366</sup> in description of the Kingdom of God. (Matt. 22: 1ff).

Similarly, it was at the breaking of bread at Emmaus that the eyes of the two disciples were opened, (Luke 24: 13-35) a sign of victory relating to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So in the celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus invites his followers to continue to eat his Body and Blood in memory of him.

Therefore, both the priest and the congregation express thanksgiving to God through the Son who offers his body and blood in the Eucharistic sacrifice for the salvation of humanity and in memory of him. Hence if the Akan understanding of the Eucharist as thanksgiving (for the ‘things of creation’ received) is deepened, it would enrich their readiness to participate in the Eucharistic celebration since it would bring them closer to their cultural understanding of giving thanks aside thanksgiving during communal meals.

### **5.3 Biblical Foundations of Eucharist**

In the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2: 42), there is a clear purpose for the meeting of the early Christian community, i.e. they gather together in this meal setting to break bread as a sign of their unity. This shows that the importance of meals to humanity cannot be only social but also biblical. The Old Testament writings reveal certain moments of meal fellowship where food,

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<sup>364</sup> Code of Canon Law, 900: 1.

<sup>365</sup> Eucharistic Prayer II in Weekday Missal, 1979: 1019.

<sup>366</sup> The notion of heavenly or Messianic banquet as a concept in Christian Theology has its roots in Isaiah 25:6.

meat and drinks were eaten as source of nourishment (Gen 1: 29; Deut 23: 24-25; Lev 11: 1ff; Ps. 23: 1-6; Isa 58: 7).

These are some biblical quotations which emphasize on the human dependency on food as life sustaining and human nourishment. Meal fellowship was an important activity for the Jewish culture and people. For instance, at certain times of their life, Yahweh came into contact with the people through the action of meal sharing (Gen 18: 1-8; Exod 18: 12: 11). The biblical basis for the Eucharist as a Christian rite of worship is strongly rooted in the New Testament as picking up the form of a Jewish banquet. Thus, the New Testament explicitly states that the celebration of the Eucharist has its foundation on the farewell meal of Christ with his disciples and the narration of the institution (Mark 14:23; Matt 26:27; Luke 22:17, 19; 1Cor 11:24) give credence to this position.

### **5.3.1 Jesus and Meal practice**

Jesus Christ engaged in the practice of meal during his earthly life. Being a Jew, Jesus Christ also observed the Jewish tradition of meal-sharing during the Passover festivity. It was during one of these Passover feast that Jesus Christ had a meal with his disciple which was the last meal with the disciples before his suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. During this farewell meal, also popularly referred to as the Last Supper, Jesus used this Jewish festive meal to emphasize on the importance of meal to humanity which is meant to sustain and nourish humanity as willed by the Father (Ps 104: 14ff; Ps 145.15ff; Deut. 8:8ff). The ingestion of food into the human body signifies life and a perfect example is the story of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8: 55). Understood in this way, the essential aspect of food is to give life to humanity and this evidence points to the fact that meal sharing is a significant part of human life. Jesus demonstrated this sign of livelihood through eating after his resurrection from death (Luke 24: 41).

With his cultural background as a Jew, Jesus Christ also participated in this practice of meal sharing in his earthly life. The following scriptural sources depict Jesus partaking in meal sharing: the Emmaus story (Luke 24: 13-35); Parable of the prodigal son; (Luke 15); Calling of Levi (Mark 2: 14-17) and Appearance of Jesus Christ to the Seven Disciples (John 21: 1-4; Luke 14: 12-14; Matt 9:10-13). In the New Testament narrations, Jesus Christ also encountered people either sharing a meal with them or feeding them by himself.

### 5.3.2 Jesus and the Last Supper Meal

The last Supper meal of Jesus Christ and his disciples is also called the farewell meal event which culminated in the Easter experience. Reports of this meal are presented in four different versions in the New Testament (Mark 14.12-26a; Matt 26: 21-30; Luke 22: 7-28 and 1Cor 11: 17-26) and it is also known as Institution narratives. According to Faber, these reports can be traced to two traditions namely the author of Matthew depending on the Markan tradition whereas the author of Luke is closely to Pauline tradition.<sup>367</sup> In spite of the differences in presentations in both traditions, all of them emphasize on the meal aspect of the Eucharist by mention words such as supper, bread, cup, chalice, thanksgiving, prayers, etc. Furthermore, Faber contends that the Lord's Supper meal is not the Passover feast meal in the sense of the Jewish rite rather in the view of the Passover which Jesus himself will live.<sup>368</sup> It is worthy to note that the celebration of the Christian Eucharistic meal is not a repetition of the Passover meal in which Christ participated with his disciples. The "*Pasha*" is an annual Jewish festive event whereas the Christian Eucharist is either celebrated daily, regularly, monthly, etc.

Undoubtedly, the Gospels give a vivid description of the Last Supper which was a familiar meal Jesus Christ had with his disciples before his passion and death. It is also recorded in the Pauline First Epistle to the Corinthians, which goes further to suggest how early Christians celebrated this Last Supper. In this epistle, Paul gives the earliest recorded description of Jesus' Last Supper: "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:23-25). Thus, Jesus' disciples were to perform this task always in memory of Jesus Christ and also, proclaim his death until He comes again.

The Synoptic Gospels depict Jesus as presiding over the Last Supper which happened to be a usual normal Jewish annual festive meal. Nonetheless, it was a major cultural and religious event which was significant in the Jewish tradition where the "Passover Seder" was set up and every Jew participates in this meal. Jesus Christ's references to his body and blood during the farewell

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<sup>367</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 99.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

meal with his disciples foreshadowed his crucifixion which becomes a new covenant with a promise of a new people of God. In the gospel of John, the account of the Last Supper has no mention of Jesus taking bread and "the cup" and speaking of them as his body and blood; instead it recounts his humble act of washing the disciples' feet, the prophecy of the betrayal, which sets in motion the events that would lead to his death on the cross as well as his long discourse in response to some questions posed by his followers concerning the unity of the disciples (John. 6:26-65).

In John 6:26-65, the evangelist attributes a long discourse to Jesus which deals with the subject of the living bread and in verses 52-59 contains echoes of Eucharistic meal which is linked with eternal life to those who eat of this bread. This language, according to Ackah however, is a teaching on the Eucharist in Jesus' speech about the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35-58).<sup>369</sup>

Paul the Apostle responded to abuses at a meal that the Corinthian Christians had at their meetings and that he did not deem worthy to be called "a Supper of the Lord". He appealed to them to celebrate it worthily, since otherwise they would be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord, and in the same letter, writes: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." (1 Cor 10: 14-21)

Paul had first evangelized the inhabitants of Corinth, in Greece and his nascent congregation was made up of pagans and converts (1 Cor 12:2). They had written him regarding numerous matters of concern (1 Cor 7:1). Criticizing on what he had heard of in their meetings at which they had communal meals, Paul's response reminded them about what he asserted he had "received from the Lord" and had "passed on" about Jesus' actions and directives at his Last Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34). This Pauline address to the various Christian communities on the meal fellowship outlines one major characteristic of Christians, that is, the gathering together in order to break bread (Acts 2:42). Clearly the religious table fellowship tradition had been going on in the Early Christian Church, antedating Paul's conversion.

There are three references in Acts to "the breaking of bread" by early Christians at Jerusalem and by Paul on his visit to Troas (Acts 20: 7). The letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles make it clear that early Christianity believed that this institution included an instruction to continue the celebration in anticipation of this life of the joys of the banquet that is to come in the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>369</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology*, 113.

In this direction, there is a close highlight between the concepts of sacrifice and meal in the Eucharist since it was within the observance of the annual Jewish traditional meal event that Jesus Christ also offered himself as the sacrificial victim in atoning for the sins of the world and also a promise of eternal life to all those who believes in Him (John 6: 47). At this point, Faber is of the view that God personally permits ‘killing and healing devotion’ (Matt 9: 12ff; Luke 15) during meal fellowship as a foretaste of the eternal banquet ( ).<sup>370</sup> Thus, it is clear that Jesus crystallized the already existing rite [Jewish annual event of Passover] to institute the sacrament of the Eucharist. Based on the above scriptural references, we can say that both the Gospels and Pauline epistles give a vivid presentation of the Eucharistic words in the context of a meal.

#### **5.4 Development of Eucharistic Theology in Patristic Era**

Tracing the historical development of the Eucharistic meal is very necessary due to the important place this sacrament occupies in Christianity. It is worthy to acknowledge that this pre-Easter meal or Last Supper of Jesus Christ with his disciples culminated into the celebration of the Eucharist which has become a Post-Easter event celebrated in memory of Christ. Therefore the Church has always understood the Eucharistic meal in the context of a sacrifice because of the memory aspect in relation to the person and destiny of Jesus Christ. Faber explains that, nowhere in the New Testament is a direct application of the word ‘sacrifice’ linked to the Eucharist but she contends: “if according to the Scriptures, the Eucharist is understood as a memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then it is also a memorial of his sacrifice.”<sup>371</sup> Thus, the offering of the gifts of bread and wine in the celebration becomes an act of remembrance by the Church. Notwithstanding, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist has led to a series of disputes in the Church especially as questioned by the reformers. In spite of the many controversies surrounding the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, “From the Protestant and Roman-Catholic side ... it can be emphasized in unison that Christ's sacrifice on the cross can neither be continued, repeated, nor replaced, nor supplemented.”<sup>372</sup>

The format of the Eucharistic meal as we have it today did not start like this among the early Christians. It started as a meal fellowship which was observed among the Christians. The early

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<sup>370</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 99.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, 110.



Christian community celebrated this meal of fellowship with their ‘remote’ understanding of the Passover recalling their liberation from slavery hence the thanksgiving prayers offered before the meal was paramount. The Church has, through different stages of its life, shaped this meal fellowship into the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist as part of her teachings. We shall examine some of these teachings concerning the Eucharistic doctrine of the Church.

#### **5.4.1 Early Ecclesiastical Writings and Patristic Theology**

The doctrine of the sacrament of the Eucharistic theology developed during the Patristic era. Patristic theology started at the end of the apostolic era, thus the first century and perhaps ended with the Council of Chalcedon or the Second Council of Nicaea in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. Thus, these Fathers were the link between the apostolic Christian communities and later Christianity whose works were apologetic. Their fundamental preoccupation was to defend the Christian faith and Church practices by teaching and clarifying certain key Church issues such as the sacrament of the Eucharist. For instance, Congar writes, “it was in the age of the [Church] Fathers that the forms of liturgical celebrations were fixed, in all its essentials, according to the manner in which we carry them out today.”<sup>373</sup> The Greek and Latin Fathers such as Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ambrose etc, emphasized on the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic meal. As part of explaining the theology of Sacraments, the Fathers tried to place the sacraments in the context of the salvation history. Thus, three approaches – Spiritualistic; Symbolical; and Realistic – were employed in describing the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the first approach, the Eucharist was seen as a spiritual food (1Cor 10:3-8). In the Spiritualistic approach, St. Ambrose contends: “in that Sacrament [Eucharist] is Christ, because it is the body of Christ. Therefore, it is not bodily food but spiritual...”<sup>374</sup> In the same vein, St. Augustine also states: “the body of Christ will be life to each one, if what is visibly received in the sacrament is spiritually eaten and drunk in very truth.”<sup>375</sup>

Secondly, under the symbolic approach, the use of symbols was used in the study of the Eucharist. Some of the Church Fathers who supported this approach included Tertullian,

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<sup>373</sup> Yves Congar. *Tradition and Traditions: A Historical and Theological Essay. (Vol. II)*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 448.

<sup>374</sup> Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, 5:55 as quoted in Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*. (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998), 8.

<sup>375</sup> Augustine, *Sermon* 131, n. I.

Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, etc. For example, Tertullian observes: “the Lord called bread his body in order that you may understand him to have given the figure of his body to the bread...”<sup>376</sup>

Under the realistic approach, the teaching of the Fathers was in realistic terms because they believed that the bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ. The Church Fathers such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Ignatius of Antioch presented the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as a proof against docetism which rejected the reality of the humanity of Christ. Individual contributions of some of the Church Fathers as well as church writings would be considered at this stage.

#### **5.4.2 The Didache**

The Didache which is probably the oldest preserved church document provides us with the format of the liturgical celebrations especially the Eucharist. There have been many controversies surrounding the author, place and date of composition ranging from 30 to 150 A.D. although according to Hoping this document comes from the Syrian region and deals with questions of ethical life, the liturgy and the community constitution.<sup>377</sup>

As an informative document, Koenig also writes, “Moreover, the Didache, in which the word ‘Eucharist’ is used for the first time on record to identify the Church’s chief ritual supper, offers these directions for celebrating it [Eucharistic meal].”<sup>378</sup> It must be observed at this point that, this position of the Didache confirms the earlier evidence that the word Eucharist was never used in the New Testament writings.

According to LaVerdiere, a Catholic Scripture scholar, “the Didache is a remarkable document, a kind of community rule or manual of discipline; it is a treasure trove of early Christian traditions, sayings, instructions and prayers ....”<sup>379</sup>

Three chapters (9, 10 and 14) of this early Church document were dedicated to the sacrament of the Eucharistic meal. It is clear that the meal celebration in the Didache was modeled after the Jewish meal structure which begins with the basic form of praise, thanksgiving and petition at

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<sup>376</sup> Tertullian, cf. FEF 343.

<sup>377</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 71.

<sup>378</sup> John Koenig, *The Feast of the World’s Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission*. (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 2000) 21.

<sup>379</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere. *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 128.

the end. The section 9 of the Didache explicitly outlines the criteria for participation in the Eucharistic meal as only “those baptized in the name of the Lord” since the Eucharist is exclusively a Christian celebration. Whereas section 10 provides the liturgical format of the Eucharistic celebration, section 14 described how a Sunday liturgy of breaking bread should be like.

Section 9: As for concerns the Eucharist [Gk. eucharistias], give thanks in this fashion. First, in respect to the cup: We give you thanks [Gk. eucharistoumen], Our Father, for the holy vine of your servant [Gk. paidos] David, which you made known to us through your servant [...] Then, in respect to the broken bread: We give you thanks, Our Father, for the life and knowledge that you have made known to us through your servant Jesus; yours is the glory forever and ever. [...] However let no one eat or drink of this Eucharist unless he has been baptized in the name of the Lord; for concerning this the Lord also said: “Do not give to dogs what is holy.”

Section 10: “After it has been completed, give thanks in this fashion: Holy Father, we give you thanks for your holy Name, which you have made dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. [...] Almighty master, you created all things for your Name’s sake and gave man food and drink for enjoyment so that they might give thanks to you, but you gave us spiritual food and drink [...] and eternal life through your Servant... Remember, Lord your Church and deliver her from evil and make her perfect in your love, and gather your Church from the four winds into your Kingdom, which you have prepared for her; for yours are the power and the glory forever...”<sup>380</sup>

The Eucharistic sections in the Didache which were closely structured on Jewish prayers for religious meals presents the breaking of bread on the Lord’s Day as a Christian meal which binds the Christians together aside the sacrificial elements of this celebration. The section 9 identifies prayers which were been said over the cup, bread and over the church as thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). This is where the Eucharistic interpretations of the thanksgiving prayers in the Didache seem convincing because these prayers are reminiscent of Jewish table prayers.<sup>381</sup>

Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians emphasizes on the bond of unity or oneness which comes out of participating in this meal. “And there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single body, for we all share in the one loaf” (I Cor 10:17). Also, prominent in the two sections above is the act of thanksgiving prayers: about the chalice, the bread by the early Christians as they gather to thank God for offering himself as the spiritual food. The eschatological implications of participation in this meal also suggest communion with the glorified Christ whose return Christians anticipate in hope.

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<sup>380</sup> From the Didache as quoted in James T. O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 5-6. Cf. Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 161.

<sup>381</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 74.

What makes the Didache more eucharistic in form is its Sunday liturgical worship format: “On the Lord’s own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks, but first confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure.”<sup>382</sup> Therefore, the celebration of the meal takes its name from the *eucharistia* through the chalice and bread (1Cor 10:16-17). But it is worthy to note that, the Eucharist celebrated by the community in the Didache has no reference to the passion death and resurrection of Christ as embedded in our Eucharistic celebration today. It is with this understanding that Josef Andreas Jungmann referred to the Eucharist in the Didache as an agape celebration instead of a “real Eucharist” since for him, a Eucharistic celebration without the words of institution is not Eucharist.<sup>383</sup>

Although the Didache stresses on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic meal, its eschatological undertones cannot be over-looked. The wine is illustrated as “the holy vine of your servant [Gk. *Paidos*] David”. It therefore indicates that the eucharistic wine stands “for the glorified Lord, the true vine” (Jn. 15: 1), which provides drinks for the people and to participate in taking this wine, the Christian must enter into communion with the glorified Christ, whose return the faithful anticipate in hope: *Marana tha!* (10: 6).<sup>384</sup>

Furthermore, an analytic approach towards the section 9 of the Didache and I Cor. 10: 16-17 shows a resemblance concerning the order of the Eucharistic liturgy. Both passages present the breaking of bread which is preceded by the blessing of the cup. The communal aspect of this Eucharistic meal is stated by Paul that; “And there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, one single body, for we all share in the one loaf” (1 Cor 10:17).

### 5.4.3 Clement of Rome

Just like the Didache, Clement of Rome placed emphasis on the sacrificial element of the sacrament of the Eucharist and sees the necessity of designating ministers for its performance. In his first Letter to the Corinthians, Clement gave a description concerning the role of worshippers as well as the way by which the offering of the gifts must be carried out.<sup>385</sup> The need to have ministers to perform this sacrifice led Clement to distinguish between the leaders and the

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<sup>382</sup> Didache 14:1.

<sup>383</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 77.

<sup>384</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 162. Also see, Gakpe-Ntsri, 170.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. Also see, Staniforth, Maxwell, ed., *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1982), 44.

community, that is, the role of presbyters (elders) and bishops (overseers), and the faithful in general. There was no further distinction between the presbyters and the bishops but Clement posited that; “each one of us, in his own order should fittingly give thanks to God with a good conscience, not transgressing the assigned rule of the ministry.”<sup>386</sup>

Clement compared the Christian priesthood to the Levite priesthood as a divine institution and obliged the Christian priests to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice on behalf of the people. This obligation of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice by the Christian priests provides an inkling that without the ministerial priests, the sacrificial value of the Eucharist loses its significance. This position of Clement deepens the understanding of the ministerial role of presbyters and bishops in the offering of gifts. It is worthy to note that the Church recognizes the priest as the ‘ordinary’ minister of the Eucharistic meal<sup>387</sup> who leads the Christian community in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this case, the Eucharistic meal brings the Christian community together as the communal meal of the Akan social ethnic group binds the people together.

#### **5.4.4 Ignatius of Antioch**

One of the Fathers who contributed to the development of the sacrament of the Eucharist is Ignatius of Antioch. While on his way to martyrdom in Rome, he made references to the Eucharist in his seven letters. In agreeing with the earlier position of Clement, Ignatius emphasized that the only valid Eucharist celebration is the one offered by either the bishop or someone mandated by him (Smyrna 8.2). In other words, the role of ministerial priesthood becomes an indispensable characteristic of the Eucharist as sacrifice.<sup>388</sup>

Ignatius demonstrates a close relationship between the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary and the Eucharistic sacrifice. According to him, the Eucharist is indispensably the flesh and blood not only of the crucified Christ, but the glorified Christ as well (Smyrna VIII. 1). It is therefore imperative to conclude that through participation in the Eucharist, the Christian shares in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Ignatius maintains the presence of Christ in the flesh even after his resurrection and, consequently, the Eucharist is indeed “the flesh [...] Jesus Christ who suffered for our sin, which [the flesh] the Father raised

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<sup>386</sup> 1 Clement, 40, 1.

<sup>387</sup> Code of Canon Law No. 910. 1

<sup>388</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 163.

up in his goodness” (Smyrna VIII.1). Understood in this way, Ignatius presents the sacrament of the Eucharist to Christians as the realization of the whole mystery of Jesus Christ.

Also, it became evident in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 4) where Ignatius was emphatic about the fundamental nature of the Eucharist in Christian life. He writes: “I am God’s grain, and I am being ground by the teeth of wild beasts in order that I may be found [to be] pure bread for Christ. My love has been crucified, and there is in me no fire of material love, but rather living water, speaking in and saying within me, ‘Come to the Father’. I take no pleasure in corruptible food or in the delights of this life. I want the Bread of God, which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ, who is the seed of David; and as drink I want his Blood, which is incorruptible love.”<sup>389</sup>

The passage above in the letter of Ignatius to the Romans clearly explains the Eucharist as Jesus Christ himself; his willingness to be crucified; as food to be eaten by the use of the teeth; “... thanksgiving and the cause of unity of the Church, spiritual medicine, pledge of the resurrection, and model for Christians to imitate.”<sup>390</sup> In this way, Ignatius affirms and outlines the importance of meal to the community. Meal is seen as the satisfying entity which gives life and strength to the human body and in the same sense, the Eucharistic meal gives spiritual vitality to the Christian who receives the Body and Blood of Christ.

#### **5.4.5 Justin Martyr**

Justin Martyr is considered to be the first Christian writer who became famous for his apologetics and especially his public explanation of the correct meaning of the Eucharist as well as the importance of this sacrament. In his first Apology which was addressed to the Royal family, five themes were developed by him and one out of these five themes was solely dedicated on the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. Under the theme for the Eucharist, Justin, just like the Didache emphasized on the one criteria – baptism- for participation in the Eucharist and reception of this holy food. In other words, he gave an explanation on how the celebration of the Eucharist is to be done, the meaning of the Eucharist as a food (meal) and finally the condition for the receiving the Holy Communion. In writing about the Eucharist as a sacrifice, Justin states:

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid, 164. The passages are taken from Ignatius’ letter to the Romans: 4 and 7.

I also maintain that prayers and thanksgiving, when offered by worthy persons, are only perfect and God-agreeable sacrifices. According to their tradition, Christians also have only these sacrifices; they offer them when they celebrate the memory [of the death of Christ] with bread and chalice, commemorating the suffering which the Son endured because of them.<sup>391</sup>

In his first apology, Justin presents the earliest testimony of the Sunday (first day of the week) liturgy format. Because of the communal aspect of this meal, the celebration begins with the gathering of the people and the readings (memories of the apostles or writings of the prophets) of the day takes place. After the readings, the president gives a word of exhortation which is followed by prayers. After the prayers, bread, wine and water are brought before the president who offers prayers and thanksgiving for these gifts to which the people present give their assent through their acclamation, 'Amen'. The gifts of bread, wine and water are then distributed among the baptized present and those who are absent, the deacon is sent to bring their 'share' to them.<sup>392</sup>

Justin gives an earliest testimony of giving viaticum to those who maybe absent from the community celebration. This task of the deacon demonstrates the communal aspect of the Eucharistic meal as well as the presence of Christ in the body and blood. Justin presents the somatic real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. He uses the incarnation story as a sacrifice taken by Christ which marks the presence of Christ in the bread and wine in the celebration of the Eucharist. He used the institution narrative to explain the point that the Eucharistic food was and still is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ hence Christ is present in the Eucharistic species.

Justin is one of the church Fathers whose preoccupation was to explain the idea of sacrifice in the Eucharist over the sacrifice of the Jews and Pagans. According to him, whereas the sacrifice of the Jews and Pagans were purely bloody, that of the Eucharist is not bloody. The Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and we celebrate it in an unbloody manner. Justin is of the view that the bread and wine upon consecration during the Eucharist becomes the body and blood of Christ for the sake of salvation. This transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ nourishes our body and soul because it is the incarnate Jesus who is present through the word of prayer over them. Basing his arguments on Malachi 1:10-12, he explains: "from the farthest east to farthest west my name is great among the nations, and everywhere

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<sup>391</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 81.

<sup>392</sup> Justin the Martyr, *First Apology for Christians*. 67. (PG 6, 429B-C).

incense and a pure gift are offered to my name ...”.<sup>393</sup> This scripture reference was applied by Justin in reference to the ‘spiritual and eschatological’ notion of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

#### 5.4.6 Tertullian

He was the first Christian author from Carthage to produce an extensive collection of Latin Christian Literature. As an apologist, Tertullian was also one of the Church Fathers who defended the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic meal. His contribution toward the development of the Eucharistic theology was to fight against the concept of Marcion who ascribes to Christ the appearance of a body and in accord with his dualistic opinion of reality (flesh and spirit). Tertullian writes:

Having taken bread, and having distributed it to his disciples, he made it his body, saying: “This is my body,” that is, figure of my body. However it would not be figure unless the body is true. Moreover an empty thing, which is a phantasm, cannot take a figure, as if he made bread a body for himself because, lacking the truth of a body, he ought to hand over bread “for us.”<sup>394</sup>

This above passage of Tertullian confirms the belief in relation to the Eucharistic species constituting the reality of Jesus Christ. He therefore employed the Greek idea of image of prototype in relation to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

#### 5.4.7 Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian, unlike Tertullian, emphasized on the eschatological aspect of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Understood in this way, he considered the reception of the sacraments and the Eucharistic worship as indications of the manifestation and realization of the unity of the members of the Church with one another and with Jesus Christ.<sup>395</sup>

Concerning the Eucharist, Cyprian had only a symbolic view. He acknowledged the union between the sacramental elements and Jesus’ body and blood.<sup>396</sup> This union, according to

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 168. See also Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*. (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998), 8; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.40. 2-4.

<sup>395</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 169. See also Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*. P.10

<sup>396</sup> Nicholas Thompson. *Eucharistic Sacrifice and Patristic Tradition in the Theology of Martin Bucer 1534-1546* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 76, n. 14.



Cyprian, happens due to the consecration or in his own term, to its “sanctifying state.”<sup>397</sup>

Concerning the blood of Jesus Christ in union with the wine, Cyprian writes:

“When Christ says, ‘I am the true vine,’ the blood of Christ is assuredly not water, but wine; neither can His blood by which we are redeemed and quickened appear to be in the cup, when in the cup there is no wine whereby the blood of Christ is shown forth, which is declared by the sacrament and testimony of all the scriptures.”<sup>398</sup>

He uses Genesis 49: 11 and draws an analogy out of it; “He shall wash His garment in wine, and His clothing in the blood of the grape. ‘But when the blood of the grape is mentioned, what else is set forth than the wine of the cup of the Lord?’”<sup>399</sup> Cyprian emphasizes no separation between the blood of Christ and the consecrated wine. Thus, the wine is the blood of Jesus and vice versa. The body of Jesus is likewise united with the consecrated bread so as to be inseparable. On the reception of the Communion, he states:

“So also we call it ‘our bread’ because Christ is the bread of those who are in union with His body. And we ask that this bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not, by the interposition of some heinous sin, by being prevented, as withheld and not communicating, from partaking of the heavenly bread, to be separated from Christ’s body.”<sup>400</sup>

In this sense, if Cyprian is referring to the bread as heavenly, which possesses a power of salvation after been consecrated, then it is not a mere symbol. He is rather recognizing the presence of Christ in the bread there urges every Christian not to be prevented from the reception of this bread. Thus, Cyprian believes that failure to receive this bread means separation from the body of Christ hence seeing the Supper as the “food of salvation”. This is an issue which must be dealt with by the Church hierarchy concerning a certain category of Catholic Christians who due to certain reasons such as divorcees, those in polygamous marriages or improper marital engagements are not allowed to receive the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic celebration.

Although Cyprian, an African with a common belief in Jesus Christ offering his body and blood in the Eucharist such as the Latin Fathers, he does not use, “... in this context the concept of commemorative actual presence of the once-for-all historical sacrifice of the cross.”<sup>401</sup> In a different perspective, Cyprian sees a relationship between the sacrifice of Jesus Christ with that

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<sup>397</sup> Cyprian, Epistle 62.1 (ep. 63 in the Oxford series), ANF 5.359.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid, Ep. 62. 2, ANF 5.359

<sup>399</sup> Ibid, Ep. 62.6, ANF. 5. 360

<sup>400</sup> *De Dominica oration*, treatise 4. 18, ANF 5:452

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

of Melchizedek: “Who is more priest of the highest God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offers a sacrifice to God the Father! And indeed he offers the same as Melchizedek, namely bread and wine, namely his body and blood.”<sup>402</sup>

#### **5.4.8 Ambrose, Bishop of Milan**

Ambrose (AD 339 – AD 340) is one of the Fathers who made tremendous contribution to the theology of the Eucharist. He promoted the understanding of the Eucharist through his writings. Although he is designated as a Latin Church Father, Ambrose was influenced by the Greek Fathers whom he studied. Due to his contribution towards the Eucharistic theology, Gakpe-Ntsri writes: “Just as Cyril of Jerusalem was credited with being the pioneer of the ‘conversion theory’ in the East, so Ambrose receives credit for introducing ‘the idea of conversion of elements ... into the West.’”<sup>403</sup>

This conversion theory was first introduced into the West by Ambrose who believed and taught that, this change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ comes about by the blessing proclaimed over the bread and wine. By this doctrine, Ambrose affirmed the somatic real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Ambrose believes that at the time the prayer of consecration is said by the priest, a change takes place in the nature of the elements (bread and wine). For him, this change of the elements is done by the creative words of Jesus Christ.<sup>404</sup> It is worthy to note that Ambrose did not support the theology of the real presence of Christ with the mindset of the Platonic way of thinking as propounded by the Greek counterparts. He contends: “If the word of Elisha was so powerful that he brought fire from heaven, cannot the word of Christ change the species *elementorum* ...?”<sup>405</sup> This Ambrosian question portrays the power embedded in the prayer of consecration which changes the gifts of bread and wine into becoming the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Secondly, this question of Ambrose lays a sound foundation for a theological term known as transubstantiation or transignification which talks about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic meal which will be developed in the Scholastic theology.

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<sup>402</sup> As quoted in Ibid. See also Cyprian, *Epistles* 63.4 (CSEL 3.703.11-15).

<sup>403</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 187.

<sup>404</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 169.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, 170. Cf. also see Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, 9.52.

### 5.4.9 Augustine of Hippo

In our effort of understanding the development and significance of Eucharistic theology, the work of Augustine of Hippo is very important. He was born in 354 at Thagaste in Numidia, now known as Algeria and later became a Manichaeist. In his quest of searching for religious truth, he encountered the preaching of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Hence there seems to be a great resemblance of the ideas of Augustine towards Eucharistic theology with that of Ambrose although he adopted the symbolic outlook. This resemblance is possibly due to the fact that Augustine was converted to Christianity through the inspiration he experienced from the preaching of Ambrose of Milan. The Augustinian text described the sacrament of the Eucharist in symbolic terms concerning the presence of Jesus Christ that can be understood in a full, real sense which provoked controversy in the Middle Ages.

This Eucharistic theology developed by Augustine is characterized on one hand by his understanding of the church (“*Totus Christus, caput et corpus*”) and on the other hand by the Neo-Platonic archetypal image thinking which resulted in his symbolic outlook.<sup>406</sup> This doctrine shows the relationship between sign and reality by distinguishing the difference between sign (*signum*) and reality (*res*). According to Faber, the *res* is a quantity which does not serve to denote something else, but it carries its meaning in itself rather whereas the *signa* stand for something to which they are not themselves.<sup>407</sup> Every sign as explained by Faber is in some way *res*, in order to be able to be a sign at all, but it is a *res* which, besides what it represents for the senses, also denotes something else.<sup>408</sup> Symbol, for the Akan is essential because its meaning is in-depth in knowledge acquisition and always gives a lesson whereby a sign always leads to something.

## 5.5 Medieval Era and Eucharistic Theology

In tracing the development of the theology of Eucharistic meal, the contribution of the medieval era is important. Through Isidore of Sevilla (ca. 560-636), the Augustinian and Ambrose, the Eucharistic traditions were transmitted into the early stages of the medieval period. In combining

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<sup>406</sup> Margit Eckholt. *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes: Einführung in die Sakramentenlehre*. Summer semester lecture notes at University of Osnabrück, 2017.

<sup>407</sup> Faber, *Einführung in die katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 34.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

these two approaches or traditions, Isidore teaches of the Eucharist composing of bread and wine which becomes the body and blood of Christ through the transformation.<sup>409</sup>

This era saw a lot of disputes concerning the Eucharistic meal as a symbol or a reality. The visible reality, according to Hoping, was now regarded as the truth from which the symbolic was distinguished but since the closure of the patristic era, more concentration has moved towards the somatic (bodily) real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic gifts.<sup>410</sup> The first Eucharistic controversy was the Carolingian Eucharist Controversy since the Eucharist was not called the last Supper.<sup>411</sup> This Eucharist dispute was the teaching of Paschasius Radbertus, an Abbot of Corbie monastery (died 859) and Ratramnus, also, a monk in Corbie (died 868). This dispute concerning the Eucharist was the inability of reconciling realism and symbolism of the sacramental body of Christ. While Paschasius argued from the realistic point of view as seeing the sacramental body of Jesus Christ as identical with the historical body, Ratramnus does not comprehend “the transformation as a change which takes place in the nature of the Eucharistic food.”<sup>412</sup>

The second of such disputes was also brought up by Berengar, a monk at Tours. He was of the view that since the bread and wine in the Eucharist does not change their appearances after the consecratory prayers, they still remain bread and wine. Therefore, he rejected the idea that, “the substance of bread should give way to the sacrament of the Lord’s body.”<sup>413</sup> Berengar therefore concluded that the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is merely spiritual and not physical. This Berengar position was regarded as a heresy and the synod of Lateran (1059) responded with an “exaggerated formulation” that: “Bread and wine which are on the altar, after the consecration, are not only the sacrament but also the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they become sensual, not only in the sacrament but in truth, grasped and broken by the hands of priests and chewed by the teeth of the faithful” (DH 690).<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Amadi, “*Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*”, 144.

<sup>410</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 181.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid*, 182.

<sup>412</sup> Gerken, *Dogmengeschichtliche Reflexion*, 209 as cited by Margit Eckholt in *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes*: 17.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>414</sup> Eckholt, *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes*, 17.

### 5.5.1 Thomas Aquinas Eucharistic Doctrines

During the Scholastic period, the theology of the sacraments gained a deeper intellectual attention as compared to the Patristic era. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Scholastic theology developed as an approach of illuminating the sacramental theology and taken into cognizance its individual parts such as the sacrament of the Eucharist. The scholastic doctrine of the Eucharist was developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and his contribution to the Eucharistic theology became famous.

According to Thomas Aquinas, “the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is sacramental and depends upon the Presence.”<sup>415</sup> Understood in this way, the efficacy of the sacrament of the Eucharist is made present in and through the presence of Jesus Christ who underwent the once-for-all sacrifice<sup>416</sup> which is celebrated for the redemption of sinners. This Thomistic view affirms the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice because he sees the Mass as a sacrifice which symbolizes the Passion of Christ.

The idea of Transubstantiation as developed by Thomas Aquinas teaches that the Eucharistic species is not just a mere symbolism but a reality.<sup>417</sup> He argued that the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is not a formal change but a substantial change. He contends: “The complete substance of bread is converted into the complete substance of Christ’s body, and the complete substance of wine into the substance of Christ’s blood.”<sup>418</sup> For Thomas, substance is a metaphysical reality which cannot be seen physically and he explains:

“Substance cannot be seen by the bodily eye, nor is it the object of any sense, nor can it be imagined.”<sup>419</sup>

The term substance as employed by Thomas Aquinas is more or less another version of Aristotle’s *ousia* which literally means being. For Thomas Aquinas, the concept of substance refers to “something which exists in itself as a subject, as opposed to accidents, which do not have existence in themselves free of a subject.”<sup>420</sup>

Thomas Aquinas’s teaching on the doctrine of Transubstantiation is the question of the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He affirms that in the normal sense material realities become

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<sup>415</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 177.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 201. Also, see, *Summa Theologica*. 3a. 75, 1.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, 202. Also, see, *Summa Theologica*. 3a. 75, 4.

<sup>419</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 180.

<sup>420</sup> Thomas Aquinas, S Th. III, q. 76, a. 7.

present to each other by means of contact of quantity to quantity whereas with regard to the Real Presence of Christ, even though the Body of Christ is a quantity, it is not present in a quantified manner.

Furthermore, according to Thomas, Christ's Presence in the Eucharistic species is not by local motion rather, it is a spiritual activity or Presence therefore it is only a matter of understanding and not of our human imagination. Christ becomes present in the sacrament as a result of the words of consecration which takes place. This is the reason why faith is very necessary in understanding this substantial change which makes the conversion of the Eucharistic species of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a reality and not a mere symbolism. For Thomas Aquinas, faith is important to be able to understand this conversion as a substantial change: "The complete substance is converted into the complete substance of Christ's Body and the complete substance of wine into the substance of Christ's Blood."<sup>421</sup>

To be able to understand this process of change, Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between ordinary change and a change of the total substance. He employs the change of total substance to the change which occurs in the Eucharistic sacrifice. That is the substantial change of form which transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. By this explanation of Thomas Aquinas, the accidentals of bread and wine remains unchanged although total substance of change has taken place. Based on this, Ackah writes: "These accidents [bread and wine] do not inhere in the substance of Christ because that would expose Christ's body to material change in a way that even would contradict his glorified state."<sup>422</sup>

The reason assigned by Thomas concerning the unchanged state of the accidents was to assist him in explaining the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. As regards this substantial change, Aquinas offers two-fold ways: "The first way, is an immediate result of the sacramental sign; [whereas] the second way is by a natural concomitance."<sup>423</sup>

Therefore he employs the theory of natural concomitance to explain how the body and blood are fully present under the Eucharistic elements. By natural concomitance, he explains:

"And by a natural concomitance, you have here whatever is found to be actually joined to the term of the conversion. Because wherever two things are actually joined together, wherever you have one, the other has to be."<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> *Summa Theologica*, III a 75, 4.

<sup>422</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 182.

<sup>423</sup> *Summa Theologica*, 3a. 76, 1.

<sup>424</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, "Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice", 206. Also, see S. Th. 3a. 76, 1.

By this principle of Thomas Aquinas, the Real Presence of Christ exists in each of the Eucharistic species. The inference from this theory of concomitance is that all the components are naturally connected to each other in order of forming one substance wherever any of the components exists.

This Thomistic doctrine of Transubstantiation encountered series of opposition from medieval theologians due to the fact it was not the thought of the time. It is worthy to acknowledge that, Thomas Aquinas's theory was meant to provide the belief in the reality of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist which transforms the celebration and reception of the Eucharist into the true celebration of the Paschal Mystery of his death and resurrection from the dead. By this he demonstrated that, "the Eucharist is not a mere symbolic commemoration of the Lord's Supper and death, but a real offering of Christ's body and blood in a bloodless manner."<sup>425</sup> Thus, Thomas Aquinas was not employing philosophical thinking as the only option in explaining the reality in the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Bachl argued against this Thomistic view of Transubstantiation because of the scholastic attempt of narrowing the Eucharist to only "transubstantiation". For Bachl, this effort makes the sacrament lose touch with tradition since food is a symbolic element in human life.<sup>426</sup>

Understood in this way, the scholastics just like the patristic theologians, presented the meaning of the Eucharist in a sacramental or ritual experience of the Lord's Paschal Mystery which emphasized on the spiritual element of the Eucharist as a sacrament. In conclusion, Thomas Aquinas embraces the sacrament of the Eucharist as a sacrament which serves as spiritual food for the forgiveness of sins, which kindles our faith and love as a community and which eventually leads us to a perfect communion in eternal life.<sup>427</sup>

## **5.6 Reformation and the Eucharist**

The era of reformation in the sixteenth century provided a novelty for the development of the doctrine of the Eucharist. Two principles which were of utmost importance to this era were "scripture alone" and "justification by faith". This era created a division within the Church due to

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>426</sup> Eckholt, *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes*, 13. Also see Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 7.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, 18.

several issues that was raised by the reformers. Our focus would be on their stance on the Eucharistic sacrifice and the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

### 5.6.1 Martin Luther and the Eucharist

Martin Luther outlines three major elements which he considers as hitches in the theology of the Eucharist. These views of Luther were written in his book: *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*<sup>428</sup> which was written in 1520. Luther rejected the understanding of the Eucharist as sacrifice as well as the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>429</sup> Three questions of concern namely sacrifice of the Mass; doctrine of transubstantiation, and question of lay chalice; were raised by Luther for the Church to provide answers.<sup>430</sup>

Luther declines the scholastic position of the reception of Holy Communion under one species because according to him, this is unbiblical. For him, employing the concomitance theory to defend this communion under one species was frail since the use proposal of the concomitance doctrine was only based on human logic and not expressing the will of God. He therefore advocates for the chalice to be used by all the faithful and not only the priest.

Concerning his belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, he expresses disagreement with the view of Thomas Aquinas and establish that the “full reality of bread and wine also remains”. Luther regarded the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic species as a “substantial” one. He writes, “It is not necessary ... that one of the two disappear or be annihilated, but both the bread and the Body remain, and by virtue of the sacramental unity it is correct to say, ‘This is my Body’, designating the bread with the word “this”. For now it is no longer ordinary bread in the oven but a ‘Flesh-bread’, i.e., a bread that has become one sacramental substance, one with the Body of [Jesus] Christ.”<sup>431</sup> Luther maintains further:

“Therefore it is entirely correct to say, if one points to the bread, “This is Christ’s Body”, and whoever sees the bread sees Christ’s Body. ... Thus also it is correct to say, “He who takes hold of this bread, takes hold of Christ’s Body; and he who eats this bread, eats Christ’s Body; he who crushes this bread with teeth or tongue, crushes with teeth or tongue the Body of Christ”. And yet it remains absolutely true that no one sees or grasps or eats or chews Christ’s Body in the way he

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<sup>428</sup> Martin Luther, in vol. 36 of his works.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>430</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 244.

<sup>431</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 184.



visibly sees and chews any other flesh. What one does to the bread is rightly and properly attributed to the Body of Christ by virtue of the sacramental union.”<sup>432</sup>

The above passage of Luther gives a different view on the Eucharist as compared to various positions of Berengar and Wyclif. Although the veneration of the sacrament of the Eucharist received a boost during the medieval era, Luther rejected the placing of the sacrament for veneration by the Christians and also as viaticum for the sick who could not join the community for the Eucharistic celebration. He was of the view that, the remaining sacramental species must be consumed immediately after the celebration. Luther did not only reject the Eucharist as a sacrifice, he also turned down Eucharistic piety because he saw that practice as a contentious replacement for communion.<sup>433</sup> In this case, Luther was criticized for teaching a new doctrine suggesting of a multiplicity of the Body of Christ in such a way that it would be locally present (localisation) wherever the sacrament was present. Out of this criticism, he employed the theory of ‘ubiquity’ as a reply to his critics about the presence of Christ. He affirms:

“If God and man are one person [in Christ] and the two natures are so united that they belong together more intimately than body and soul, then [Jesus] Christ must also be man wherever he is God. ...It was on this point that I insisted when I showed that God and man were one Person, and that Christ thereby had acquired a supernatural existence or mode of being whereby he can be everywhere.”<sup>434</sup>

By this position of Luther, it can be concluded that Jesus Christ can thus be in heaven and at the Lord’s Supper at the same moment or time.

By rejecting Transubstantiation, Luther understood the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ with the lens of “consubstantiation”, a process where “the body and blood of Jesus Christ indeed become present but coexist with the substance of bread and wine, so that the empirical forms of bread and wine—which certainly remain after the consecration—are still bread and wine in absolute sense, not merely their species.”<sup>435</sup> In other words, there emerges a simultaneous presence of the figures of bread and wine and the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ hence the bread and Christ co-exist.

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<sup>432</sup> Luther, *Confession concerning Christ’s Supper*, in Luther’s Works, vol. 37, 300. As quoted in Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 185.

<sup>433</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 242.

<sup>434</sup> Luther, *Confessions*. 229. Quoted in Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 185.

<sup>435</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 211.

Although Luther was against Transubstantiation concerning the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, he was close to the position of Catholicism in relation to the Real Presence of Christ but his concept of companionation which rejected the change in substance betrayed him. Hence the Council of Trent, through its second canon was emphatic on the ‘change in the substance’ of bread as a way of turning down the views of Luther<sup>436</sup> but there are great agreements in today’s ecumenical approaches.

Furthermore, Luther also dismissed the sacrificial element of the Eucharist although he defended a somatic real presence of Christ in the gifts of bread and wine against the spiritualists such as Karlstadt, and the Swiss reformers. Because since 1524, Karlstadt, has introduced a purely spiritualist interpretation concerning the words of institution: “Jesus pointed to himself with the words of institution.”<sup>437</sup>

His critique of Transubstantiation weakens the argument concerning the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. If the species are not converted into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, it means that they cannot also be an oblation of his body and blood. In this respect, Luther questioned the much-cherished position of the Eucharist as sacrifice since Jesus Christ did not offer himself to God but Christ was rather given by God to man. Thus, Luther seems to have lost sight of the fact that, Catholic Theology offers a two-fold giving and a two-fold receiving in relation to the Eucharist as well. This is indicated in the First Eucharistic Prayer:

Father, accept this offering from your whole family. [...] Make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth. [...]

Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven. Then as we receive from this altar the sacred body and blood of your son, let us be filled with every grace and blessing.<sup>438</sup>

Luther emphasized on faith (*sola fide*) more than good works hence he regarded justification as a divine gift from God to his sinful children which needed no individual’s efforts in earning a person’s salvation. For Luther, a person is only justified by faith and not by any good work. He fundamentally regarded the notion of Eucharist as sacrifice as a ‘good work’ which is offered to God to appease him and thereby receive favours from him. Inferring from this position of Luther, God’s gift is gratuitous which is regardless of people’s efforts and good works. Hence, he saw the Eucharist as a sacrament given by God and not a sacrifice because that sacrifice was offered

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>437</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 250.

<sup>438</sup> First Eucharistic Prayer.

by Christ once and for all (Heb. 10:12) on the cross. Consequently, he held the notion that the Mass is a sacrament through which Jesus Christ offers himself to humanity once again and not human beings giving something to Christ.

Hence, if the Mass is a true sacrifice as taught in Eucharistic Theology, then it is a new sacrifice working against the Calvary sacrifice which was offered by Jesus Christ which is unacceptable to God. This implication of this Lutheran position points to the fact that the Eucharistic sacrifice celebrated by the Church or which the ministerial priesthood offering Jesus Christ to the Father, i.e., a ‘good work’.<sup>439</sup> Luther therefore shifts from sacramental offering to the practice of personal prayers as the only way to have an upward movement to God.

### **5.6.2 Ulrich Zwingli and Eucharistic Theology**

Zwingli (1484-1531) is one of the famous contributors to the age of reformation. The works of Ulrich Zwingli is somehow different in comparison to those of Luther and Calvin in relation to the Eucharistic doctrine and this position of Zwingli nearly caused a division among the reformers themselves. Also, his ideas concerning the Eucharist also widened the gap between both positions maintained by the Churches. At one side of the coin, he reasoned together with Luther in rejecting the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist whereas on the other side, he, unlike Luther, rejects the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Zwingli holds the belief that, the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is purely symbolic and not realistic as Luther understands the presence of Christ in bread and wine to be.

It is worthy to note that, he preferred to use the term the “Lord’s Supper” and he regarded this as a memorial celebration with two important elements, namely, confession of the death of Christ and the shedding of Blood as a form of reconciliation with God the Father. Zwingli explains that just as the Passover meal is a remembrance of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt so also the Eucharist is a memorial of the death of Christ on the cross. In other words, the Lord's Supper is not the body and blood of Christ, but bread and wine “as a reminder, praise and thanksgiving for the fact that he suffered death for us and shed his blood in order to make our sins clean.”<sup>440</sup>

Therefore he believes in this anamnetic presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He refers to the bread and wine used during the Last Supper as merely signs of the Body and Blood of Jesus

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<sup>439</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 187.

<sup>440</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 253.

Christ. Thus, he considers the reception and eating of the body as senseless and monstrous. He explains:

I have now refuted, I hope, this senseless notion about bodily flesh. In doing that my only object was to prove that to teach that the bodily and sensible Flesh of Christ is eaten when we give thanks to God is not only impious but also foolish and monstrous, unless perhaps one is living among the Anthropophagi.<sup>441</sup>

The teachings of Luther and Zwingli differ at this point: while Zwingli was advocating for *manducatio spiritualis*, Luther was for *manducatio corporalis et oralis* concerning the reception of the Holy Communion.<sup>442</sup>

According to Zwingli, the “Verba Institutionis” has a figurative meaning, that is, the words; ‘This is my body, which is given up for you.....’ is used in a figurative sense therefore the word, ‘This is my body....’ means nothing other than the ‘*significatio corporis Christi*’ which is identical to the *commemoratio corporis* of the institution report.<sup>443</sup>

For Zwingli, the presence of Jesus Christ can be located among the congregation according to his divine nature. Thus, he defines sacrament as “the sign of a holy thing” with an earlier explanation that, “when I say: The sacrament of the Lord’s body, I am only referring to that bread which is the symbol of the body of Jesus Christ who suffered death for the sake of humanity.<sup>444</sup> In this sense, Zwingli regards sacraments as containing only material elements which have nothing to do with divinity and that, it is the congregation which is transformed into the body of Christ and not the bread and wine.

Zwingli, employing the Platonic theory of dualism, explains the separation between spirit and matter therefore the Holy Spirit does not need sacraments to achieve its divine purpose as the Church wants us to believe. For him, the two natures of Jesus Christ – divine and human- are separated from each other. Understood in this way, he believes that the divine nature of Christ remained in heaven during the incarnation and it was only the human Jesus who came on this earth, suffered, died, resurrected and eventually ascended into heaven. Like Luther, it is faith which decides and not earthly or material things. Therefore the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist comes about through contemplation of faith. In sum, the bread and wine used during the Eucharistic celebration are only signs which remind us of the death of Jesus Christ. This

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<sup>441</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 188. See also Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 1525, 231.

<sup>442</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 256.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid, 252.

<sup>444</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 219.

position of Zwingli was later debunked by Luther in 1526, by using his ‘doctrine of ubiquity’<sup>445</sup> to resolve the presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. It is worthy to note the importance of these approaches as historically oriented.

### 5.6.3 John Calvin and the Eucharistic Theology

Another reformer whose teachings concerning the Eucharist is John Calvin. He was a French theologian who was born in 1509 and died in 1564. Calvin was a prominent French Protestant reformer during the second generation of the reformation. Calvin, together with Luther condemned the doctrine of transubstantiation; and he also rejected Zwingli’s understanding of the sacrament as symbolic. Just like Luther and Zwingli, John Calvin also rejected the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist as maintained in Catholic doctrine. He opines that salvation of humanity is the sole prerogative of God’s grace which is received in faith.

Concerning the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as taught in Eucharistic theology,<sup>446</sup> Calvin rejects this catholic position. However, he sees the sacrament of the Eucharist as God’s way, “to transmit to the believing folk the benefit of the sacrifice offered to himself by his son”.<sup>447</sup> Calvin holds the view that, the bread and wine are an image of communion with Jesus Christ, and through the bread and wine, the Christian community is connected to Jesus Christ who resides in heaven. Although Christ is not present in the signs of bread and wine, believers grow in closer relationship with Him in his Spirit into one body and hence become one with Him in body, soul and spirit.<sup>448</sup> In this sense, we can deduce from the fact that, Calvin, just like Zwingli accepted the *manducatio spiritualis* in relation to the reception of the Holy Communion against the *manducatio impiorum* of Luther.<sup>449</sup> Hence he encourages Christians of the frequent reception of the Communion under both species although he condemned the veneration of the sacrament.

Calvin saw the adoration of the sacrament as idolatry and superstitious. He writes:

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<sup>445</sup> The doctrine of ubiquity employed by Luther states that the transfigured corporeality of the crucified, risen and exalted Lord participates in the omnipresence of God and can therefore be present in different places at the same time. Cf. Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*. 254.

<sup>446</sup> Jesus Christ is himself present with his body and blood in the Eucharist.

<sup>447</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 216.

<sup>448</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 257.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

“... What then? Shall we deny that this is superstitious worship when men prostrate themselves before bread to worship [Jesus] Christ there? Doubtless the Council of Nicaea meant to forestall this evil when it forbade us to fix our humble attention upon the symbols set before us.”<sup>450</sup>

It is worthy to note that Calvin maintains the belief that “... Christ’s Flesh does not enter into us” and that “... we maintain no other Presence than that of a relationship [between the elements and the Lord’s Body and Blood], he yet maintains that the faithful are ‘substantially’ united to Christ.”<sup>451</sup> For Calvin, this means that, when we receive the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit unites the heavenly Lord to us in a spiritual way as our food. In other words, the Eucharist, according to Calvin, becomes a mystery. He explains further:

“Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s Flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers our senses.... The Spirit truly unites things separated in space.”<sup>452</sup>

Just like Luther, Calvin accepted the Lord’s Supper as an offering of thanksgiving and praise. For Calvin, the Lord’s Supper can only be called a sacrifice in an inappropriate sense, provided it is a “memory”, an “image” and lastly, a testimony of the unique sacrifice of Christ on the cross. He maintains that, the Lord’s Supper is not an offering but a divine gift from God, which was with thanksgiving and that Christ, gave us a table at which we should eat, but not one Altar on which a sacrifice is to be offered.<sup>453</sup> But we can say that Calvin does see the Eucharist as a sacrifice due to the ‘anamnetic’ aspect in his position.

In sum, there are some common characteristic among the reformers although each of them had his own unique approach in this respect. All of them rejected the sacrificial character of the doctrine of transubstantiation in relation to the Eucharist, although the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is acknowledged by all of them. Secondly, they also stressed on faith as a prerequisite in our Christian life.

In conclusion to the age of reformation, the great awareness brought about by the reformers through the controversies they presented led to the initiation of some practical changes as regards some theological issues in the Church and prominent among them was Eucharistic theology. From the above, we can bear witness to the development of Eucharistic theology during this period of reformation which emerged as a result of the separate contributions of the reformers.

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<sup>450</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 190. Also see, Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. IV, chap. 17, 12, 1373.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid. 191.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 240.

The Catholic Church, through the Council of Trent responded to these various criticism raised by the reformers.

## **5.7. The Council of Trent**

The Catholic Church's initiative in responding to the reformers is as a result of the Council of Trent. The prime purpose of this council was to address the concerns<sup>454</sup> of the protestant reformers and also put in place measures towards church reforms. It was the first council to deal with Eucharistic theology exhaustively and its teachings are important for theological debates today. In other words, the efforts of the council were to explain and teach the church's position on the Eucharist by defining the real presence of Jesus Christ in opposition to the teaching of Zwingli.

Some major highlights of the Council of Trent were discussions concerning the real presence of Christ, the controversial issue of the chalice for the laity; the Eucharist as a true and real sacrifice that is offered to God which is also a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that serves the commemoration of the sacrifice on the cross at Calvary; the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice which is offered for both the living and the dead, purposely for sins committed, for satisfactions, and other areas of the Eucharistic theology.

### **5.7.1 Theology of the Eucharist as True Sacrifice**

The Eucharist as a sacrifice is one of the three dimensions of the Eucharist aside Eucharist as real presence and Eucharist as communion.<sup>455</sup> The concept of sacrifice in relation to the Eucharist has in recent years been discussed in our contemporary society due to its complexity in sacred contexts but prior to this, it is worthy to note that the notion of the Eucharist as a sacrifice had also been rejected by the Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This recent debate has become necessary because some Protestant theologians still have a different understanding of the Eucharistic theology in relation to its sacrificial nature although Jesus offered himself as a sacrificial victim on the cross for the salvation of humankind.

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<sup>454</sup> Heresies committed by the proponents of Protestantism. The Council also issued key statements and clarifications on Church doctrines and teaching such as original sin, the Mass, sacred tradition, etc.

<sup>455</sup> Catechesis on the Eucharist and the New Evangelization (Fruits of the 4<sup>th</sup> National Eucharistic Congress; National Catholic Secretariat, Accra- Ghana: May 2018.), 5.

As a response to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century reformers concerning the sacrificial element of the Eucharist, the Council affirms the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus Christ which is connected with the Last Supper. The Council further contends that, the action of Jesus Christ in offering bread and wine as prefigured by Melchizedek was also to empower the disciples with priestly authority to enable them to continue the offering of this sacrifice instituted by him. It is worthy to note that this earlier point is very important due to the reason of the reformers denying the cultic priesthood or the ministerial priesthood in favour of the common priesthood.<sup>456</sup>

Trent states that Jesus Christ had intended in making the last Supper, "... a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice once accomplished on the cross might be represented."<sup>457</sup> Therefore in discerning about the position of Trent in relation to sacrifice and priesthood, Rahner writes, "... the Council of Trent sees this relationship of sacrifice of the Mass to the sacrifice on the cross to lay above all the fact that there is in both the same High Priest and the same sacrificial victim."<sup>458</sup>

In this way, the Mass becomes a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross therefore the Council of Trent affirms that deep relationship between the Mass and the sacrifice on the cross. This explanation from the Council confirms this relationship by comparing the Eucharist to the Jewish Passover meal. By recalling to mind the deliverance of their ancestors from the land of Egypt, the Jews performs the rituals as commanded by Yahweh to their forefathers, this is not different from the last supper where Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist and instructed his disciples to undertake this new rite in calling to mind his death. In making use of the patristic notion of anamnesis, the Council of Trent reiterates that, the Eucharist does not merely remind us of the death of Christ as a past event but most importantly, the act of commemorating such a mystery makes it a present reality. This realistic presence of Christ is due to the fact that, it is Christ himself who is "... immolated under [the] visible signs by the Church through the priests in memory of His own passage from this world to [God] the father, when by shedding of His blood He redeemed and delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us [humanity]

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<sup>456</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, "Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice", 225.

<sup>457</sup> DS, 1740.

<sup>458</sup> Karl Rahner. "The Eucharist and Suffering" in: *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III., trans., Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger. (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 161.



into his kingdom [cf. Col. 1. 13].”<sup>459</sup> By virtue of Jesus Christ himself as the sacrificial victim for the atonement for the sins of the world, Hans Jorissen states:

“The Mass draws its atoning power entirely and solely from the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross, whose healing power and fruits of salvation are mediated or rather applied through the Mass: The fruits of the bloody sacrifice on the cross are abundantly received through this unbloody one (which is the Eucharist), and, as the Council says with regard to the participants, (only) by those who approach God with a right disposition, i.e., 'with a sincere heart and right faith, with timidity and reverence, contrite and penitent.’”<sup>460</sup>

This bloody sacrifice on the Cross is what the Church celebrates in an unbloody sacrifice on the altar as the Eucharist. Thus, the Eucharistic meal is a sacrifice when it represents Jesus’ gift of life which includes his devotion to the will of God the Father. The Council of Trent affirmed that: “The sacrifice of the Mass is not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving nor a simple commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished on the cross but a propitiatory sacrifice.”<sup>461</sup> Therefore, referring to the Eucharist as Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross must be understood that this sacrifice is no longer offered in a bloody manner as it happened on the cross. In this sacrifice, “There is one single and unique victim: he is the same who now makes his offering by way of the ministry of priests, the one who offered himself on the cross. Only the manner of offering differs.”<sup>462</sup>

The reformers opted for the common or universal priesthood of all believers since there was no need for mediation in their teachings. For instance, John Calvin taught that, Christ, being immortal, needs no vicar to replace him. Therefore the Father designated him ‘priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’.<sup>463</sup> Based on this notion of the reformers, the Council explicitly gives prominence to this office of priesthood within the eucharistic community. For the Council of Trent, the priestly character of the officiating minister is closely connected to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. Trent, through the *Doctrine concerning the Sacrament of Order* proclaims:

Sacrifice and priesthood are by the ordinance of God so united that both have existed in every law. Since therefore in the New Testament the Catholic Church has received from the institution of Christ the holy, visible sacrifice of the Eucharist, it must also be confessed that there is in that Church a new, visible and eternal priesthood, into which the old has been translated. (DS 1764)

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<sup>459</sup> DS 1741.

<sup>460</sup> Hans Jorissen. “Das Verhältnis von Kreuzesopfer und Messopfer auf dem Konzil von Trient”, in: Albert Gerhards and Klemens Richer (ed.), *Das Opfer* (Herder, 2000), 232.

<sup>461</sup> The Official Catechetical Text of the Great Jubilee of the Year (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa. 2000), 80.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>463</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. Xviii, 2, 1430.

Based on this declaration from the Council of Trent, the ministerial priesthood is invested with the authority of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of Jesus Christ under the Eucharistic species.<sup>464</sup> As inculturation has always encouraged participation, the lay faithful who forms part of the Church also offer Jesus Christ as the victim in the sacrifice through the priest and with him. In emphasizing on this earlier statement of the part played by the lay faithful during the celebration of the Eucharist, Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* states:

“... The sacred ministers represent not only our saviour but also the whole mystical body and each one of its members; in [the Eucharist] sacrifice the faithful are associated in the common prayer and supplication and, through the hands of the priest, whose voice alone renders the immaculate Lamb present on the altar, they themselves offer to the eternal Father this most pleasing Victim of praise and propitiation for the needs of the whole Church.” (DS 1764)

The two-fold functions of the ministerial priesthood are emphasized by the Council of Trent. One of the prime function of the priest, according to the Council is, the priest renders Christ—the sacrificial victim—present and offers him to God the Father as his representative on earth. Whereas, on the other hand, it is Christ, who, serving simultaneously as priest and victim, offers himself in the role of a ministerial priest. The Second Vatican Council in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (7) re-echoed this double function of ministerial priesthood. Hence, the Council of Trent proclaims Jesus Christ who offered himself as a sacrificial victim on the cross for the salvation of humanity, is the same victim in which the priest offers during the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. Although the victim is the same, it is the mode of offering which differs; while the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was bloody, that of the Eucharist which takes place on the altar is unbloody or bloodless. The different mode of celebration does not in any way belittle the other therefore the Council posited:

“The fruits of this oblation (that is, the bloody one) are received in abundance through this unbloody oblation. By no means, then, does the latter detract from the former.”<sup>465</sup>

### **5.7.2 The Eucharistic Real Presence**

The Council of Trent, after affirming Jesus Christ as the real victim that is offered during the celebration of the Eucharist, responded also to the question of his presence as an answer to the

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid, 1771.

<sup>465</sup> DS 1743; ND 1548.

reformers. The Eucharist as real presence is another dimension of Catholic worship in relation to the Holy Eucharist. For instance, Zwingli opined that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is only figurative and symbolic whereas Calvin also maintains the separation of the two natures - divine and human- of Christ. To these allegations, the Council of Trent maintained the position concerning the two natures of Christ. For the Council Fathers, none of the natures is separated from each other; they are united under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine. Basing its stance on the patristic and scholastic theologians, the Council of Trent declares:

“For the apostles had not yet received the Eucharist from the hands of the Lord (cf. Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22) when He Himself told them that it was truly His body that He was giving them. This has always been the belief of the Church of God that immediately after the consecration the true body and blood of our Lord, together with His soul and divinity, exist under the species of bread and wine. The Body exists under the species of bread and the blood under the species of wine by virtue of the words. But the body, too, exists under the species of the wine, the blood [also] under the species of the bread, and the soul under both species in virtue of the natural connection and concomitance by which the parts of Christ the Lord, who has already risen from the dead to die no more (cf. Rom. 6:9), are united together.”<sup>466</sup>

The Council of Trent in further agreement with the above passage hinted about the Last Supper account and affirmed:

Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly His body that He was offering under the species of bread [...], it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now again declares that, by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes a place a change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and the whole substance of wine into the substance of His blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly named transubstantiation.<sup>467</sup>

An assessment of the above two passages provides us with the admission that the Council dwelled so much on the Thomistic concepts of natural concomitance and transubstantiation in making such final declarations although no philosophical method was employed by the Council Fathers. It is worthy to note that, the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, according to Masure, “is not therefore the Person of the Saviour but His Body and Blood.”<sup>468</sup> This description of Masure leads to the understanding that, if the bread and wine used during the Eucharistic celebration are truly the body and blood of Christ, then Christ is the sacrificial victim who is offered in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

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<sup>466</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 195. Also see, DS 1640.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Eugene Masure. *The Sacrifice of the Mystical Body*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), 135.

Furthermore, the Council of Trent once again made use of the Thomistic concepts of natural concomitance and transubstantiation in their explanation concerning the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. For the Council Fathers, the reality of the body and blood of Christ's presence under both species of bread and wine in the Eucharist means transubstantiation has taken place. In agreement with the position of the Council of Trent, Masure writes: "if the body of Christ is present, that is because there can be no sacrifice without a victim, and indeed because in the traditional idiom of humanity, victim and sacrifice are one."<sup>469</sup>

Hence, the Council of Trent teaches that the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice is not a mere symbol of bread and wine, rather in the totality of his being as both the living and glorified Lord. Christ offered himself once on the cross, and he offers himself always in an unbloody manner in the celebration of the Eucharist. Trent disputes the reformers' attempt of demonstrating the presence of Christ in the Eucharist as by the power of grace. The Eucharist is the "self presentation of Christ as the victim and priest in a sacramental manner. The Eucharist thus presents the Paschal Mystery of [Jesus] Christ."<sup>470</sup>

According to Faber, the presence of Jesus Christ in the celebration of the liturgy can take place in a variety of ways such as the host of a meal, as the one who shares in his destiny and also, as one who chooses a concrete, bodily form in communicating himself by the offering of bread and wine as a sign of himself. Therefore, anyone who receives these gifts of bread and wine receives Christ himself. The starting point begins with the words of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper: "This is my Body..."<sup>471</sup> The bread and wine are images of the bodily presence of Christ among us and the symbolic meaning of this statement in the reception of bread and wine does not exclude the real presence of Christ in ancient thought. Today the "substance" is understood in a material way and not spiritually as in Antiquity and the middle Ages. As the movement of the interest in the real somatic presence was isolated from the personal and actual presence of Christ in the Eucharist, there emerges a breakup insofar as the signs and reality are no longer seen together. In solving the situation faced by the Christians in the medieval period concerning the reception of the Eucharist, either in mystery or in truth, a confession is formulated:

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<sup>469</sup> Masure, *The Sacrifice of the Mystical Body*, 135. See also, Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 195.

<sup>470</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 195-196.

<sup>471</sup> Words are not directly interpreted in the New Testament writings but in the Old Testament, the Christians were convinced of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ under the forms of bread and wine in the Eucharist. They are "eucharistic bread" (Justin, 1 *Apology* 67, 5: CorpAp 1,186.

“Bread and wine that are on the altar are not after the consecration only sacrament, but also the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they become sensual, not only in the sacrament, but in truth, touched and broken by the hands of the priests and chewed by the teeth of the believers.”<sup>472</sup>

In this way, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic figures is described as the transformation of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, while the perceptible properties of bread and wine remain unchanged as an attempt of solving this situation. Thus, the Thomistic doctrine of transubstantiation is explained differently by the use of concepts such as trans-signification, trans-finalization<sup>473</sup> etc to recognise the presence of Jesus Christ in the forms of bread and wine.

Faber is of the view that, “The connection of the somatic real presence to the personal presence of Jesus Christ results in a change of perspective that does not exclude belief in a sacramental mode of presence, but [rather] underlines its meaning: the Eucharist is an encounter event whose subject is Jesus Christ. He wants to allow encounters to happen and to communicate as the Lord's Supper reveals, in person, i.e. in a concrete form of expression of the person.”<sup>474</sup> Christians must therefore understand that, the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic meal must be seen as a spiritual encounter with Christ and with one another coming together to commune with one another through sharing as we prepare ourselves in anticipation of the Lord. It is this ecclesial body which gathers together to fellowship through eating and drinking as they await the coming of the Lord (1Cor 11: 26). Understood in this way, the presence of Christ in the context of a meal is an ‘expressive way of offering himself as a gift’. In the Eucharistic encounter, God communicates himself with the receiving community as in the incarnation event through the ‘*fiat*’ of Mary. Faber states:

“the incarnational movement into history, through which the closeness of God takes on a concrete physical form, is not a particular phenomenon, but remains in the life of the church through the self-presentation of Jesus in bread and wine in the innermost center of Christian life.”<sup>475</sup>

Thus, the goal of this encounter or self-communication is the transformation of the receiving people who forms the worshipping community. This Eucharistic worship came into being due to the substantial and permanent transformation of the Eucharistic gifts and adoration in relation to the Lord who is present and who lays hold of the signs of bread and wine and accomplishes these

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<sup>472</sup> Cf. *Professio fidei*, 1059: DH 690; see also DH 700.

<sup>473</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 114.

<sup>474</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 115.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid*, 116.

signs permanently in order to communicate them. Therefore, the Church is born and renewed as the Eucharistic meal brings about the unity of the people of God (LG. 11). In sum, the Council of Trent was emphatic on the Eucharist as the sacrificial meal where Jesus Christ who offered himself as the victim on the cross is now offering himself on the altar through the actions of the priests. Meal therefore becomes an important part of this Eucharistic sacrifice just as meal sharing is an essential part in the Akan practice of sacrifice.

### **5.7.3 The Meal Component of the Eucharist**

The development of the Eucharist as a meal can be traced to the Last Supper meal of Jesus Christ and his disciples. It is in this celebration of the Eucharist that Christians come together to be fed from the same table as a community as communion is also an important dimension of the Eucharist. It can also be seen as the farewell meal of Jesus to his disciples before his death on the cross as atonement for the world. Secondly, the practice of meal is also attached to offering of sacrifice, thus the consumption of such food after the sacrifice is offered.

The principal focus of this thesis is assessing the relevance of the Eucharist as a meal in the context of the Akan social ethnic group which acknowledges meal sharing as a communal affair. With this Akan perspective, the Eucharist which is a sacrifice, is also a Christian meal that brings all the ‘People of God’ together irrespective of cultural, tribal or social backgrounds. It is a figure of the sacrifice of Christ which leads the Church, through communion, in the reception of the fullness of the body and blood of Christ under the species of bread and wine.

The basis of this reference to the Eucharist as a meal can be traced to the Last Supper event of Jesus with his disciples which took place prior to his passion, death and resurrection from the dead which won Christians our salvation. However, the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be simply referred to as a “meal” although breaking and distribution of bread and drinking from cups are essential moments of meal sharing. What makes this meal extraordinary as compared to the Passover meal in the Jewish tradition are two distinct actions namely the giving of the bread and the cup with its accompanying blessings. For Söding, these two special actions in this meal mark the communion of the “completed reign of God” which is anticipated.<sup>476</sup> In other words,

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<sup>476</sup> Thomas Söding. “Das Mahl des Herrn. Zur Gestalt und Theologie der ältesten nachösterlichen Tradition”, in: Hilberath, B. J. and Sattler, D. (eds.). *Vorgeschnack: Ökumenische Bemühungen um die Eucharist* (Mainz. 1995), 147.

the Church considers the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the reason for the eschatological salvation.

The importance of eating and drinking in human life is naturally meant to provide strength to every living being and as well as make them mobile. Notwithstanding the human need for food in order to survive, animals also dwell on food for their existence. It is in the light of this statement that Nocke emphasizes on the essential intake of food by human beings and grinding the food. Aside these health benefits, meals also play a significant role during feasts and festive occasions by inviting people to partake in meal sharing thereby bringing them together. Every meal is preceded by an invitation. A biblical example in relation to invitation is:

All you who are thirsty come to the water; all you who have no money come. Yes without money and at no cost, come, buy and drink wine and milk. Why send money on what is not food and labor for what does not satisfy? Listen to me and you will eat well; you will enjoy the richest of food (Isa 55:1-2).

According to Nocke, it is in eating food and drinking together that community is “represented and established”, and meal in this instance becomes a sign of communion with God the Creator who gives and human receives.<sup>477</sup> Human action of thanksgiving stems from this fact of receiving from our Creator, the gift of food which strengthens and maintains our very existence of life and creates a community out of it. In this case, whereas the daily offering of meals becomes a moment of thanksgiving to God by the society, attendance at sacred meals such as the Eucharist becomes a moment of thanksgiving to God in memory of the salvation history in the life of humanity. Due to this belief, its preparation obligates everyone to participate and as well partake in the eating of the food in the community.

Notwithstanding, the communion of meals which goes with sharing is what transpired at the Last Supper when Jesus pronounced these words while inviting his disciples: “Take, eat, ... drink!” (Matt. 26:26ff). Thus, the sharing of meals play a significant role in every festivity or feast as the participants become united with each other through the act of eating, drinking and sharing life together. This is the Pauline understanding of the Christian Eucharist, in other words, the “Lord’s Supper” (1Cor 11:20) which is based on the banquet of Israel where all the participants become united with one another and God. In the same light, meal sharing and drinks also become an important aspect of festivals among all tribes (Akans inclusive) in Ghana since it

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<sup>477</sup> Franz-Jozef Nocke. *Sakramententheologie*. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1997), 36.

becomes a communion or fellowship with friends, visitors, foreigners, deities as well as the ancestors who still form part of the living community.

As already stated, the Eucharist is a memorial sacrificial meal offered by Christ for the salvation of humanity and it is for this purpose of new life that Bachl wrote about the “anthropological depth dimension” of meals. Christ echoes this newness of life and proclaims; “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (John 6:54). Hence the Eucharistic meal becomes a memorial of the life-giving of Jesus Christ for the sake of the salvation of humanity which happened on the Cross, and as well reminds Christians of the increasing presence of Christ among the ‘People of God’ in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Thus, Christians celebrate God’s covenant with humanity in the form of a meal which is the Eucharist. It is in this meal that bread and wine are to be taken and blessed by the priest through the prayer of consecration, distributed and accepted as the real body and blood of Christ who gave his whole self out to the entire world. By employing the concept of transubstantiation, he who receives the consecrated species of bread and wine truly receives the body and blood of Christ, so also he who receives Holy Communion under only one species, receives the whole Christ. This teaching, according to the Council of Trent is possible bearing in mind the doctrine of concomitance proposed by Thomas Aquinas. The Council Fathers outlined the importance of the reception of the Sacramental meal in this statement:

Our Saviour, therefore, instituted this sacrament before leaving this world to go to the Father. He poured out, as it were, in this sacrament the riches of His divine love for men, “causing His wonderful works to be remembered” (cf. Ps. 111/110)4), and He wanted us when receiving it to celebrate His memory (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24) and to proclaim His death until He comes to judge the world. ... His will was that this sacrament be received as the soul’s spiritual food (Mt. 26:26) which would nourish and strengthen ... those who live by the life of Him who said: “He who eats Me will live because of Me” (Jn. 6: 57); and that it be also a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sin. Christ willed, moreover, that this sacrament be a pledge of our future glory and our everlasting happiness and, likewise, a symbol of that one “Body” of which He himself is “the Head” ..., and to which He willed that we, as members, should be linked by the closest bonds of faith, hope and love, so that we might all say the same thing, and that there might be no dissensions among us.<sup>478</sup>

The impulse of this statement from the Council of Trent is encouraging a full participation with Christ in the Paschal Mystery celebrated and the belief that reception of the body and blood of Christ brings a union between humanity and Jesus Christ. Trent is of the view that, the

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<sup>478</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 196.



Eucharistic meal is not just an ordinary meal but embedded with the power of forgiveness for those who receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The importance of food to the human body as stated by Bachl is a part of a system of life that supports, strengthens and makes the human body healthy<sup>479</sup> and he is of the view that:

Eating and drinking are avenues that humanity appropriate reality and actually maintain it. Human beings eat because they like it and taste the food. As they taste the food, they are tasting the world as well as experiencing the nourishment of food and thereby approving its delicacy as well. In meal sharing, human beings enjoy themselves by using that moment as a medium of interacting with one another as they sit at the table and find taste in each other.<sup>480</sup>

This is the rationale behind the act of giving thanks at meals by the Akan due to the benefits derived from food. With this understanding, it becomes easier and proper to assist the Akan to see the sacrament of the Eucharist as a meal due to their foreknowledge of the importance of meals in their cultural setting. Likewise in the Eucharist, there is gratitude, happiness, approval, appreciation, acceptance, acknowledgement of the presence of God among the participants and the world at large.

Notwithstanding, meal-sharing becomes an important activity of every sacrifice even in the African Traditional religion. Therefore, the celebration of the Eucharist is fulfilled in a meal setting with Christ himself inviting all men and women to come and sit at this table. This invitation extended by Christ to every individual to participate in this meal symbolizes the unity of humanity in the celebration of the Eucharist. The significance of this unity is realized when Christians express their identity as a Church when they come together to celebrate the Eucharist. Also, in this sense, Jesus Christ unites all the people together with himself in a saving manner. In effect, “the actual sacramental signs of the Eucharist are those of a meal: bread, as basic food, is shared to express fellowship, whilst wine is poured to symbolize joy and a fullness of life.”<sup>481</sup>

The liturgy, especially the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby Christ’s faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.

Notwithstanding the above question posed concerning the Eucharistic meal, Sarpong emphasizes on the fact that the Eucharist does not only require the ‘People of God’ to be united, it actually unites all humanity irrespective of linguistic, racial, tribal, religious and doctrinal

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<sup>479</sup> Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 11.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>481</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 197.

differences.<sup>482</sup> Emphasizing on the bond of fraternity emerging from the Eucharist, Pope Benedict XVI is of the view that this unity which emerges in the Eucharistic meal is stronger than that of human families among the ‘People of God’. Thus, the Eucharist ‘makes’ the participants more than blood relations by a solemn declaration that:

“I exhort the whole Church of Africa to show particular care for the celebration of the Eucharist, memorial of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, sign of unity and bond of charity, paschal banquet and pledge of eternal life...”<sup>483</sup>

Still touching on the value of togetherness or unity which comes up during the celebration of this sacramental meal, Akans (for the purpose of this study) are enjoined to participate fully in the Eucharistic meal. Hence the Church’s Constitution on Sacred Liturgy explicitly states; ‘a full, active and conscious participation in the Liturgy (SC. 14) must be adopted by all the ‘People of God’. This ecclesial statement reaffirms the bond of unity which is a result of the participation in this Eucharistic meal by which the Body and Blood of Christ are consumed as well as sharing life together.

## **5.8. The Second Vatican Council and Eucharistic Theology in Contemporary Period**

Although much emphasis had been placed on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist by several theologians, the question regarding the meal aspect of the Eucharist had also been considered. Contemporary theology has been in force before the convocation of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII in 1959 but we shall make use of the Vatican II as the starting point for the development of Eucharistic theology in contemporary times. This section therefore seeks to consider the contributions of Vatican II to Eucharistic theology which becomes the starting point for inculturation.

### **5.8.1 Vatican II and Eucharistic Theology**

The Second Vatican Council as an ecumenical council was convoked by Pope John XXIII in Rome on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1959 which was later completed by Pope Paul VI on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965. It was the twenty-first ecumenical council by the Catholic Church’s chronological record. The

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<sup>482</sup> Anokye, *Eucharistic Spirituality in a new Millennium*, 24.

<sup>483</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus: Apostolic Exhortation on the Commitment of Africa*. 153.

Vatican II Council gave birth to several documents comprising of Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations, and one of such Council documents is the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy which is also referred to as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

One key word of this thesis, Eucharist falls under the central theme in this ecclesial document which is captioned in the second chapter of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: “The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist”. It is in the view of this title that Gakpe-Ntsri asserts: “Vatican II places the Eucharist in the context of the Paschal Mystery [of Christ].”<sup>484</sup> So the Council’s reference to the Eucharist as a mystery is in the sense of the great sacrifice that was accomplished by his death on the cross which has won salvation for the world. In other words, the Eucharist celebrates the whole mystery of Jesus Christ giving his body and blood as a mark of the redemption of the world. The Council further contends:

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, Our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us (SC. 47).

The Council’s position on the Eucharist is closely linked with the sacrifice on the cross hence the Eucharist is referred to as a sacrifice. The Council demonstrates the relation between the ‘bloody’ sacrifice on the cross and the ‘unbloody’ sacrifice of the Eucharist which takes place under the form of bread and wine. Indeed, the result of the self-giving of Christ through his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection has yielded salvation for the whole world.

Most importantly, it is clear that the success of the institution of the Eucharistic sacrifice dwells on the meal aspect where Christ gives out his Body to eat and Blood to drink. This sign of love expressed by Jesus Christ is also evident in the African understanding of meal-sharing where it signifies acts of charity, unity, communal living and hospitality. Thus, all the actions and gestures in these events which sum up the entire mystery of Jesus Christ is what is celebrated in the Eucharist. Hence the Council presents the Church itself as the sacrament which emerged from the “... side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross” (SC. 5).

Another aspect of the teaching of the Council on the Eucharist is ‘memorial’ due to the fulfillment of the redemptive deed of Christ. The Council uses this term in the sense of the theology of the Patristic. It is worthy to note that, there is no considerable difference between the

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<sup>484</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”, 224.

Eucharistic theologies of Trent and Vatican II. Rather, it is only the approach which differs: for example, while Vatican II employs biblical sense in explaining the Eucharist, Trent uses the scholastic approach. And placed the liturgy in the in the context of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Fathers had often taught.<sup>485</sup> Ratzinger also affirms the different approaches used by these two councils as the application of tradition. He writes:

“Whereas Trent had used the idea of tradition only in the plural – as traditions—Vatican II, except for one quotation from Scripture (2 Thess. 2: 15), uses it only in the singular: *traditio*. This makes clear...the difference in the two positions....Vatican II starts from the abstract concept, whereas Trent was concerned with the concrete phenomenon, the actual existing traditions, by which it meant the form of the Church’s life as it was actually practiced: the Lord’s Supper was celebrated as a sacrifice in the form of the Mass, there were days of fasting, one baptized children,...etc.<sup>486</sup> [Vatican II, on the other hand, deals with] the total nature of tradition: primarily, it means simply the many-layered yet one presence of Christ throughout all the ages; it means the totality of Christ in the world.”<sup>487</sup>

Jesus Christ in instituting this sacrament through his actions and gestures at the Last Supper feast admonished his disciples to always perform this activity in his memory. He commands, “Do this in memory of me” culminates in the memorial or Anamnesis which is always accompanied with the invocation of the Holy Spirit which is also known as the Epiclesis. In agreeing with Vatican II, Max Thurian states: “It is the memorial of all that God has done for our salvation, in the incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension of Christ. This presence of Christ, in his sacrificial memorial, is the fruit of the living word and the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>488</sup>

Reaffirming this real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic liturgy, the Council states:

To accomplish so great a work of Christ is always present: in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations: he is present in the sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,’ but especially in the Eucharistic species... he is present in the Church (SC 7).

The Council teaches that Jesus Christ is always present in the Church as he promised: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18: 20). Thus, the presence of Christ in this sacrifice of the Eucharist is evident in the Eucharistic species, in the person of the minister, in the gathered assembly and lastly, in the word because it is Jesus himself who speaks (SC 7). This understanding means that the presence of Christ in the

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<sup>485</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “*Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*”, 247.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid. Also see Joseph Ratzinger. “*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Ch. II,*” in CDV, Vol. III., 183.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Thurian, *The Mystery of the Eucharist: An Ecumenical Approach*, 10.

sacraments cannot be undermined whenever a person receives the Eucharistic species, that person receives the ‘actual’ and ‘real’ Christ (SC 7). The Council further emphasizes on the Holy Communion with the understanding of “a paschal banquet in which [Jesus] Christ is consumed” (SC 47) although He is also present in the species.

The Council further declares, “The Liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ” (SC 47) and this priestly duty is performed in communion with all the “People of God”. Although the priestly office is identified with the Eucharist, the Council acknowledges the role of the lay people in this celebration. The Council writes: “... the ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he enjoys [...] he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, joins in the offering of the Eucharist. [Thus] They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of the holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.” (LG 10)

Concerning the presence of Christ among the ‘People of God’, Power, in agreement with Vatican II, writes: “[Vatican II] placed the Tridentine emphasis on Christ’s presence in the Eucharistic species in the context of his presence in the assembly, in the world and in the minister.”<sup>489</sup> In this case, coming together to celebrate the memorial of Christ in the context of a Eucharistic meal, bearing in mind the spirit of Vatican II, Amadi writes, “... the Eucharist becomes really and truly a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity and a Paschal banquet.”<sup>490</sup> Hence the Council’s constitution on the Church states: “In the celebration of the Eucharist, these [fruits] may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord [Jesus Christ]. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrates the world itself to God” (LG 34). For the Council, participation in the Eucharistic meal is very important because it is through its celebration that Catholics sanctify the world they live in with the fruits of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Therefore, participating in the Eucharistic celebration and reception of this sacrament gives Christians the fortitude to overcome some of the social evils faced as human phenomenon because Christ has nailed the world inclusive of our human evils to the cross. Thus, Christians become a new creation in Christ by overcoming our old life and put on the new ‘cloth’ of purity.

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<sup>489</sup> David N. Power. *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 263.

<sup>490</sup> Amadi, *Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*, 160.

This could be the reason behind the calling for an active participation by the people which is propagated by the Council but this call can only be effective when the Eucharistic meal is situated within the context of their local communal meal. Hence the Council states:

“Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture, that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature. Wherever human life is involved, therefore, nature and culture are quite intimately connected one with the other.... Thence it follows that human culture has necessarily a historical and social aspect and the word "culture" also often assumes a sociological and ethnological sense. According to this sense we speak of a plurality of cultures. Different styles of life and multiple scales of values arise from the diverse manner of using things, of laboring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridic institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty. Thus the customs handed down to it form the patrimony proper to each human community...”. (GS 53)

This ecclesial document further states:

“There are many ties between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch.... Likewise the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful. The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man, it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurements of sin...”.(GS 58)

The above two passages depict the importance of culture to Christianity therefore presenting the sacrament of the Eucharist in the context of a communal meal to the Akan is in the right direction. Thus, this Council makes a conscious effort in recognizing and acknowledging the importance of cultures of local Churches such as the African Church with the aim of enhancing a fruitful outcome or dialogue between the different cultures and the Gospel. For instance, the permission given to local Churches to use the vernacular in the celebration of the Eucharist has been remarkable.

### **5.8.2 Post-Vatican II and Ecumenical Eucharistic Theology**

Although the sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacrament which must unify Christians as Christ wills, (John 17:21) there have been a lot of disputes and disagreements regarding this doctrine. The teachings of the Second Vatican Council therefore provide a new ‘platform’ for ecumenical dialogue concerning certain disputed theological doctrines such as Eucharistic theology considering the Catholic and Protestant viewpoints. Significant among some of these

disagreements is the position held by Catholics and the Reformers in relation to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic meal, doctrine of transubstantiation and the mode by which a person receives Jesus Christ in the sacrament.

The Reformer's position of the Eucharist as meal above all other emphasis led to the rejection of the Catholic teaching concerning the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. This denial leads to a different understanding of the doctrine of transubstantiation concerning the presence of Christ in the sacrament and therefore dismissed the idea of regarding the priest as the ordinary minister of the Eucharist.

In the effort of solving this problem of disunity and bringing all the Christian denominations together, Vatican II suggests ways of rebuilding this disunity and togetherness between Catholicism and Protestantism and its result is the Decree on Ecumenism, also known as *Unitatis Redintegratio*.<sup>491</sup>

In making the ecumenical spirit evident, the Council did not necessarily dismissed the Protestant view on the Eucharist. The Council rather recognizes the Protestant approach to an extent when it writes: "... when they [Protestants] commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Lord's Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with [Jesus] Christ and await his coming in glory" (UR 22). It becomes clear by implication that Vatican II does not reject the value of Evangelical celebration of the Lord's Supper.<sup>492</sup> From this recognition given to Protestantism by the Council was a first step considered as regards ecumenical dialogue, whose principal subjects are to consist of "...the doctrine about the Lord's supper,... worship, and ministry in the Church" (UR 22).

Secondly, the reaction of Protestantism towards their traditional belief of not accepting the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist during the first Roman Catholic/Lutheran and Roman Catholic/Methodist ecumenical dialogues was evident.

"The agreed statement of the Roman Catholic/Lutheran World Federation records that the Evangelical Lutherans still prefer to avoid even today any mention of "sacrifice of the Mass" because of the way in which this very term seemed at an earlier age to support an autonomous

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<sup>491</sup> This Latin term means, "Restoration of unity". This decree was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1964.

<sup>492</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 201. Also see Beinert, Wolfgang, and Fiorenza, Schüssler Francis, (eds.) *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 229.

sacrificial power for the priest (*eine selbstmächtige Opferkraft*), which undermined the part of the faithful in the sacrament and their reception of communion.”<sup>493</sup>

Furthermore, the Catholic maintains this position that, the sacrificial victim (Jesus Christ) cannot be anything else but Christ himself, since “... apart from [Jesus] Christ we have no gifts, ... no sacrifice of our own to offer God. All we can plead is Christ, that the sacrificial Lamb and Victim whom the Father Himself has given to us.”<sup>494</sup>

For Power, the above statement is noted to meet the difficulty that the Mass may seem to add something to the sacrifice of the cross.<sup>495</sup> Nevertheless, Power considers the statement of the Commission as “an interesting way round the problem, since one does not find in [the Council of] Trent the statement that the Church offers [Jesus] Christ, ... even though it is said that the victim offered is Christ.”<sup>496</sup>

Another important subject discussed at the level of the ecumenical dialogue is the notion of regarding the Eucharist as memorial. Concerning this concept of memorial, the Protestants in a way come close to affirming the Catholic position of Eucharistic sacrifice. The Faith and Order Commission takes a concrete step at Lima in 1982. In writing about the Eucharist, the Commission states:

Eucharist is the memorial of the crucified and risen [Jesus] Christ, i.e., the living and effective sign of this sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all mankind. The biblical idea of memorial as applied to the Eucharist refers to this present efficacy of God’s work when it is celebrated by God’s people in the liturgy.<sup>497</sup>

The Lima Commission regards *anamnesis* (memorial) and *epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the offering) as complementary terms. In the statement of the Commission concerning the latter concept, “The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal. Fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution”.<sup>498</sup> The concept of *Anamnesis* also presents a similar understanding, namely, “... making present and alive the saving event of the cross and the presentation of [Jesus] Christ’s unique sacrifice to

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<sup>493</sup> Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition*. 2; ref: Lutheran/Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *The Eucharist* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation 1980). 21, n. 59.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner. *Unity of the Church: An Actual Possibility*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 129.

<sup>495</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 203.

<sup>496</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “*Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*”, 253.

<sup>497</sup> Faith and Order Paper No. 111: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: WCC, 1982) “Eucharist”, No. 5, 11. This paper will be referred to as BEM.

<sup>498</sup> BEM, 13; Eucharist No. 14.



[God] the Father as the urgent prayer of the Church.<sup>499</sup> Max Thurian, in basing his argument on the Lima Paper asserts:

The sacrifice of the cross and resurrection, made present and active for us today in the Eucharist, is central in the *anamnesis*. But, as the BEM document says, what is recalled in thanksgiving in the Eucharist is the whole existence of [Jesus] Christ.<sup>500</sup>

Just like the Faith and Order Commission, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission also "... recognized as legitimate the specification of anamnesis as sacrifice, in reference to the Tradition of the Church and her liturgy."<sup>501</sup>

This recognition given to the Eucharist as sacrifice does not fully resolve the controversy between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. One of the questions which must be answered is, "Whose sacrifice is the Eucharist?" Considering the view of Catholicism, the Eucharist is both Christ's and the Church's sacrifice. Referring to the Eucharist as Christ's sacrifice is also evident from the ecumenical statements we have so far discussed. But more specifically, the Eucharist is seen as Christ's sacrifice because it is a re-presentation of his 'once and for all' sacrifice on the cross. Furthermore, according to the Lima document:

It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. He is the shepherd who leads the people of God, the prophet who announces the Word of God, the priest who celebrates the mystery of God.<sup>502</sup>

Both documents of Lima and Vatican II's Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (No. 7), is very significant. These two documents emphasize that the ordained minister basically acts in the name of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Lima Document states:

The one who presides at the Eucharistic celebration in the name of Christ makes clear that the rite is not the assemblies own creation or possession; the Eucharist is received as a gift from Christ living in his Church.<sup>503</sup>

There are, however, some signs or indications in the ecumenical dialogues that, besides the sacrifice of Christ, the Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church, for as Max Thurian contends,

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<sup>499</sup> Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright. *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 245.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid. Ref. BEM, p. 11, "Eucharist", No. 6. Vatican II expresses much the same idea in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Nos. 6 & 7).

<sup>501</sup> "Observations on the Final Report of ARCIC", in: *The Tablet* Vol. 236 (May 1982) No. 7401, 493.

<sup>502</sup> BEM, 13; Eucharist No. 14.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid. Cf. Vatican II, SC, 7: "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass... in the person of the minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formally offered himself on the cross' "

“The Liturgy is an act of the community”.<sup>504</sup> It is through the liturgy that the worshipping community best expresses itself as the mystical body of Jesus Christ; for it is in celebrating the mystery of Jesus Christ that the community becomes united with Christ in his self-offering. An importance to the recognition of the Eucharist as sacrifice is the acknowledgment given to the sacramentality of priestly ordination. The emphasis placed by the Catholic party in the ARCIC report<sup>505</sup> concerning the role of ordained ministers within the Eucharistic assembly rightly states:

It is only the ordained minister who presides at the Eucharist, in which, in the name of Christ and on behalf of his Church, he recites the narratives of the institution of the last Supper, and invokes the Holy Spirit upon the gifts.<sup>506</sup>

The above statement shows the interconnectedness between the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist and the sacramentality of the ordained minister. Thus, to a considerable degree, the Lima Commission shares this position and states:

It is especially in the Eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body.<sup>507</sup>

Furthermore, the Commission refers to God as the source of the authority given to ordained ministers. It asserts: “The authority of the ordained minister is rooted in Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father (Matt. 28:18), and who confers it by the Holy Spirit through the act of ordination.”<sup>508</sup>

In sum, although there is a general agreement in ecumenical discussions concerning the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist regarding the significance of bread and wine, this real presence takes different forms according to their different positions. While both sides possess shortfalls considering their entrenched positions, for ecumenical reasons, they must allow renewal of these positions to grow through theological deepening in the common endeavor to devotedly fulfill the Lord’s commission.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Thurian and Wainwright, *Baptism and Eucharist*, 242.

<sup>505</sup> Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission.

<sup>506</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 205.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid. See also BEM, “Ministry”, No. 14. 22.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>509</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 117.

### 5.8.3 Eucharistic Theology and Ecumenism

Of importance to the Church in recent times is the significance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. This concern creates a fixed reciprocal relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the ecclesial body, since the unity of the people of God “is meaningfully designated and wonderfully effected” through the Eucharistic meal (LG 11). This position of the ‘unity of the people of God’ has also been the concern of the ÖAK since “practice of mutual participation in the celebrations of the Lord’s Supper / Eucharist in respect for the respective other liturgical traditions”<sup>510</sup> is significant. The Ecumenical Working Group in Germany states, “that church leaders encourage their congregations to celebrate ecumenical services with the congregations of the other denomination as often as possible, and to extend eucharistic hospitality to the members of the other churches in the process. The hope of full eucharistic fellowship must be upheld because it is more and more intolerable that Protestant and Catholic Christians cannot celebrate the Eucharist together.”<sup>511</sup>

The Church is of the opinion that;

“When we [Christians] break the Eucharistic bread we really get a share in the body of the Lord and are raised to communion with him and with one another... So we all become members of that body” (LG 7).

On the contrary, the Eucharist is the celebration of the ecclesial body which the condensed fulfillment of what the Church is (1 Cor 10:16ff; 1 Cor 11: 17-34). This relationship is traced back to its source in the twofold epics of the Prayer:

“The Spirit is called down over the assembled community as over bread and wine, so that through participation in the Eucharistic body it may become the one ecclesial body: “Strengthen us through the body and blood of your Son and fill us with his Holy Spirit so that we may become one body and one spirit in Christ.”<sup>512</sup>

Therefore, the Eucharistic Body points beyond itself to all the other Eucharistic communities with which it is in communion with since the participation in the holy gifts establishes the community.<sup>513</sup> If the celebration of the Eucharist strengthens communion, then Eucharistic communion could presuppose Church communion. Thus, the community can grow through the Eucharist. In this sense, Eucharistic communion between other Churches must be emphasized

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<sup>510</sup> Eckholt, *Gast sein und Gott hereinbringen*, 200-214.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 117. See also; Third Prayer: Celebration of Holy Mass / 26: 496.

<sup>513</sup> Cf. *Communio Sanctorum* No. 4/44: 15 as cited by Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 117.

with the fruits of full communion by discussing the different models of communion. Moreover, Eucharistic hospitality must not disregard the ecclesial component of the Eucharist and allow members of other denominations to partake in the Eucharist either in individual or general cases. This agreement is otherwise known as intercommunion.

This could be the reason behind the ÖAK<sup>514</sup> document titled “Together at the Lord’s Table” that was dealing with the “Eucharistic meal fellowship” whereby both Catholics and Protestants can participate in, and receive the Holy Communion. This document clearly envisaged, “the practice of mutual participation at the celebrations of the Holy Communion/Eucharist, respecting each other’s liturgical traditions, to be theologically well-founded.”<sup>515</sup> But the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity under the leadership of Kurt Cardinal Koch, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under the leadership of Luis Cardinal Ladaria, have not agreed to this proposal due to certain discrepancies on the part of some Protestant Churches in Germany (EKD) using the Protestant Churches in Hessen and Nassau as an example (EKHN).<sup>516</sup> But if partaking in the eating of the Body and drinking of the Blood of Jesus Christ gives us salvation then this document is of the view that all denominations, both Catholics and Protestants must be allowed to participate in the celebration of this meal and receive the Body and Blood of Christ respectively due to its redeeming power for all sinners.<sup>517</sup>

In the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973, many of the Protestant churches gave accent to intercommunion among them by granting also, inter-celebration and to a large extent, offer Eucharistic hospitality or even the practice of open communion. It is against this agreement that, in the views of the Catholicism and Protestantism, the Eucharist as the culmination and conclusion of a reunion and not a means to unity and must not be detached from its ecclesial framework. The Catholic Church rightly states:

“One should not, however, regard communion in worship (*communicatio in sacris*) as a general and indistinguishable means of restoring Christian unity. Two main principles are decisive here: the witness of the unity of the Church and participation in the means of grace. The witness to the unity of the church in most cases forbids communion in worship, but concern for grace recommends it in some cases. How one should behave here in concrete terms, taking into account all circumstances of the time, place and persons, the local episcopal authority should decide in prudent discretion,

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<sup>514</sup> Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians. This group was established in 1946 to strengthen ecumenical ties in Germany.

<sup>515</sup> This document has received negative reaction from the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: cited in Catholic News Agency. Feb.10.2021/09:00MT

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Eckholt, *Gast sein und Gott hereinbringen*, 200-214.

unless otherwise determined by the bishops' conference in accordance with its own statutes or by the Holy See" (UR 8).

It is in the context of hospitality that Pope Francis admonishes Christians to rediscover their vocation as citizens of their own nations and of the entire world. They are to be builders of a new social bond and to be aware that existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others. This is necessary because life must not be seen as simply as time that passes, rather time for interactions.<sup>518</sup> This idea of communalism as echoed by Pope Francis is what makes meal sharing a communal affair within the Akan culture. The Supreme Pontiff referred to the Eucharistic celebration as the 'common meal' which should bring all Catholics in the El Salvador conflict to the way of peace.<sup>519</sup> Archbishop Romero states, "the principle of poverty that [He] mentions and the sharing of the meal, of the Eucharist, to which all are invited, were ways, though through a long and bloody conflict, to open a space for reconciliation and healing processes, and also to become again, as a community of believers, a credible sign of 'universal fraternity' in a broken world."<sup>520</sup> The fraternity expressed through hospitality by members of this social ethnic group goes beyond immediate family ties therefore there is no exclusion in meal sharing.

## 5.9 African Culture and Eucharist

The concept of inculturation is considered by theologians as a way to 'localize' certain Church practices such as the celebration of the Eucharist in local Churches such as the Church in Ghana. The purpose of this agenda is to increase their commitment and participation in their Christian life. This section is to examine the African concepts of 'sacrifice' and 'real presence' in the context of meal sharing in relation to the Eucharist. In other words, the consumption of food after a sacrifice has been offered plays a significant role in the African Traditional Religion because it also marks the presence of the divine among them. Similarly, this belief is also held in the celebration of the Eucharist as well as receiving the Holy Communion that Christians experience the real presence of Christ among them. It is worthy to acknowledge that just as Jesus Christ is the "Inviter" to the celebration of the Eucharistic meal, this practice is also noted in the African culture whereby one is invited to partake in a meal sharing.

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<sup>518</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship*: Vatican 2020, 66.

<sup>519</sup> Eckholt, *Gast sein und Gott hereinbringen*, 200-214.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*, 200-214.

### 5.9.1 Meal and Sacrifice

A meal is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love, and unity; food and drink taken in common are signs that life is shared together and not in isolation. According to Ackah, African life is that of communality that is the reason why the African eat, drink and share life together with others. This activity of sharing life together brings about peaceful coexistence, cohesion, care for each other and love in the community.<sup>521</sup>

In Africa, it is rare for people to eat alone because meal sharing is a communal activity. According to Boston, in the typical Akan societies, hands are washed before the meal begins, usually by a child who pours water over the cupped hands of the adults in the group. This traditional practice of hand washing can also be identified in the Eucharistic theology. For example, during the Eucharistic meal, the mass server pours water over the hand of the priest as a sign of cleansing the priest before proceeding with the prayer of consecration. Meals occupy a special place during sacrifices among the Akans so also the use of assorted types of drinks. Aside the use of food and drinks during sacrifices among the Akans, the use of animals are also employed and these animals are usually referred to as the sacrificial animal (victim) whose blood is used as atonement for the entire community. Thus, sacrifice must always be thought of together with a meal to which none of them must be detached from the other. According to Faber, the meal aspect of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ shows in person how directly it benefits all those who take part in the Eucharist as their food for life.<sup>522</sup>

In typical traditional Akan household meals, everyone sits around a common dish of cassava, maize, or plantain. Each person takes a portion, shapes it into a ball, and then dips it into a single dish of relish, soup, or greens. If there is meat, the best portions are first offered to visitors or elders in the group. The serving of a drink is also often served from a common bowl or cup, which is passed from one to another.<sup>523</sup> The meal concludes with another hand washing. Understood in this way, eating a meal together is the most basic way of sharing a common life by restoring what has been lost and likewise gives strength for what lies ahead.

Regardless, the rich diversity of the African cultural landscape makes it difficult to generalize about particular African cultural and religious practices such as the Akans in Ghana. Certain particular cultural beliefs and customs such as meal sharing may be diverse but the depth

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<sup>521</sup> Ackah, *The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today*, 135.

<sup>522</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 111.

<sup>523</sup> Frances Boston. *Preparation for Christian Initiation* (Kampala, Uganda: Gaba Publications, 1973), 53.

dimension of the African worldview such as hospitality is strikingly consistent. Thus, it is a demonstration of the deep level of culture.

In assembling responses for the *Lineamenta*<sup>524</sup> on the Synod of Bishops, a Special Assembly for Africa, Okoye, observes that there is a striking similarity in descriptions of the African traditional religion coming from all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Probing beneath the surface layer of diverse practices, a careful observer finds similarities in the models, meanings, and interpretations of African life.<sup>525</sup> Because the Eucharist deals with this depth dimension of meaning rather than the superficial level of practice, it is possible to identify “communal meal” as a root metaphor in African celebrations of the Eucharist. However, looking at the historical context of the sacrament of the Eucharistic theology, little attention is given to the meal aspect -- eating and drinking-- of the Eucharist although it is an encounter. This, according to Bachl, is the decisive act of reception,<sup>526</sup> which brings the people together into a fellowship.

An African theologian Uzukwu describes this experience as “the totality of the human person/community (in all its tensions) in dynamic union with its universe, choreographing before the giver of life to whom the fruit of life is joyfully presented.”<sup>527</sup> This description reveals that the symbol of gathered assembly, with its accompanying notions of human community, divine-human communion, and thanksgiving to God, is deeply rooted in Akan consciousness.<sup>528</sup>

### 5.9.2 Meal and Real Presence

In Africa, the presence of the Divine cannot be underestimated because of their belief in the supernatural. According to the Akan worldview, the living cannot go to the world of ancestors until an individual dies, however, there is a close connection between the living and the dead especially the ancestors. In support of this view, Nurnberger writes, “In African traditional religion, it is the authority of the ancestors that carries existential significance.”<sup>529</sup> This explains

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<sup>524</sup> A written text in preparation for a General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Catholic Church.

<sup>525</sup> James Chukuma Okoye. “*The Eucharist and African Culture*,” *African Ecclesial Review* 34: (1992), 278.

<sup>526</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 115. See also Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 125.

<sup>527</sup> Elochukwu Uzukwu. “*Africa’s Right to be Different Part II: African Rites in the Making*,” *Bulletin de Théologie Africaine* 4, no. 8 (July-December 1982): 248.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>529</sup> Nürnberger, Klaus. “*The ‘real presence’ of Christ in the Eucharist: a response to African traditional spirituality*,” in: *Missionalia*, Southern African Journal of Mission Studies, 33, no. 3 (2005): 411-439.

the African belief that their relationship with the ancestors or deceased relatives are beyond space and time.

The Akan is preoccupied with the belief that the ancestors are always watching them from afar therefore their presence is always felt among them. Secondly, the ancestors are believed to be the custodians of their various family lineages or clans with the responsibility of protecting them as well as punishing the relatives as a sign of their disapproval of certain misdeeds by relatives. The ancestors are supposed to partake visibly in the activities of the living. For instance, Sarpong is of the view that, the ancestors continue the kingship institution after death.<sup>530</sup> In the light of this, the living family relatives are eager to maintain a cordial and good relationship with the ancestors. It is in this perspective that Fortes writes about the Tallensi of Ghana that the living relatives always contact the ancestors through the offering of sacrifices, pouring of libations and recitation of prayers as well.<sup>531</sup> The offering of these sacrifices by relatives are a way of maintaining the continuity of the family lineage and meals play a significant role in this context.

In traditional Akan households, the popular belief of the presence of the ancestors is highly respected hence certain amount of food is placed on the ground as a symbol of communion with the ancestors in the spiritual world during meal-sharing. This act of depositing food on the ground which is accompanied by a prayer of petition is an act of venerating the ancestors as well as paying allegiance to them in order of sustaining their solidarity with the living. The pouring of libation is also an important act which acknowledges the dependence of the living on the ancestors therefore invoking their blessings and favors on their daily human activities such as naming of a new-born child, sowing and harvesting seasons, outbreak of misfortunes, pandemics, etc.

This African veneration of ancestors has its parallel equality in Catholicism with the veneration of the saints. During the celebration of the Eucharist, the whole Christian communities who are living in Christ share an unbroken fellowship or relationship with the saints who have died, “through Him, with Him and in Him”. Obviously, “Neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). The major difference between ancestors and saints is that, the Church regard

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<sup>530</sup> Sarpong, *Ghana In Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, 41.

<sup>531</sup> Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan. (eds.) “*The Political System of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of Ghana*” in *African Political System*.” (Routledge. 1940), 253-254.



saints as people who are supposed to have led a good life on earth, with a special relationship with Jesus Christ and have become exemplary believers. In African Traditional Religion (ATR), the term ‘ancestor’ refers to any member who lived according to the accepted societal norms and died a ‘decent’ death.

Similarly, the real presence of Christ during the Eucharistic meal and through the reception of his Body and Blood takes place during the celebration of this sacrament. The real presence of Christ, according to Faber, found in the Eucharistic figures is described as; the substance of bread and wine is transformed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, while the perceptible properties of bread and wine remain unchanged.<sup>532</sup> Notwithstanding, Faber believes that; “the physical encounter between [Jesus] Christ and believers mediated by the sacrament aims at their resemblance to Christ and ultimately the holistic perfection of their humanity.”<sup>533</sup> Thus Catholics are of the belief that, the eucharistic gifts are substantially and permanently transformed in the ‘depth of their being’, i.e. the presence of Christ is not only limited to the performance and reception of the Eucharist but even in the veneration of the sacrament.<sup>534</sup>

The celebration of the Mass, therefore, is not just a ‘simple’ meal but a meal which represents the presence of Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ who cured all manner of diseases such as the lepers, the blind; the one who walked on the sea, who fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and fish, etc is still present during the celebration of the Eucharist. This belief becomes a reality through the reception of the Eucharistic species of bread and wine which also becomes the real Body and Blood of Christ, that is, the Holy Communion. Because of the presence of Christ, Gakpe-Ntsri in agreeing with the Church highlights that, “a full participation in Christ’s Paschal Mystery requires a union with him through the sacramental reception of his body and blood”.<sup>535</sup> Perhaps, this becomes the reason behind the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council that, “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy ...”(SC 14).

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<sup>532</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 113.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>535</sup> Gakpe-Ntsri, “*Aspects of Inculturation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*”, 230.

## **5.10 The Role of the Eucharist in African Cultures**

As earlier discussed, meal-sharing is not alien to the African culture due to their traditional values of communalism and commensality. In other words, the African believes in collectivism in relationships more than individualism. This is a good foundation upon which Christianity could employ in educating them about the Eucharist as they already possess a fore-knowledge about meal-sharing. The inculturation of Christianity in local Churches such as Africa could have been successful if there was an incorporation of some African cultural values such as meal-sharing as a communal activity into the celebration of the Eucharist. This section would delve into the role of the Eucharist as a symbolic act in African cultures. In other words, the characteristics of the Eucharistic meal as seen by the African will be examined.

### **5.10.1 A Meal of Covenant: Sharing in the Eucharist**

God is the ‘giver’ of every gift, and humanity receives this gift and thanks Him for such generosity. In this way, every covenant is a treaty between two parties or people; the giver and the receiver in doing a specific thing. There is an obligation or responsibility on the side of each party or member to fulfill its part of the agreement or promise. Also, there is a host or an initiator to a covenant just like an ‘inviter’ to a meal. Thus, a covenant is a gift of a ‘kind’ to restore a situation however in this context, the Eucharist is a covenantal meal given by God (Host) as a gift of self-giving to the Church.<sup>536</sup> In this way, it becomes clear that the covenant in the Old Testament was a gift of ‘kind’ whereas in the New Testament, Jesus Christ gives his whole body as a gift in this covenant and by this, this sacrifice is personalized.

The Eucharist symbolizes the relationship between Christ and humanity because as Christians celebrate this sacrament, they recall the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross which has won salvation for them. Thus, the sacrament of the Eucharist becomes the new covenant given by Christ to his followers after the old covenant between God and Israel when Yahweh freed them from slavery in Egypt. In the Old Testament, God entered into a covenant relationship with the Israelites and meals were used to seal the covenant (Exod 24: 5-8; Exod 24:11 ff;).

“After the Israelites broke their covenant with God, He promised of a new covenant: The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of

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<sup>536</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 108.

Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand out of the land of Egypt- a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”(Jer. 31:31-33)

This new covenant was realized when Jesus Christ shed his blood from his own body on the cross. By this death, He foreshadowed this covenant at the Last Supper when he took the cup of wine and said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). In this sense, whenever we participate in meal sharing, we renew our covenant with God. Thus, eating and drinking from a cup becomes a powerful reminder to Christians that, Christ perpetually gave of himself to the Church on the cross and thereby establishing a new covenant of love with us. ‘Take this, all of you, and drink from it, this is the Chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for the forgiveness of sins’ (Matt 26: 27-29). The Church is therefore obliged to return this love shown by Jesus Christ by a total gift of ourselves in love to Him. In this new covenant, it is the blood of Christ which seals this sacrifice and not the blood of the sacrificial animal.

Perhaps the greatest problem of the church in respect to its mission on earth has been its endless division due to different approaches to the Eucharistic meal. Instead of the Eucharistic meal bringing Christians together, it has rather become a ‘thorn in the flesh’ among Christians. By sharing in the last meal with his disciples, Jesus united them in a covenant relationship with himself and with one another. Therefore sharing in the sacred meal establishes unity and communion with the one Lord. An African theologian, Onwu argues that Africans think of relationship in covenantal terms as well. Writing from the Nigerian Perspective, he cites the *Igbo* people’s use of a common meal to cement relationships.

The *Igbo* social ethnic group from Nigeria believes that when two or more persons eat or drink together from the same bowl they have entered into a covenant. They have licked their common saliva, which has a spiritual quality in the *Igbo* culture.<sup>537</sup> With it, one may bless or curse, express friendship or enmity. In this way, sharing in a meal affirms the holy value attached to life and unity in relationship.<sup>538</sup> The Akans of Ghana also share this same belief as the *Igbo*

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<sup>537</sup> The *Igbo* ethnic group resides in the Southeastern and South-central parts of Nigeria.

<sup>538</sup> Nlenanya Onwu. “*The Eucharist as Covenant in the African Context*,” *Africa Theological Journal* 16, no. 2: (1987), 151-152.

people because in sharing a meal communally, human life is shared together, thus uniting all the people together.

Margit Eckholt is of the view that ‘reciprocal participation’ does not imply intercommunion but “a justified participation in the Lord's Supper or Eucharist made possible in the individual dioceses by the leadership of the Eucharist...”<sup>539</sup> and an instance is the sacrament of Matrimony which binds two denominations together. So as a ‘reciprocal guest’ at the Eucharistic meal, it reminds Christians everywhere of fulfilling their part of the covenant agreement with Jesus Christ that we share in a communal meal at the Lord’s holy table and not the table of any particular church. Thus, in the celebration of the Eucharist, we affirm our covenant with Jesus Christ and with others. It is in this respect that practices that exclude Christian members of other denominations from partaking in the Eucharist are a serious hindrance to establishing an authentic Christian community as the Ecumenical Working Group had already pointed out. This practice of exclusion does not promote mutual participation in the celebration of the Eucharist / Lord’s Supper as stated by the ÖAK and it becomes interesting when Catholics and Protestants cannot celebrate the Eucharist together although the Catholic Church refers to the Eucharist as the ‘*Sacramentum Unitatis*. Thus the covenantal nature of this sacrament requires the Church to break through the ‘limits of law’ anew and allow hospitality to take place especially in the reception of the Eucharist since the Eucharist is for all manner of people- strangers, sinners, orphans, the poor, widows, etc through the invitation of God.<sup>540</sup> For example in Ghana, the issue of Christian couples who are not properly divorced, remarried couples and Christians who have not ‘sacramentalized’<sup>541</sup> their marriages could be considered for the reception of Holy Communion because of the meaning attached to the Eucharist.

### **5.10.2 A Meal of Unity and Peace: Achieving what it signifies**

Because the Eucharist is a meal of unity, Faber writes: “There is a permanent reciprocal relationship between the eucharistic and the ecclesial body, since the unity of the people of God "is meaningfully designated and wonderfully effected" through the Eucharist.”<sup>542</sup> Earlier before

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<sup>539</sup> Eckholt, *Gast sein und Gott hereinbringen*, 200-214.

<sup>540</sup> Eckholt, *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes*, 53.

<sup>541</sup> Referring to persons who may not have performed the customary marriage rites or those who may perform the customary rites but have not blessed their marriages i.e. Holy Matrimony.

<sup>542</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 117. Also see, LG 11.

this position of Faber, Augustine (+430) had already presented the ecclesial view of the Eucharist as the sacrament of the unity of the church as decisive. For him, the sacrament of the Eucharist is a sign not only of the presence of Jesus Christ, but also of the presence of his ecclesial body. “If you want to understand ‘Body of Christ’, hear what the apostle says to believers: ‘You are the body of Christ ... then your mystery [the mystery that you are] is laid on the Lord's table. You receive your mystery. To what you are, you answer: ‘Amen’ ... You hear: ‘Body of Christ’, and you answer: ‘Amen’. Be a member of the body of Christ, that your ‘Amen’ may be true.”<sup>543</sup>

The sacrament of the Eucharist is a celebration which fulfils the role of a communal meal which brings joy and unity among the people. Hence, Jesus Christ, being raised from a Jewish background and culture had knowledge of the significance of a meal in a communal feast. As earlier referred to the Eucharist as a meal of covenant, meals were connected to the sealing of covenants (Exod 24). Basically, meal sharing had a significant role to play in Jewish traditions.

The African worldview of meal-sharing as a medium of unifying the members who partake in such meals is always emphasized in the community. Having meals together becomes a moment to settle disputes and quarrels among African household and friends in a bid to promote togetherness. In other words, the bond of togetherness is an important social value of African social ethnic groups. This position emerges out of the popular proverb among Akans; ‘a single broom is easily breakable whereas a bunch of broom is hardly broken’.<sup>544</sup>

Therefore, African Christianity insists that faith must be framed in a communal context due to the notion that in ‘unity lay strength’. Therefore by understanding the Eucharistic meal as a meal of unity and peace, its participation symbolizes a new meaning of community gathering as a family who shares life together in its cultural values of unity and peace. For this reason, the Eucharist must be understood communally, not just in terms of Christ and the individual. In the words of Hunsinger, “by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist at once actualizes, symbolizes and anticipates the unity of all things in Christ.”<sup>545</sup> Therefore, Onwu observes, “Participation in the

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<sup>543</sup> Cf. Augustine, Sermones 272: PL 38, 1247; as quoted in Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 105.

<sup>544</sup> Akans explain this proverb by stating that strength lays in unity therefore an individual person could easily be defeated unlike a group of persons.

<sup>545</sup> George Hunsinger. “*The Bread That We Break: Toward a Chalcedonian Resolution of the Eucharistic Controversies*”. *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 24.2 (2003), 255.

Eucharist makes believers not only more committed to their Lord Jesus Christ but also, more responsible for one another in mutual service, love and unity.”<sup>546</sup>

Regarding the Eucharist as a meal of unity and peace, Vatican II admonishes Christians to sanctify their respective communities with the fruits of the Eucharistic meal such as unity and peace through their participation in the celebration of this sacrament. The Council Fathers assert, “In the celebration of the Eucharist, these [fruits] may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrates the world itself to God” (LG 34). Thus, participating in the Eucharistic celebration and receiving Christ into our human bodies, we are enjoined to give up violence and overcome other social evils for the sake of peace and unity in our various communities. Thus, this sacrament of the Eucharist is always characterized by possessing a very symbolic element of unity. According to Fernandez, this bond of unity in the Eucharist is found in this analogy:

Just as the bread is made from several grains of wheat, all crushed and mixed together, each losing its identity, as it were, in order to form the one bread, so individual Christians who celebrate the Eucharist mingle to form but one Body in Christ and with Christ. The wine too brings out this same significance: it is obtained when several grapes have been crushed, fusing their substance into one single cup of wine.<sup>547</sup>

This analogy from Fernandez implies that whenever Christians eat of the bread and drink of the wine, they unite symbolically with Christ and with one another in the Christian community. Thus, communion with the body of Jesus Christ becomes at the same time communion with the ecclesial body. It is with this understanding that Paul bemoaned the attitude of some Christian’s refusal to commune with fellow Christians and saw it as an affront to the communion of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11: 17-34).

Still emphasizing on the sacrament of the Eucharist as a sacrament of unity and peace, Pope Francis is of the view that, “... the strength of the love that is split apart so as to join us [Christians] in unity”<sup>548</sup> is the strength derived from the Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharistic meal, all the participants are united with Christ who is present, then united with one another. Understood in this way, the Eucharist becomes a form of absolute hospitality due to the nature of bringing togetherness through the reciprocal events of ‘give and take’ between the host and the guest. This unity formed between the two persons becomes very necessary because of the

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<sup>546</sup> Onwu, “*The Eucharist as Covenant in the African Context*,” 151-152.

<sup>547</sup> Enrique J. Fernandez. *The Eucharist: Step by Step*. (Bombay: St. Paul’s Publications, 2001), 118.

<sup>548</sup> Cf. Angelus Reflection on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, ‘Corpus Christi’ as reported by vaticannews.va. 06. 06. 2021.

readiness to share everything with each other and the preparedness to receive whatever is offered.<sup>549</sup>

### 5.10.3 A Meal of Reconciliation: Identifying the Communal Implications of Sin

Another important aspect of the African celebration of the Eucharist as communal meal that may enrich the church is the way in which sin is considered a communal affair. As earlier stated in reference to the Eucharist as a meal which fosters unity and peace, the end result of such encounter is for the purpose of reconciliation. In participating in the living memory of Christ on the cross in the Eucharist, the Church recalls the readiness of Christ in reconciling our broken world which is filled with conflicts and violence to God His Father. Jesus Christ sacrificed himself as the victim in order to reconcile the sinful humanity to his father in heaven (John 3:16; Rom 5:10). The steps followed in identifying the communal implications of sin of the individual as a communal affair is geared towards the belief of communality therefore meal-sharing becomes the moment to reconcile both parties identified. For instance, traditionally, the “*Etor*”<sup>550</sup> meal of the Akans is usually eaten at moments of reconciliation as a symbol of readiness to reconcile with each other, bearing no grudge against the other person and fulfilling the ancestral oath of keeping the community together without blemish.

Thus, African notion of sin are always focused on relationships with others in the community. For this reason, individual sins become matters of communal concern because the sin of a person could affect the whole community.<sup>551</sup> For instance, when a person breaks a taboo or commits an abominable act against his or her totem,<sup>552</sup> the person becomes ‘contaminated’ therefore the individual needs to perform certain cultural practices for reconciliation<sup>553</sup> as a way of bringing the person back to his or her original state of purity. Thus, in African traditional understanding, the public naming, condemning, and breaking of sin emphasizes the relational aspect of human moral behaviour, grounded in the bedrock of life’s interconnectedness. In this sense, the reconciling power of Christ in the Eucharistic assembly works to reconstitute human communities disaggregated by sin.

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<sup>549</sup> Eckholt, *Wirksame Zeichen der Nähe Gottes*, 53.

<sup>550</sup> A popular cultural meal among the Akans which is prepared with plantain or yam and with palm oil and eggs.

<sup>551</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestors*, 86.

<sup>552</sup> This term refers to a creature or plant with which a person is supposed to be in relationship with.

<sup>553</sup> Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestors*, 86.

Referring to the Eucharist as a meal of reconciliation is in the right direction because, it was on the night of his betrayal that Christ gives his Body and Blood (his whole self) for the sake of the world. Christ did not reward Judas with punishment for betraying him but rather Jesus responded to this betrayal by giving out his life (Matt 26:25ff; Mark 14:18ff; Luke 22:21ff). Jesus' death on the cross was a bold step taken by Christ to overcome the sins of the world and reconcile humanity to God the Father. Thus, during meals of reconciliation, the sinner is not punished but rather a new form of life is given or achieved. Pope Francis expresses the belief that we must not respond to evil with evil rather as Christians, we must respond to evil with 'good' just as Christ, notwithstanding his suffering which was caused by our human betrayal gave his whole life for our sake. For this reason, the Supreme Pontiff describes the Eucharist, "not as the reward of saints, but the Bread of sinners."<sup>554</sup>

Furthermore, during moments of reconciliation in African societies, offenders are forgiven so also in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal, sinners are shown mercy and forgiven of their sins so that they can be reconciled with God and the community. Therefore, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the broken relationships emerging from the structures of sin in our communities are made whole once again, and a concrete symbol of people's daily struggle against sin within the community is overcome. Hence the sacrament of Penance also offers an opportunity to every Christian to seek forgiveness of sins and thereby become worthy to participate in the Eucharistic meal where oneness with God the Father is realized as well as the other sacraments.

#### **5.10.4 A Meal of Mystical Power: Experiencing the Real Presence of Christ**

For the African, meal sharing is one of the means by which the presence of the divine is experienced. According to Okoye, "Africans inhabit the universe with spirits; invisible mystical forces, powers and spirits of ancestors."<sup>555</sup> This position of Okoye culminates in the belief that the universe is imbued with a powerful energy, which may be tapped by spirits, medicine men, witches, priests, priestess, and rainmakers. Africans espouse a worldview in which communities can be brought into relationship with invisible forces and powers.

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<sup>554</sup> Cf. Angelus Reflection on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, 'Corpus Christi' as reported by vaticannews.va. 06.06.2021.

<sup>555</sup> Okoye, "*The Eucharist and African Culture*", 278.



Not unlike those in the New Testament who reckoned with Paul's "principalities and powers" (Eph 6:12), Africans tend to believe the workings of spiritual forces in the world. The unmediated presence of God receives great emphasis in Africa because it is the very thing that creates the assembled community.<sup>556</sup>

The Eucharist, however, is not to be considered as a meal endowed with mystical power on its own. Instead, its significance lies in the action of an assembly suffused with the presence of Jesus. What the assembly does with the elements representing Christ's body and blood conveys the deepest meaning of the Eucharist. This is because, in the African consciousness, a strong sense of mystical power is attached to the human action of sharing a meal together with both the living and the dead. Thus, the eschatological perspective of the Eucharistic meal is anticipated.

The Eucharist is a communal meal in which Christ is celebrated, and in which Christ gives himself as the sacrificial victim to the world through the cultural symbols of food and drink to reconcile us with the Father and with one another in the community. Therefore, the Eucharist is no mere a meal, but a communal act joyfully celebrating the Risen Christ in our midst while giving thanks to God the Father and partaking in the mystical power.

#### **5.10.5 A Meal of Participation: Including Everyone in the Ritual Action**

The African by nature believes in a life of communality and this cultural understanding of collectivity as the image of family has been used for the Church in Africa by the African Bishops.<sup>557</sup> This image of a family, according to Sarpong, "... emphasizes [African cultural values of] care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust".<sup>558</sup> All these emphasis of Sarpong cannot stand without participation which runs through all the afore-mentioned characteristics of the family as offered by him. This concept of collectivism or communalism requires the effort of everybody who makes up the community. Thus, everyone –stranger, sick, poor, orphans, etc- is to partake in this celebration depicting a symbol of a strong bond of family unity. Based on this, the priest celebrates this sacrament together with all the 'People of God'.

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Ecclesia in Africa, Post Synodal Exhortation published in September 1995, cited by Sarpong in *Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*, 97.

<sup>558</sup> Sarpong, "*Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor*", 99.

This concept of communal involvement in ritual action is also evident in the African Church. For instance, due to inculturation, the clergy and faithful of Kumasi archdiocese of Ghana draw upon the *Ashanti* culture to involve the laity in the celebration of the Mass. During offertory time, young women and men including the youth dance through the congregation toward the altar carrying items such plantains, cassava, water, etc, and livestock which serve as traditional symbols of sacrifice and give them out to the priest in front of the altar. The singing of hymns and responsive litanies accompanying this dance are sung in the vernacular to traditional tunes. The beating of drums by the drummers supplies the rhythms which propel drive the constant movements of the whole Christian community.

It is clear from the above discussions that the Eucharist, as “the source and summit” of Christian life is centered on the active participation of the entire membership of the community which is composed of the minister and the lay faithful. In fact, the real presence of Christ [“This is the Body of Christ”] during the Eucharistic celebration becomes evident through full and conscious participation by all the members of the Christian assembly. In this sense, participation becomes significant since the Eucharist brings all churches together in sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ as Jesus prayed that all shall be one (John 17:11).

### **5.11 Eucharist as a Source of Vitality**

The reason behind our acknowledgement of the Eucharist as the source of vitality of Christians is due to the purpose for which Christ instituted it and the circumstances surrounding his willingness in offering himself as the sacrificial victim on the cross in order that we may have eternal life. Jesus could have used different means in giving us the Eucharist but he singled out the context of betrayal. It was within the betrayal of Jesus and its subsequent suffering that he gave us the Holy Eucharist as a sign of overcoming the painful actions of humanity during the meal with the disciples. In connecting the bread and wine with his pain and suffering emanating from this betrayal, Jesus underscores the importance of meal in our human life.

The importance of food to the human body can never be socially underestimated because food is a necessary commodity needed for growth, strength and many others. It is in line with this assertion that Bachl emphasizes on the nutritional value of food to the physical health of the

individual.<sup>559</sup> This position of Bachl concerning the physical vitality of the human body can be likened to the Church's stance on the Eucharistic meal which is also meant to satisfy the spiritual empowerment of Christians. Therefore, Jesus Christ left behind the Eucharistic celebration where natural elements are refined by the priests and gloriously changed into His Body and Blood as a meal of brotherly solidarity and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

This spiritual 'satisfaction' is meant to heal, liberate and encourage Christians in their Christian life. Citing *Ecclesia de Eucharistia Vivit*<sup>560</sup> of John Paul II, Anokye, the metropolitan archbishop of Kumasi describes the Eucharist and the Church as mutually related. According to this Ghanaian theologian, it is the Eucharist that nourishes the Church with Christ, the Life-giving Bread, on one hand while the Church also makes the Eucharist available on the other hand by celebrating it, protecting it, adoring it and ordaining ministers for its continual perpetuation.<sup>561</sup> It is in the sacrament of the Eucharist that the redemptive gift of life for all sinners is present and experienced.

Christians acquire spiritual vitality when they gather in worship for the celebration of the Eucharistic meal by recalling the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ which transforms us into our new birth as new personality awaiting the pledge of eternal life. Thus, this nourishment is gained by participation in, and in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharistic meal which makes us more than blood relations, thus, becoming true brother and sisters, thanks also to the Word (cf. Rom. 8:29).<sup>562</sup> In this sense, the Church has encouraged members of Christ's body to receive the Body and Blood of Christ regularly as a source of renewing such spiritual vitality.

Therefore, all Christians are encouraged to participate fully, consciously and actively in this liturgy. The participation in this sacred worship must be accompanied by faith and devotion because after nourishing the faith of the participants, it sends them home empowered to live and share that faith. It is with this understanding of living and sharing the faith that the Second Vatican Council encourages Catholic Christians on active participation in the celebration of the Liturgy with these words: "In the celebration of the Eucharist, these [fruits] may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their

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<sup>559</sup> Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 11.

<sup>560</sup> Papal Document meaning 'The Church lives on the Eucharist and the Eucharist lives on the Church'. April, 2003.

<sup>561</sup> Anokye. *Eucharistic Spirituality in a new Millennium*, 15.

<sup>562</sup> Vincent Owusu. *The New Evangelization and The Liturgy In The Ghanaian Context*, in Acts of the 2014 National Pastoral Congress. (Kumasi, Ghana: Majoy Services, 2016), 97.

holy actions, the laity consecrates the world itself to God” (LG 34). Upon receiving the Holy Communion, Christians acquire this spiritual vitality when they gather in worship for the celebration of the Eucharist and as well, recall the things Jesus said and did that are special to them.

Human life is full of social evils, injuries, guilt, sicknesses, sins, conflicts, among others and these evils often hurt our soul and body. In this vein, Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross to heal and liberate humankind from these social structures of sin therefore reconciling humanity with God the Father. In other words, the individual has been washed clean, made pure and reconciled with God the Father through this action. This action paves way for the Christian to partake in the celebration of the Eucharist, and as well as receive the Body and Blood of Christ which is a sign of overcoming death. Paul letter to the Colossian community attests to this freedom offered to humanity through Jesus’ death on the cross: “You were in sin and uncircumcised at the same time. But God gave you life with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record of our debts, those regulations which accused us. He did away with all that and nailed it [our transgressions] to the cross” (Col 2: 13-14).

Still emphasizing on vitality, the reception of the Holy Communion gives the receiver a life of grace and this supernatural life depends on our union with Christ. Understood in this way, the Holy Communion becomes a spiritual food which nourishes our soul and strengthens Christians against our human frailties by giving us power over spiritual death. The Eucharist keeps the Holy Spirit in us alive because in receiving the Holy Communion, it is Jesus who joins his spirit with ours hence we do not lose our souls through our deadly or mortal sins as the gospel of John states.<sup>563</sup> This spiritual liberation of our souls gives the Christian the grace to grow in the Lord.

### **5.11.1 Matter of the Sacrament**

In the struggle for recognition of local theologies in the “global Church” known as inculturation, one of the most significant questions which is of outmost importance is the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist. For instance, by using the traditional communal meal sharing in

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<sup>563</sup> John 6:50 “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. John 6:51, 53-58 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh....So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

relation to the celebration of the Eucharist, could the usage of certain Akan common staple foodstuffs or the structure of Akan communal meals used in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal assist them in acquiring a deeper understanding of this sacrament and as well, make it more attractive, lively and meaningful in their Christian life.

The Eucharistic species of bread and wine form the matter for the valid celebration of the Eucharist accompanied by a valid ordained minister. This question is very important because it poses as one of the major challenges in the inculturation process concerning the meal aspect of the sacrament. The Church clearly states:

In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself. For the liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it (SC 21).

Can this above statement apply to the matter (bread and wine) of the sacrament of the Eucharist? Nürnberger is of the view that the matter of the sacrament of Eucharist should not be solely bread and wine in local churches. Can this position which is held by Nürnberger ever change in a new perspective in the doctrine of the sacraments? This question has become necessary because advocates of inculturation are of the view that Jesus Christ could have used any different foodstuff in place of the bread and wine.<sup>564</sup> This position of Nürnberger seems to fit the inculturated Eucharistic celebration which local Churches such as the African Church could work towards in this new perspective. Notwithstanding the above argument raised by Nürnberger, sacramental theology clearly stipulates that the bread used for the Eucharistic celebration must be wheaten only, and recently made, and the wine must be natural, made from grapes, and not corrupt.<sup>565</sup>

The concern here is that, as part of inculturation, can the African or Ghana (Akan) Church not propose some locally produced staple foods and drinks for use during the Eucharistic celebration as bread and wine in this new perspective? In acknowledging what matters most in this sacrament, Nürnberger states, "So without the words of institution, the sacraments would be nothing but plain water, bread and wine."<sup>566</sup> This view seems to suggest that local foodstuffs,

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<sup>564</sup> Nürnberger, The "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist: a response to African traditional spirituality, 420.

<sup>565</sup> Code of Canon Law, 924 (1).

<sup>566</sup> Ibid, 422.

according to Nürnberger can also be used since the words of institution changes it into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since the bread and wine currently recognized as the valid matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist is basically suited for the Mediterranean region, can some local foods among the Akan ethnic group be used in this perspective? Okoye in supporting this assertion writes, “Bread and wine happen to be the food and drink of Mediterranean countries, [which is] the original bosom of the Church.”<sup>567</sup> Da Silva also confirms the position of Okoye and states: “Bread and wine are powerful signs of a familiar and fraternal meal in the Mediterranean context”.<sup>568</sup> This symbolic gesture of meal sharing of a particular community such as the people in the Mediterranean is also practiced in Ghana as an act of hospitality among the Akans in this context.

Still on the matter of this sacrament, a small quantity of water is added to the wine during the act of consecration by the minister<sup>569</sup> as a sign of our humanity sharing in the divinity of Christ whereas Christ shared in our humanity, that is, the Divine Exchange. This mixture of the water and wine signifies the blood and water which came out of the side of Jesus Christ on the cross (John. 19:34; cf. 1John. 5:6). This significance can be fully experienced in the offertory prayer (preparation of the gifts) which is often prayed silently or quietly by the priest.

‘By this mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity’ (John 19:34; Rom 5:2; Phil 2:8).

Thus, this action represents the willingness of Christ to give himself freely out to the world so that humankind can also share in his divinity as he came to share in our humanity by his physical birth by Virgin Mary through the profession of her ‘*fiat*’.

### **5.11.2 Reception of the Eucharist**

The Eucharist is a meal which all the baptized people after undergoing a period of catechumenate are called upon to partake in its celebration and reception. Because Christ is present in this sacrament, he who receives this Holy Communion receives the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ who offered himself on the cross for our salvation. In this context, every

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<sup>567</sup> Okoye, *The Eucharist and African Culture*, 272-292.

<sup>568</sup> J. A. da Silva. “*Bread and Wine for the Eucharist: Are they Negotiable?*” *AFER* Vol. 34. (2): (1992), 261.

<sup>569</sup> Code of Canon Law, canons 924 and 926; cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, canon 707; and General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 319-324.

Catholic is encouraged to receive the holy Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration (SC 55).

Faber is of the view that, it is in the celebration of the Eucharist meal that the Church arises and renews itself.<sup>570</sup> “When we break the Eucharistic bread we really get a share in the body of the Lord and are raised to communion with him and with one another ... [By this] so we all become members of that body” (LG 7). Thus, Catholics must make an outward sign of reverence as a symbolic gesture before receiving the Holy Communion. Before the gesture of reverence is echoed, Catholic faithful must have the proper disposition before receiving this sacrament which guarantees the salvation of their souls. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of the communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.”<sup>571</sup> According to Kodell, “the means of renewing their bond with one another in Christ while being nourished for the spiritual journey.”<sup>572</sup> Catholics may receive Communion during Mass or outside of the Mass which is reserved purposely for the sick and aged as Viaticum.<sup>573</sup>

A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.<sup>574</sup>

The Catholic Church teaches that: “[a] person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.”<sup>575</sup> In spite of this rule, exemption is always given for the sick who are taking medications as well as the aged who cannot observe this rule. Our concern over here is: does this traditional rule concerning the reception of the Holy Communion still applicable in our world of today?

The word *viaticum* is derived from the Latin word *Via* or ‘way’ meaning "provisions for a journey. This practice of offering communion to the sick as viaticum is defended by the Council of Nicaea (325) when it mentioned that, keeping communion in the tabernacle is purposely for

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<sup>570</sup> Faber, *Katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 117.

<sup>571</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, No. 160.

<sup>572</sup> Jerome Kodell. *The Eucharist in the New Testament*. (A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1991), 11.

<sup>573</sup> Code of Canon Law, canon 917.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid*, canon 916.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid*, canon 919.

the administering of communion to the sick.<sup>576</sup> Therefore, *Viaticum* has become a term used especially in the Catholic Church for the communion administered to a dying person, or as a part of the last rites which otherwise is also referred to as the sacrament of the Sick. There is a belief that this spiritual food is to assist the individual to die a holy death if he or she should die. This Catholic tradition of giving the Eucharist to the dying person ensures that instead of dying alone, the individual dies with Christ who promises immortality to all who partake in this sacrament, “He who eats my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life” (Jn. 6:54). It is with this understanding that, the Communion which is given as *Viaticum* is accompanied with the words, “May the Lord Jesus Christ protect you and lead you to eternal life” hence can be seen as the “medicine of immortality”.

Due to the spiritual and social benefits embedded in this sacrament, converts, for instance, in the Church are required to receive the Most Holy Eucharist only after they have undergone a careful preparation and acquired sufficient knowledge (catechesis). This catechesis empowers them to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and ability to receive the body of Christ with faith and devotion. It is this type of catechesis that this research is targeting so that the contemporary catechumen is given a deeper instruction during their encounters with their teachers especially their study of the sacraments. Thus, presenting the sacrament of the Eucharist to the Akan catechumen in the form of a communal meal would catch their understanding and encourage them to appreciate and always participate actively in this sacrament.

It must be noted that, the reception of the Holy Communion may be under one species either (the Sacred Host alone), or under both species (both the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood). “Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom. [However] Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received even under only one species, and as far as the effects are concerned, those who receive under only one species are not deprived of any of the grace that is necessary for salvation.”<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Für Euch Gegeben*, 268; DH 1645.

<sup>577</sup> General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 281-282.



In sum, the Eucharist is the spiritual meal which frees us from the power of sin and death and offers us with life as a pledge of eternal life. Also, it connects the whole body of Christ through the virtues of hope, love and faith<sup>578</sup> therefore the Church encourages the ‘body of Christ’ to partake in the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist and receive the sacred Body and Blood of Christ.

## 5.12 Conclusion

This chapter delves into the sacrament of the Eucharist, its development and its different aspects in relation to the African concept of meal-sharing especially the Akans of Ghana. The relation to the cultural worldview is significant for a successful inculturated Eucharistic celebration.

The “Institution reports” in the New Testament attest to the fact that the celebration of the Eucharist is based on the farewell meal or the Last Supper meal of Jesus Christ together with his disciples prior to his passion and death on the cross. The biblical evidences support the belief that this sacrament was fulfilled in a meal setting which has come to be known by other Churches as the Last Supper. Its celebration is always performed in accordance with Jesus’ instruction at the Last Supper that, “Do this in memory of me”. The Last Supper meal also has a social and religious event performed by Jesus and his disciples due to his Jewish background. Thus sacraments are a gift to the Church given by God for the sanctification of the world. The format for the celebration of the Eucharistic meal cannot be compared to the meal celebrated by the early Christians due to modifications proposed through Church reforms. No wonder, Christians always celebrate this action (meal) in remembrance of Jesus’ death on the cross which has won salvation for the world. Due to this, Eucharistic theology must bring all Christians together.

Also, due to the central role it plays in the life of the Christian, the Church teaches that every Catholic with the proper disposition is encouraged to receive the Holy Communion regularly as a source of vitality. Thus, the Church teaches that it is within this Eucharistic sacrifice that Christ offered himself on the cross as a means of saving the world and giving his body and blood as a pledge of immortality to those who partake in it. Hence he commanded, ‘Do this in memory of

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<sup>578</sup> Hoping, *Mein Leib Fur Euch Gegeben*, 268. DH 1638.

me'. It must be noted that, although the Eucharistic sacrifice is a meal, it is not just a mere meal rather it is a meal which marks a sign of unity, reconciliation and liberating power among Christians who participates in its celebration.

Experiencing the real presence of Christ during the Eucharistic celebration through participation and reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is the form he employed in reconciling humanity to God the Father. In this direction, the Church desires and encourages all her faithful to that full, conscious, and active participation of the Eucharistic celebrations by virtue of their baptism in solidarity with the priests. The laity, above all other, must nourish themselves in the Eucharist.

It is worthy to acknowledge the role of the Church Fathers, Reformers, the Council of Trent through to the Vatican II in their efforts of shaping the Eucharistic doctrine. For instance, the Council of Trent in understanding the doctrine of Transubstantiation affirmed the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal, and the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The Vatican II Council instituted a number of changes in relation to the liturgy as a way of encouraging full and active participation in the Eucharistic celebration and that becomes the starting point for inculturation. For instance, the position of the altar was changed to face the congregation or the laity so also the change of Latin into the vernacular or language of local communities was also in force. According to Vatican II, the idea of community in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal was essential in the promotion of participation.

As a way of promoting inculturation, there is the need for recognition of local theologies as well as the cultural worldview of local Churches towards participation. Hence participation in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal on African soil cannot be a challenge if there is an inculturated Eucharistic celebration where certain traditional symbols, meanings and values are incorporated into the celebration. This incorporation is necessary since communal meal-sharing has been an essential characteristic of the African (Akan) social ethnic group before the emergence of Christian religion by the missionaries in Africa. The African worldview of meal sharing go with certain traditional or cultural values such as communality, solidarity, participation, social nourishment and many more. Some of these values can be incorporated into the celebration of the Eucharistic meal as a way of helping the African (Akan) Christian acquire a deeper understanding of the Eucharist through their own cultural lens. In this context, a possible call for a critical examination towards this direction as a way of offering ecclesial

guidance to some of these current pastoral challenges in local Churches could create an “open, flexible, inculturated, contextual, collegial, decentralized, inclusive ... approach to the changes and developments in the Catholic Church as a World Church.”<sup>579</sup>

In summary, recognizing the Akan cultural values of communalism, commensality and hospitality are significant elements which could be employed in arousing the consciousness of the participation of Akan Christians as a sign of inculturation of the Eucharistic meal. With this recognition, an active and conscious participation in the Eucharistic celebration becomes encouraging since they already feel motivated and belonging in the celebration.

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<sup>579</sup> Orobator, *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, 210.

## PART IV

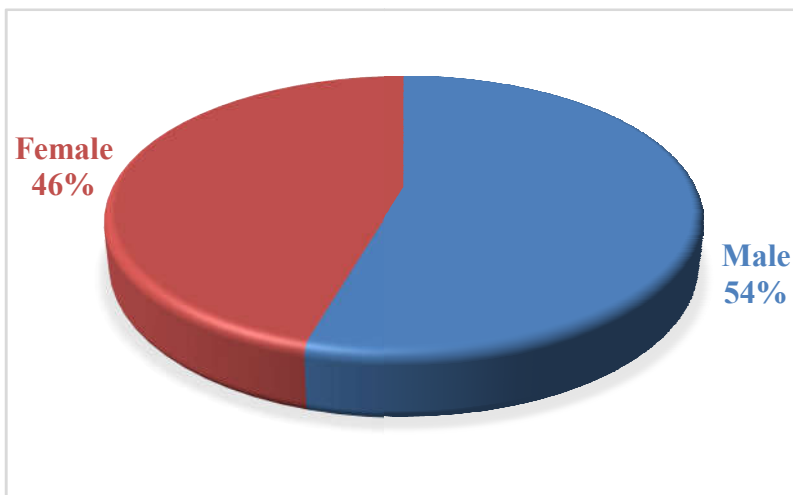
# 6 AN ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FIELDWORK REPORTS ON THE EUCHARIST AS MEAL IN THE AMAKOM DEANERY

The success of every research work depends on the usage of relevant research instruments and techniques. These instruments help the researcher to acquire the necessary tools in an effort in selecting the right target population and using the required instruments for data collection and analysis. In effect, the methodology of research as stated in chapter one guided the researcher in his trip to Ghana for the empirical evidence within the Amakom deanery in the Kumasi archdiocese which took place between January and March, 2021. A description of the Akan people has been presented and discussed in the fourth chapter. The researcher used questionnaires and interview guides during his interaction with the lay and clergy respondents at the various parishes, rectorates and residences and below is the biographical data of the respondents who engaged in the research.

### 6.1 Background Information of Respondents

#### 6.1 Biographic Data

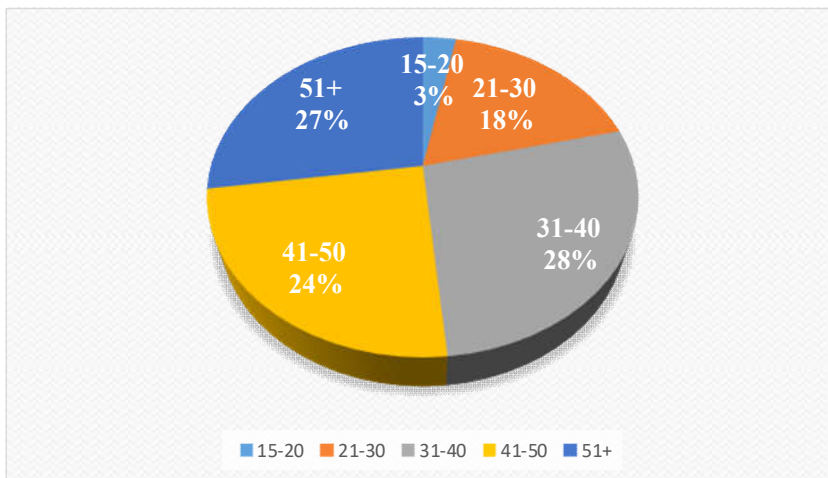
**Fig. 6.1.1 Gender of Respondents**



*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

The sample size of one hundred (100) respondents comprised of Catholic lay people and the clergy were used in this study. Out of the one hundred (100) respondents, fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents were males while the remaining forty-six percent (46%) were females, all of whom were selected from the various parishes in the Amakom deanery of the Catholic archdiocese of Kumasi within the sample frame.

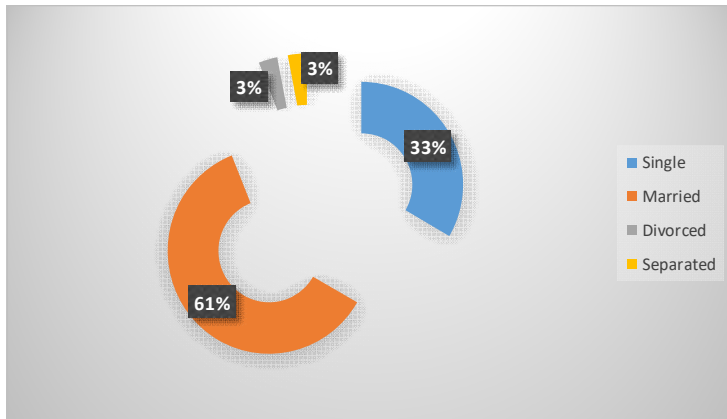
**Fig. 6.1.2 Age Range of Respondents**



*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

Considering the age of respondents was necessary to this study to assess their understanding of meal sharing in their various households and its translation to the sacrament of the Eucharist. The respondent's ages ranged between fifteen (15) to fifty-one (51) years and over. About twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents aged between thirty-one (31) and forty (40) years, twenty-seven percent (27%) aged 51 years and above, twenty-four percent (24%) of them were between forty-one (41) and fifty (50) years of age, those aged between twenty-one (21) to thirty (30) years constituted eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents. The remaining three (3) percent were between fifteen (15) to twenty (20) years of age. The age composition was considered in soliciting respondent's views, especially the youth wing in each parish as a way of assessing the viewpoint of the youth groups as well.

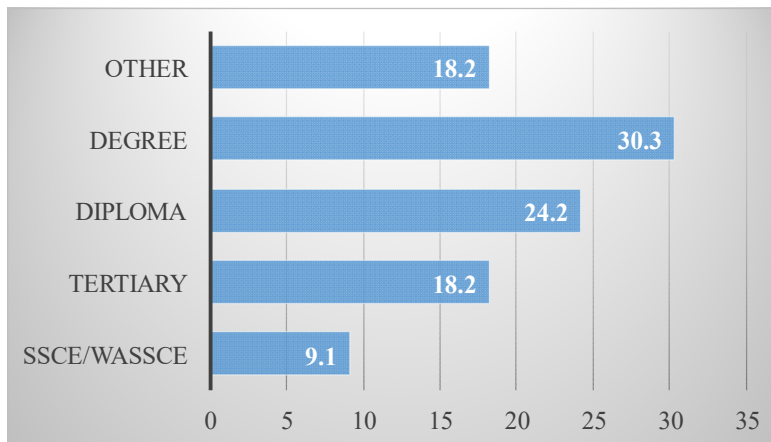
**Fig. 6.1.3 Marital Status of Respondents**



*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

The majority of the lay respondents, sixty-one percent (61%) were married couples while six percent (6%) comprising of three percent (3%) each were among the divorced or separated members. About thirty-three percent (33%) were among the people who are unmarried people. This section is essential to the study because it was meant to clarify the speculation that some Catholics leave the Catholic Church not because of their lack of understanding of certain church doctrines but in search of their life-partners in other churches.

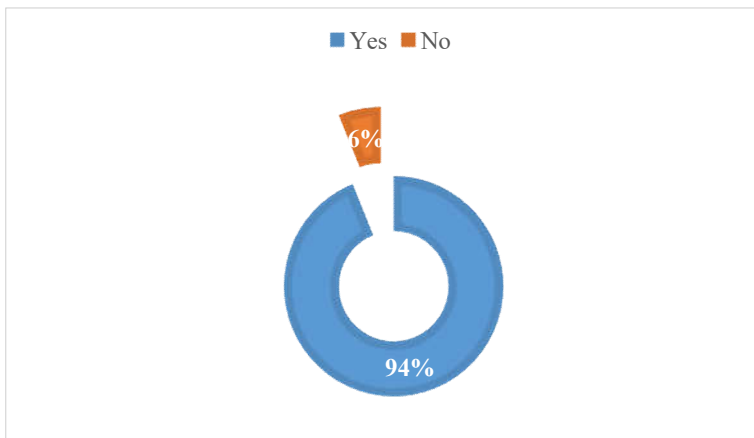
**Fig. 6.1.4 Educational Levels of Respondents**



*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

The educational background of the respondents was important to the researcher in this study therefore the data showed that respondents possessed different educational qualifications. Most of the respondents, over thirty percent (30%), were degree holders whereas eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents have acquired other forms of tertiary education. Approximately twenty-four percent (24.2%) of the respondents have earned a diploma, whereas about nine percent (9.1%) also had acquired SSCE/WASSCE qualification in that order. The remaining eighteen percent (18.2%) of the respondents have also attained other levels of education such as vocational and technical training.

**Fig. 6.1.5 Practising Catholics among the Respondents**



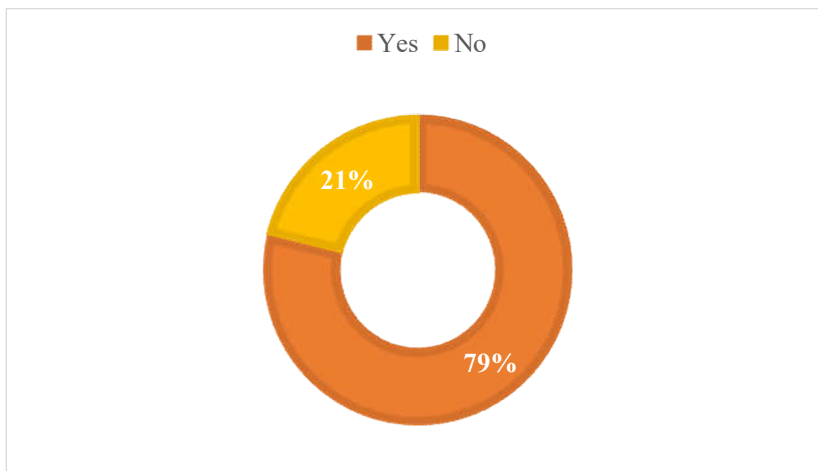
*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

In order to appreciate the level of participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the question of “Practising Catholics” comes into the picture therefore this study considered the above heading as necessary. Almost all respondents, ninety-four percent (94%) of the respondents were practising Catholics.<sup>580</sup> The remaining six percent (6%) of the respondents were church members, though not fully practising Catholics. Soliciting for ideas for inculturation from the laity is an important step towards not limiting inculturation only in the hands of experts. As rightly noted by McGarry, “If inculturation were the work of only experts, there is a danger that it would be a conceptual and technical inculturation coming from the outside and not affecting people’s lives [practically].”<sup>581</sup>

<sup>580</sup> This term refers to Catholics who are communicants and play active role in Church activities.

<sup>581</sup> McGarry, “*What Happened At The African Synod*”, 61.

**Fig. 6.1.6 Whether the respondent is a member of a Church organisation/society**



*Source: Field survey, January, 2021*

The majority of the respondents making up about seventy-nine percent (79%) were members of different church societies or organizations, whereas the other twenty-one percent (21%) did not belong to any Church society or organisation. Summarily, these twenty-one percent of the respondents expressed no interest in joining any church organisation due to different reasons.

## **6.2 The Culture of Communality among the Akans**

Emphasizing the need to understand and articulate culture in evangelization, John Paul II emphatically moved that "...faith needs to be part of cultural synthesis because a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully received, not entirely thought through, not faithfully lived."<sup>582</sup> Then also, considering the reminder of Pope Paul VI that priests are not the sole agent of evangelization since together with the laity, they form the Body of Christ under the guidance of the bishop who is the head (LG 31-33), it is good that such a profound study as this, is conducted on the Akans' culture because as Schineller contends, "A whole range of areas of Church life calls for inculturation."<sup>583</sup> However, limited knowledge of cultural diversity and relationship with the gospel has been noted as the major problem of inculturation today as Pinto puts it, "The problem of inculturation today is not about faith and its contents such as, but about

<sup>582</sup> George, "Inculturation & Ecclesial Communion", 44.

<sup>583</sup> Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, 83.



the imposition of the cultural form it has acquired during the course of history, upon people, who have different cultures.”<sup>584</sup>

According to the assessments of the various clergy<sup>585</sup> and laity<sup>586</sup> respondents, the culture of communal meal-sharing among the Akans is a cherished value of their culture. For the Akan household, the foodstuff for the meal is provided by the man who is the head of the family, while the woman’s duty is to cook and serve the food. For the respondents, gathering around a table for meal-sharing is an important aspect of the Akan community because the communal meal is one unique means of uniting and strengthening ties in the Akan social ethnic group. Consequently, there is no restriction on people to partake in this meal in the household and even visitors are always invited to share in this meal. Secondly, the meal-sharing symbolically serves as a moment of uniting both the living and the dead by pacifying the ancestors as the living commune together. However, as shared by one of the respondents, L6, the act is part of the Akan culture of ensuring commensality:

Among the Akan, the art of eating is considered an essential aspect of life; among the Akans, the key word used as their reason (s) of eating together as an obligation is commensality. Commensal relationship of eating together reduces people’s perception of inequality. It also signifies unity and sharing among the Akans. In order to achieve the results mentioned above, Akans make the act of eating together obligatory and important for social communion.

In support of these responses, Archbishop Anokye contends that, the communal meal-sharing or commensality is an important practice among the Akan ethnic group where the living and the dead commune together. There is a strong belief that communal meals unite family members because they have a common ancestral linkage.

According to the findings from the FGD, the Akan communal meals are not meant only for communal sharing among the living but they are also offered to the ancestors who form part of the family. Therefore whenever sacrifices are offered to the ancestors, the people who participate in the sacrifice also partake in the eating of the sacrificial meals. This factor chalked an average score of 3.9, implying that the meals, as known to the people, are offered to idols. The indication is that, it is mandatory that a member of the family, no matter your physical condition, must take part in the meal as explained by one of the respondents, C3:

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<sup>584</sup> Pinto, “Inculturation Through Basic Communities”, 21.

<sup>585</sup> Throughout the work, whenever the alphabet ‘C’ is used; it refers to the clergy respondents.

<sup>586</sup> In the same vein, the alphabet ‘L’ also stands for the lay respondents.

Since everybody is part of the family, we do everything together. Because if you don't eat what has been prepared, there is no way you will be allowed to prepare yours at your own appropriate time. They cook and eat together to avoid any "left-overs", thereby saving food.

The Akan communal meals are not to be tasted only but to be taken to quench hunger. The average score for the enquiry is that: The meals served are not to be tasted only but eaten to satisfy, was 3.7, which depicts a high level of disagreement to the assertion. This assertion is captured by L47, who posited that;

Eating together communally among the Akans household is obligatory because it forms part of the customs and valued traditions where all family members gather around the head of the family.

Aside from the economic reason of saving food and psycho-social need to fill one's stomach during the family meal-sharing, the core goal of partaking in the Akans' communal meal is to ensure unity and strengthen family and social ties. This fact is ascertained by L10, who contends that;

It is obligatory to bring peace, unity and also bind the household together.

The Eucharist as established by the Lord Jesus Christ too is obligatory for all those who are part of the body and have eternal life, a norm that equates the call of the Lord Jesus Christ that, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (John 6: 54). Just as if an Akan ignores being a part of the communal meal, they are not counted as part of the family, so is it that if one does not take part in the Eucharistic celebration to "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of the Lord Jesus Christ, same is not counted as part of the body of Christ – people with eternal life. Therefore, Archbishop Anokye explains; there is only physical satisfaction in the Akan communal meals whereas there is salvation in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Hence the Eucharist in the Church's theology is viewed as higher than the Akan communal meal as Archbishop Anokye contends since it brings salvation to the soul (John 6:66-68).

The FGD also revealed that, "The meal and the quantity served during Akans' communal meal make the essence of the practice vivid". This factor chalked an average score of 1.2, which is affirmative. Since no one is allowed to make their individual meals apart from the one served communally, unity and love in the family are enhanced and purified. One of the respondents, L1 underscores this relevance positing that:

Communal meals promote unity, love and explain the importance of sharing in the household meals.

The above denotes that the Akan families depend enormously on this culture to unify bonds and create a stronger sense of belonging. Members of Akan families are never fed-up with the practice. However, as indicated by the scorecard, respondents with an average score of 1.3 affirmed that *The meal and its size served during Akans' communal meal make the practice new every time*. As one of the respondents, L5 puts it: Eating together among Akan households was all about the love and how they care about themselves and other people. Therefore, it is imperative that family ties, spirit and sense of belongingness are deepened very well during communal meals.

As simple as the Passover served by Jesus Christ was when he broke bread and served wine with his disciples, without any prior special announcement of it as an event, so is how Akan communal meals are organized. The factor: *Preparations towards observing the communal meal are simple and* scored an average of 1.1 on the scorecard. This shows that members of the body (family) have no restrictive recommendations that could prevent any one or cause serious self-assessment before the meal. This assertion was assessed on the score card and it scored an average of 1.1 too. With this level of affirmation to the fact that the practice by the Akans is kept inclusive and straightforward all the time, stronger family ties could be built. The point of L2, a respondent, reiterates the view mentioned above. For them,

Eating together as a communal activity brings about cordiality among family members. It allows expression of love among family members.

There is the belief that the practice leaves the ground for members to study the different characters in the body and thereby learn to adjust and live communally. This was mentioned by participant L21, that:

It is one of the ways that build love among the members and bring togetherness among the members. It also helps to know how to relate with others because when people come together you will know the characters of others, and it will help you know how to relate with them.

Not only that, but the practice also gives the Akan community the platform to be mindful of the headship of the family, learn to be obedient to them, and receive meals from them as a symbol of “son-ship” or “daughter-ship”. This fact was mentioned by participant L67, who stated that:

The reason is that there is always one head of the family who represents the family and communal life and is the unity of the family. He/She binds everyone together, so it becomes imperative that no other person can provide for the household as the head.

Looking to Christ, the head of the Catholic Church, directly relates to this belief as He offered himself for the salvation of the world through the sacrifice on the cross as the atoning victim. Respondents unanimously agreed that, *The meal serves as one body, representing all of us feasting*. The 2.2 average score shows that generally, everyone consents to this theme. During the Focal-Group Discussion, they expressed and highlighted the essence of a communal meal, contending that it builds not only the unions and ties but also the spiritual body of the family. According to participant C19, *Eating a meal together is the most basic way of sharing a common life. It restores what has been lost and gives strength for what lies ahead, which makes it obligatory*.

Inferring from the Focal Group Discussion results, it is highly believed among the Akans that: *If the Catholic Eucharistic celebration is organized as the Akans' communal meals, the impact will be more*. This assertion scored an average of 1.3, which indicates a strong agreement to it. For Pinto, “faith is lived, clothed, enveloped, [and] expressed in a culture. A lived faith always has a cultural character. [Therefore] Faith cannot exist in a culture-free state”<sup>587</sup> because “a believer expresses his [or her] faith in the culture [that] he [or she] belongs to.”<sup>588</sup>

In order to examine the relationship between the communal meal and the Eucharistic meal, the question was posed to find out from the respondents; *If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us share in the life of Christ the more*. The average score for the factor was 1.3, an indication that making the celebration of the Eucharist more local and meaningful to the people will have an impressive impact on their belief in been a part of the body of Christ and share in His Being. The same will also impact the fraternity and relationship level, as the communal meals of the Akans does. This was further stressed by L62, who pointed out that:

Eating together is indeed an obligatory activity in Akan households, where “obligatory” here means “moral rule/norm”. The fundamental essence of this activity hangs on the moral principle of fostering unity amongst individuals of the household.

The Akan believes that “Eating a meal together is the most basic way of sharing a common life. It restores what has been lost and gives strength for what lies ahead, that makes it obligatory”, as indicated by L41 during the discussions. In addition to this, the Akan believes that a communal meal; *brings love to the household members; it is obligatory because there should be love for each other as family members or as household members*. Therefore the primary purpose of the

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<sup>587</sup> Pinto, “Inculturation Through Basic Communities”, 20.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

celebration of the Eucharist has direct focus as the communal meal of the Akans. It is also worth noting that this culture of the Akans is much respected by same. Therefore, as admonished by Norbert, “without the conditions of integrity and participation, the culture that the faith is inculturated into is fundamentally alienating to the people and so cannot speak to their hearts and minds”<sup>589</sup> elaborate on the need to carefully consider such a high-held culture that assimilates and explains values of the Christian life.

The same reason above can be attributed to the highest accepted belief with a 1.3 average score on the scorecard that, “*If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us understand the essence of it the more*”. Thus, the implication is that during communal meals, members of the family or community interact and thrush out existing differences, thereby creating unity and linkages between broken relationships, practically and physically. Members resume the next moments after communal meals knowing precisely the nature of their relationships restored.

That implies that the Akans communal meal can mend broken souls and reunite them to the family. This conclusion is supported by the 1.5 average score on the scorecard, which indicates that many of the respondents believe that “*If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, more souls will become more stable in the faith*”.

The experiences from the observation of the Akan communal meal are an obligatory practice among the Akans. Their social and spiritual lives are positively and imperatively impacted by adhering to the event’s necessary aspects. Inculturating the celebration of the Eucharist to take the form of this rich culture of the Akans can create more positive impact by way of participation in the celebrations, as posited generally by the scores on the scorecard. And also implied by the decree of Vatican II on missionary activities that Christian missionaries must ensure that Christians give expression to the newness of life in their society and culture and in a manner that is in keeping with their land and that they must be familiar with the culture, they must purify it and guard it, and must develop it (DG 21). Probably, Pinto’s assertion that, “One cannot respond to [the] Christian message in his [her] total life, if it is presented in another cultural form”<sup>590</sup> best explains the stance of the Second Vatican Council.

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<sup>589</sup> Norbert, “*Christianity and Cultures: A Mutual Enrichment*”, 21.

<sup>590</sup> Pinto, “*Inculturation Through Basic Communities*”, 27.

See Table 6.1 for the details.

Table 6.1 An Assessment of the Culture of Community among the Akans

<i>SN</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>SA [1]</i>	<i>A [2]</i>	<i>I [3]</i>	<i>D [4]</i>	<i>Average Score</i>
i	Communal meals are also offered to idols	0	0	6 = 18	64 =256	3.9
ii	The meals used are local, used to pacify the ancestors as the living commune.	0	3 = 6	6 = 18	61 =244	3.8
iii	The meals served are to be tasted only not eaten to satisfy	0	6 = 12	9 = 27	55 =220	3.7
iv	The meal and the size of it served during Akans' communal meal make the essence of the practice vivid.	58 =58	9 = 18	3 = 9	0	1.2
v	The meal and the size of it served during Akans' communal meal make the practice new every time.	52 = 52	18 = 36	0	0	1.3
vi	Preparations towards the observation of the communal meal is simple all the time.	64 =64	6 = 12	0	0	1.1
vii	No one is exempted from participating in the meal's preparation, serving or eating.	61 =61	9 = 18	0	0	1.1
viii	The meal serves as one body, which represents all of us feasting as one.	9 = 9	46 = 92	9 = 27	6 = 24	2.2
ix	If our Catholic Eucharistic celebration is organized as the Akans' communal meals, I believe the impact will be more.	55 =55	12 = 24	3 = 9	0	1.3
x	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us share in the life of Christ the more.	46 =46	24 = 48	0	0	1.3
xi	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is	49 =49	18 = 36	3 = 9	0	1.3

	inculturated, it will make us understand the more.					
xii	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, more souls will become more stable in the faith.	40 =40	24 = 48	6 = 18	0	1.5

Source: Field survey, January-April, 2021<sup>591</sup>

**Key:**

SA [1] Strongly Agree    A [2] Agree    I [3] Indifference    D [4] Disagree

### 6.3 The Catholic Eucharistic Celebration and the Akan Communal Meal

The Holy Eucharist is the most important of all the sacraments of the Catholic Church because it is only in this sacrament that Christians receive the very body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Catholics regard participation in this practice and its reception as their anchor and hope for redemption as Christ died for the sake of humanity. Therefore, Christians hold every component of the sacred practice with awe and great honour. According to C65, Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life”.

Therefore, there is the need to examine the components of the celebration of the Eucharistic meal and compare it with the Akan communal meal to conclude its impact on people’s spiritual growth. Archbishop Anokye explains that, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross was for the whole of humanity. Thus, it was communal so also since Akan meal sharing is communitarian, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist can also be seen from that angle as communal and it is life-giving. Responses from the Focal Group Discussions echoed how the Church holds the Eucharist as an important sacrament in the life of the members of the body of Christ. With an average score of 1.9, it stands that the Church agrees with the fact that “the use of bread and wine makes the celebration sacred.” The sacredness of the celebration has requirements that even demands that members are aligned before partaking in it. L65<sup>592</sup> reiterated that:

All the faithful share the Eucharist from the same “bowl” administered by the priest as if sharing one loaf of bread amongst the faithful with the sole purpose of feeding all the faithful spiritually.

<sup>591</sup> The figures indicated in the score box represent the number of respondents who responded to the question under the four categories of SA, A, I, and D. Their interpretation is referenced in the text. The values were clarified quantitatively to know and understand the extent of connections that existed among the measured factors through in-text referencing. The clarified values were analysed based on weighted averages.

<sup>592</sup> The letter ‘L’ stands for laity respondents.

As a matter of emphasis, archbishop Sarpong explains that:

The Eucharist is a sacrifice. It is not meant only as a meal. It is a sacrifice Christ offering himself to God his Father. It is similar to the mosaic sacrifice although this is an unbloody sacrifice. During Akan offering of sacrifice, animals are killed and eaten after the sacrifice: the sacrifice of the Eucharist has replaced this bloody sacrifice.

In an interview with archbishop emeritus Sarpong, he stressed that the routine of this Eucharistic celebration could not be authored. He stated that, “there are no two ways about it, in the celebration of the Eucharist, a sacrifice on the cross is re-enacted as Christ commanded”, which explains how incredible and high-held the celebration of the Eucharist is to the Church.<sup>593</sup> Both Archbishop (emeritus) Sarpong and Archbishop Anokye in an interview contend that, no staunch catholic faith holds any different or contrary view on this belief. Inferring from the scorecard result emerging from the clergy respondents, it was made known (with an average score of 2.0) that the Church agrees that the Eucharistic species of bread and wine used in the celebration of the Eucharist must be maintained in the celebration of this sacrament. Therefore, inculturation of the Holy Eucharist as promoted by African theologians does not necessarily mean that the matter of the sacrament (bread and wine) must be inculturated as expressed by the respondents, rather some aspects of the celebration can be localized. Still on the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist, Archbishop Anokye in an interview with the researcher reiterated, “the Church uses the Eucharistic species of bread and wine in fidelity to Christ who offered himself as the atoning victim.”<sup>594</sup>

Even though the above response stands, the Church is a dynamic institution. An average score of 2.9 on the score card unveiled that the respondents were indifferent to whether they *believe bread and wine are the only items that should be used for the communion*. The need to check on the use of bread and wine in the Church cannot be overemphasized.

Another critical factor examined was how respondents regard the act of meal-sharing as a sacred practice. Inferring from the clergy scorecard, respondents strongly agreed that “*the observation of the Eucharistic celebration has become ordinary*.” Preparation towards the observation of the Eucharistic celebration was fervent during early days (scoring an average of 1.1) as the average score shifted to 2.3 with the trend; Preparation towards the observation of the Eucharistic celebration is still fervent as in the earlier days. Respondents were also indifferent

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<sup>593</sup> Interview with archbishop emeritus Peter K. Sarpong at his residence in Kumasi on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.

<sup>594</sup> Interview with Archbishop Gabriel Justice Anokye at his residence in Kumasi on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.



about whether or not their fellow members in their parishes fully understand the Eucharistic celebration.

The indifferent stance on the component of the Eucharistic species of bread and wine and the change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ expressed by respondents regarding their preparation towards the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be directly attributed to the teachings of the Church. Admonishing Christ's faithful through our interview, Archbishop Sarpong called for frequent training and empowerment of the role of catechists in handling the catechesis ministry of the Church.<sup>595</sup> In the real sense, the need to explore inculturation cannot be left out in the catechism of the Church.

The analogy above holds that with an average score of 1.6, it is generally believed that members of the Church have a certain level of understanding about the Eucharistic celebration. Then again, the factor, "*The celebration makes me feel the unity among us in the church,*" scoring the average of 1.8, further deepens the fact that the Church is well taught about the Eucharistic celebration and the benefits.

Probing a bit further into the likelihood of inculturating the Eucharistic meal in the catechism of the Church concerning this sacrament indicated an exciting result. With an average score of 1.6, the Akans agreed that "*If their local understanding of communal meal-sharing is used for the Eucharistic celebration during catechesis, they believe the impact will be more.*" The dilemma remains whether or not the act of inculturation should necessarily replace the matter of the Eucharistic meal with local or cultural elements of the local people. There remains a belief that an inculturated Eucharistic celebration can still be seen in the context of communal meals of the Akan social ethnic group without the usage of local or cultural elements. Archbishop Sarpong jokingly asked, "Can a priest replace coconut water as wine for the sake of inculturation?"<sup>596</sup> Archbishop Sarpong was of the view that the African Church cannot replace the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist with any local element. With this however, respondents remained largely indifferent concerning the matter of the sacrament, as demonstrated in Table 6.2 on *whether "The current form of organizing the Catholic Eucharistic celebration represents traditions and symbols that bond us as Akans."*

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<sup>595</sup> Interview with archbishop emeritus Peter K. Sarpong at his residence in Kumasi on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

**Table 6.2 Assessment of the Catholic Eucharistic Celebration and the Akans' Communal Meal**

<i>SN</i>	<i>Factor/ Variable</i>	<i>SA [1]</i>	<i>A [2]</i>	<i>I [3]</i>	<i>D [4]</i>	<i>Average Score</i>
i	The use of bread and wine makes the celebration sacred.	15 =15	46 = 92	9 = 27	0 = 0	134/70 = 1.9
ii	The fact that bread and wine are not local does not affect my regard for the Eucharist as sacred communion.	18 =18	34 = 64	12 = 36	6 = 24	2.0
iii	I believe bread and wine are the only items that should be used for the communion.	3 = 3	15 = 30	40 = 120	12 = 48	2.9
iv	The observation of the Eucharistic celebration has become ordinary.	46 =46	18 = 36	6 = 18	0	1.4
v	My preparation towards the observation of the Eucharistic celebration was fervent during my early days.	61 =61	9 = 18	0	0	1.1
vi	My preparation towards the observation of the Eucharistic celebration is still fervent as in the earlier days.	9 = 9	40 = 80	15 = 45	6 = 24	2.3
vii	I understand the celebration of the Eucharist very well	40 =40	18 = 36	9 = 27	3 = 12	1.6
viii	The celebration makes me feel the unity among us in the church.	24 =24	37 = 74	6 = 18	3 = 12	1.8
ix	If our local meals are used for the celebration, I believe the impact will be more in the form that we have our communal meals.	43 =43	15 = 30	9 = 27	3 = 12	1.6
x	My fellow members also express understanding of the celebration	6 = 6	15 = 30	46 =138	3 = 12	2.7
xi	The current form of organizing the	3 = 3	15 = 30	40 =120	12 = 48	2.9

	Catholic Eucharistic celebration represents traditions and symbols that bond us as Akans					
xii	I see the Eucharist as a communal meal that makes us share in the life of Christ.	46 =46	24 = 48	0	0	1.3

Source: Field survey, January-April, 2021

**Key:**

SA [1] Strongly Agree    A [2] Agree    I [3] *Indifference*    D [4] Disagree

**6.4 Understanding the Eucharistic Celebration and how Akans can fully benefit from its participation**

There was also the need to gather and analyze the opinions of the clergy on the Eucharistic theology as held and taught by the Church. This section is significant since the clergy are mandated as one of their priestly functions to teach the faithful about the doctrines of the Church. Therefore the clergy who minister in Akan communities such as those in the Kumasi archdiocese are pressed upon to assist Akan Christians, using their communal meal to educate them concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist. As demonstrated in this study previously, the laity, supported by the clergy, have argued that the laid down process of celebrating the Eucharist in memory of Jesus Christ cannot and should not take any other alternative course except the one prescribed by Jesus Christ in the scripture. This is so because the elements of the Eucharist are symbols that represent believers taking part in the apex sacrifice in which Jesus Christ offered himself for the salvation of the world.

The stance of the Church on keeping to the sanctity of the Eucharist has modified some aspects of the Eucharist such as language for the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist but ensure that such a modification does not invalidate the originality and purpose of the Eucharistic celebration. Thus, the clergy, with an average score of 3.6, disagree with the fact that “*inculturating the Eucharist will make it void*”. Therefore, there is an indication that the clergy who formed part of this study support any modest innovation that does not negate or neutralize the symbols and essence of celebrating the Eucharist but a boost of it.

To ascertain more on the point stated above, the average score of the response to the factor: *Knowing what the Akan communal meal entails, inculturating the Eucharist with it will serve the essence of it*, gained a result of 1.4, which represents a clear and strong agreement by the clergy. Even though the clergy were indifferent to the fact that “*The Akans communal meal is purely cultural and not rooted in any religion*”, their afore-mentioned position could be attributed to the strong belief that, “*There is no aspect of the Akan communal meal that is idol-inclined*”. As Ackah puts it, “this *activity* of sharing life together brings about peaceful coexistence, cohesion, care for each other and love in the community,”<sup>597</sup> it is a mere activity. Refer to Table 6.3 for the details.

Furthermore, the clergy, with an average score of 1.7, agree with the belief that inculturating the Eucharist in the context of using the Akan communal meal could aid in deepening the understanding of this sacrament and hence promote participation in general. With an average score of 1.6, they also believe that *if the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us share in the life of Christ the more*. In other words, there is a sense of making concrete the practice by bringing it to match the cultural worldview of the local people. This situation calls for a paradigm shift to interlace the communal experiences with the Eucharist proposed by the clergy is paramount in deepening the Catholic faith in the congregants. This is so because they (clergy) agree that, “*If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us understand the essence of it the more.*” It is a fact that more profound understanding and adherence to the reception and participation of the sacraments are illuminated by the adoption and use of the cultural worldview of the local people. Hence situating the Eucharistic celebration in the context of the Akan communal meal would not be out of place. If inculturation can enhance the understanding of the sacraments and promote participation, then the same can strengthen the zeal for celebrating the Eucharistic meal. According to the scorecard, the clergy agreed with the belief that “*If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, more souls will become more stable in the faith.*”

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<sup>597</sup> Ackah, “The Significance of the Eucharistic Theology in Africa Today”, 135.

**Table 6.3 Clergy Respondents**

<i>SN</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>SA [1]</i>	<i>A [2]</i>	<i>I [3]</i>	<i>D [4]</i>	<i>Average Score</i>
i	Inculturating the Eucharist will make it void	0 = 0	1 = 2	6 = 18	13 = 52	3.6
ii	Knowing what the Akans communal meal entails, inculturating the Eucharist with it will serve the essence of it.	3= 13	6 = 12	1 = 3	0 = 0	1.4
iii	There is no aspect of the Akans communal meal that is idol-inclined	18= 18	0	1 = 1	1 = 4	1.3
iv	The Akans communal meal is purely cultural and not rooted in any religion.	3 = 3	6 = 12	9 = 27	2 = 8	2.5
v	Inculturating the Eucharist, using the Akans communal meal can deepen the understanding of the practice and thus enhance participation in general.	12= 12	4 = 8	2 = 6	2 = 8	1.7
vi	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us share in the life of Christ the more.	11= 11	7 = 14	1 = 3	1 = 4	1.6
vii	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, it will make us understand the essence of it the more.	10= 10	5 = 10	3 = 6	2 = 8	1.7
viii	If the Eucharist as a communal meal is inculturated, more souls will become more stable in the faith.	11= 11	8 = 16	1 = 3	0	1.5

*Source: Field survey, January-April, 2021*

**Key:**

SA [1] Strongly Agree

A [2] Agree

I [3] *Indifference*

D [4] Disagree

## 6.5 An assessment of the mode of catechism concerning the celebration of the Eucharist in the understanding of a communal meal

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher observed that both the laity and clergy perceive the communal meal of the Akan as a starting point towards educating Christians about the importance of the Eucharistic meal. Instead of the traditional catechism concerning the Eucharist as a sacrament of the Church, it was observed that responses indicate a call by both the laity and clergy for a paradigm shift in the approach towards inculturation. However, it is imperative to indicate that these views expressed by the respondents concerning the Eucharistic celebration and about the communal meal of the Akans must be assessed in the light of the Eucharistic theology of the Church. Archbishop Sarpong shares his view on the matter of the Eucharist as a sacrament and states:

It is impossible! You cannot change the matter. You cannot use coconut juice to replace wine. The bread and wine are unchangeable because that is what Jesus said that we should use in memory of him; you cannot change it in any way. There are some things such as (accidentals, un-essentials, immutable) but the reality remains: the bread and wine. In fidelity to what Jesus said: take this (bread and wine). We can use traditional symbols and elements in the celebration of the Eucharist as part of inculturation but not when it comes to the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>598</sup>

Inferring from the above assertion of Archbishop Sarpong, it is made clear that even though the communal meal of the Akans have similarities and resemblance to the organisation of the Catholic Eucharist, there should be no notion of changing the matter used as part of inculturation. This statement of Sarpong confirms the stance of the Ghanaian bishops when they stated that, concerning changing the bread and wine into the African foodstuffs as familiar elements as part of inculturation, “Rome has not responded favourably to using [such] elements other than unleavened bread and wine from grapes (imported).”<sup>599</sup> During the farewell meal of Jesus with his disciples, He used “*bread and wine*” and so nothing else could be used that can replace what represent the flesh and the blood of the sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, although inculturation is necessary for the Church in Ghana and for that matter in Africa in general. Archbishop Anokye also presented the symbolizing nature of the meal used:

For instance, when I go to the cemetery and put flowers, not synthetic flowers but real natural roses on my mum’s tomb or my father’s tomb in the western world. I don’t expect them to resurrect from the tomb to come and smell the flowers, but that is also the culture in the western world. I know

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<sup>598</sup> An interview with emeritus Archbishop Sarpong at his residence in Kumasi on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.

<sup>599</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa: On the Church in Ghana and its Evangelising Mission in the Third Millennium; Instrumentum Laboris.* (Takoradi: St. Francis Press: 1996), 49.

they have understood the gesture symbolism for what I have done so when we throw together, when we put it together they become meaningful and we put the piece together to signify something that we don't see with our naked eyes. We see a meaning; we see a significance; we see an event by this thing I have put there. So this food symbolizes a whole culture, a whole community, of the living and the dead.

This symbolism is what Archbishop Sarpong also cautioned against during my interview session with him. Sarpong states that, the matter concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist must never be changed because that was the way Jesus Christ instituted it. Emphasizing strictly on the belief that nothing else could represent what “*bread and wine*” embody in the sacrifice presented to the world.

Archbishop Sarpong further expounded that the fact among the Akans, meal was an aftermath of the sacrifice. Thus, in the Akan community, the meat is usually gotten from the sacrifice made by the community. He explained that the entire festival hinges on sacrifice and noted that the celebration is not only about the meal as believed by some section of Christians (Reformers) but also, about the sacrifice made on the cross of Calvary for humanity that Christians must commemorate in memory of Jesus Christ. He further explained his position with the illustration below:

The influence that the golden stool had on the Asante was so tremendous. If you play with the golden stool<sup>600</sup> of the Asantes, you would be in serious trouble. So Anokye taught that the Eucharist is Jesus. It must also have the same influence on Catholics as the golden stool has on the Asantes.

It is in this line of thinking that emeritus archbishop Sarpong believes that the people who part away from the Catholic Church do not recognise the *sacrifice* aspect of the Eucharist. Thus he opined, such a state of confusion brings a congregant to fall short of the completeness of the knowledge of the sacred festival, the Eucharist, and hence is mystified about how bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Furthermore, he posited that considering the sacrament of the Eucharist to be meal only, is an error that must be corrected through modern-day catechism. Understood in this direction, archbishop Sarpong emphasised the inadequacy of priests who are mandated to exercise the teaching ministry in their respective parishes. Therefore, he points out that the contribution of laymen and women such as catechists must be acknowledged, and their formation must be intensified within the Church. Thus, catechists must undergo timely refresher training or formation to equip them on current Church issues and information about Church doctrines and teachings.

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<sup>600</sup> Golden stool is the royal and divine throne of Ashanti kings and the ultimate symbol of power in Asante

In a nutshell, it can be observed that fieldwork responses indicate that the Akans' communal meal has unique features that qualify the cultural practice as a tool that can be conveniently used to acculturate the celebration of the Eucharist in making a relevant and meaningful celebration in Akan Christian communities. We must not forget that Akans have a somewhat similar conceptualisation of God just like the Jews or Christians.<sup>601</sup> Through Vatican II, the Church is open to such changes that could contribute to the practice becoming more useful and productive.

However, it is inimical to make a religious faith a stringent system void of cultural considerations because "... had early missionaries been aware of the potency of Traditional African religion and taken it seriously, Christianity would have taken a turn among African people for the better."<sup>602</sup>

## 6.6 Conclusion

Responses from respondents through interviews and questionnaires during my fieldwork have affirmed that Akan communal meals are important meeting point of communality. This cultural value is meant to foster oneness, love, and solidarity among the living and the dead. This practice is comparable to the celebration of the Eucharist which binds the living and the saints together therefore the spiritual benefits accompanying its participation and reception must not be downplayed.

According to findings from the fieldwork, partaking in the Akan communal meal is obligatory for all family members, a norm that equates to the call of the Lord Jesus Christ that, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (John 6:54). Just as if an Akan ignores being a part of the communal meal, they are not counted as part of the family, so is it that if one does not take part in the Eucharistic celebration to "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a person loses sharing in Jesus' promise of eternal life. It can be observed that the lay respondents are of the view that the Church should pay attention to Catholics who have not sacramentalized their marriages so that they can also receive the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. For the sake of fraternity as pointed out by Pope Francis, persons who have not blessed their marriages but portrays their readiness towards the reception of this sacrament must be considered. As the Church emphasizes on the significance of this

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<sup>601</sup> Vroom, "Do all Religious Traditions Worship the Same God?", 73–90.

<sup>602</sup> Sarpong, "Dear Nana: Letters to my Ancestor", 22.



sacrament, the Church must be hospitable to the Christians in this unfortunate situation which has prevented them from receiving this sacrament. Archbishop Anokye emphasizes on the joy of Christians when they encounter priests who come to their towns and villages to celebrate this sacrament.

From my observation, it appears that Christians who have not blessed their marriages in the Church are left out of the celebration and reception of the Holy Eucharist hence cannot share in the life of Christ. But in the mind of archbishop Anokye, this category of Christians must take necessary steps of preparations towards the sacrament of Holy matrimony so that they can also participate wholly and receive the Holy Communion.

Furthermore, the fieldwork undertaken by the researcher has also offered him another dimension of respondents' understanding that, although the African Church has been supporting inculturation, certain elements such as the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist is not necessary for a change in fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ. The respondents are of the view that the matter of the sacrament, that is, bread and wine does not pose any problem to their understanding. More so, through this fieldwork, the contribution of catechists in the Church has been acknowledged by the clergy therefore frequent formation training regarding Church doctrines and papal encyclicals must be organized for them.

In sum, this chapter has been able to give a detailed description of how the fieldwork was carried out in this research in all the parishes within the Amakom deanery and giving a systematic approach of the processes I engaged in to arrive at the detailed and rich data collected from my respondents or participants. Hence Akan communal meal sharing can be used as an effective and fundamental tool towards educating Akan Catholics about the sacrament of the Eucharist and by that, encouraging a conscious, full and active participation in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

## **7 AKAN COMMUNAL MEAL AS BASIS FOR PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL**

Meal-sharing among the members of the Akan social ethnic group is a cherished cultural value and its understanding is in depth among them. Participation in this cultural practice is obligatory and with no exclusion since it brings the people together to share life together as well as with the ancestors. With this knowledge, this communal meal can be a stepping stone for evangelization and in the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Thus, the Second Vatican Council considered the focal role that culture plays in the evangelization mission and in that direction, supported inculturation as a means of getting to the hearts of Christians in local communities.

In this study, we are poised to present the sacrament of the Eucharist to Akan Christians in the context of their communal meal.

This study aims to promote participation in the Eucharistic meal by Akan Christians so that the spirit of Sacrosanctum Concilium of participating fully, actively and consciously (SC 14) in the liturgy can be realized. Aside from the literature consulted in this study, several instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and focal discussions were employed. The study used all fourteen parishes and rectorates within the Amakom deanery in the Kumasi archdiocese in achieving the empirical evidence for this study. As proposed by Fr. Joseph Masson, the agenda of inculturation was geared towards recognition for local Churches and their theologies as I have already indicated in my second chapter.

This chapter concludes the research work and provides reflections on inculturation as a means of evangelization through local or cultural elements familiar to the local Christian communities. The chapter also presents the contributions this study has added to the field of Eucharistic theology and its related disciplines.

The guiding question for this research was to explore the extent to which the celebration of the Eucharist can be presented to the Akan Christians in the form of their communal meal. This principal question becomes very important since inculturation welcomes the acknowledgement of local elements in the Church's bid to effectively evangelize. This effort is geared towards participation in the celebration and reception of this sacrament of the Eucharist due to its vitality to the Christian.

The methodology used in this study was both qualitative and quantitative. The method for the empirical studies was employed in the research through the administration of questionnaires, interviews and focal group discussions conducted during the fieldwork in Ghana. Due to time constraints, the Amakom deanery was picked for this interaction at the time of the fieldwork for this research and a period of three months was used for the fieldwork. A semi-structured interview guide was used for the two archbishops and focal group discussions, whereas a structured questionnaire was designed for the lay respondents and the clergy in the parishes. The data forming this empirical study was analyzed based on the weight of respondents' responses and knowledge from existing literature.

## **7.1 Main arguments based on my major findings**

Before embarking on the field research, I had certain presumptions about the research topic and what to expect from the respondents in the fieldwork. Nonetheless, after spending three months in the field, new ideas and arguments shaped my initial preconceived worldview.

### **7.2.1 Background of Respondents**

The study considered the biographical data of respondents to assist the researcher and readers in assessing the gender, their educational qualifications, activeness in church activities, etc and their understanding of meal sharing in their households and relating it to the sacrament of the Eucharist as a meal.

- A majority (54%) of the respondents were males while (46%) were females
- The majority (52%) of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 50.
- About 6% of the respondents were either divorced or separated from marriage. Meanwhile, about 61% were in marital relationships and (33%) were unmarried people.
- About 31% of the respondents have various levels of degrees.
- Almost all respondents were practising Catholics.
- About 80% of respondents belonged to a church society such Knights and Ladies of Marshall, St. Theresa of the Child Society, Youth Council, Christian Mothers Association, St. Vincent De Paul Society, etc.

### 7.2.2 The Culture of Communality among the Akans

The principal objective of this study is how to present the sacrament of the Eucharist in the context of a communal meal to Akan Christians because meal-sharing is one important aspect of their social life. Eucharistic theology emphasizes the Eucharist as a sacrament of unity which binds all the people of God together hence this understanding has many similarities with the Akan concept of meal-sharing or communal meal. The culture of commonality is a cherished social value among the Akans; every activity is seen as a communal affair. With this in mind, meal-sharing is one activity that brings people together for the Akan. Apart from bonding the members of a household together, it also gives life to the person. Bachl contends that food is part of a system of life that supports, strengthens and makes the human body healthy.<sup>603</sup> Although the early missionaries saw the activities of Africans as fetish, when the Akan offered food to the ancestors, it was nothing related to fetishism but for the sake of communality with the dead family relatives. Hence meal-sharing is one unique way of uniting both the living and the dead and strengthening ties in the Akan society. Therefore, for the respondents, partaking in the Akan communal meal is obligatory for a significant reason: to ensure unity and strengthen ties. Members are to eat together to accomplish the essence of the practice. The Akan families depend enormously on this culture to unify bonds and create a stronger sense of belonging to the family.

To achieve complete unity and oneness in the family, members of the household (family) have no restrictive recommendations that could prevent any one or cause serious self-assessment before the meal. Since no one is undermined, family ties, spirit and belongingness are necessary to deepen during communal meals. However this understanding of the respondents affirms the position of Anokye that, the Eucharist is a sacrament that symbolizes our unity.<sup>604</sup> And for the sake of this unity, family members use this occasion to study the different characters of the household and thereby learn to adjust and live communally with each other. But to what extent can we practically say that the Eucharist, referring to the practice of a meal is a sacrament of unity when some members have various impediments such as Christians in polygamous marriages, Christians who have performed customary marriages and yet have not been able to

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<sup>603</sup> Bachl, *Eucharistie*, 11.

<sup>604</sup> Anokye, *Eucharistic Spirituality in a new Millennium*", 24.

receive the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, etc towards its reception? This question still baffles my mind and some of the respondents in their presentations.<sup>605</sup>

It is highly believed among the Akans that, *If the teachings relating to the Eucharistic celebration are presented to them in the form of their communal meal, the impact would be greater.* In this direction, the celebration of the Eucharist becomes more meaningful to the people and thereby strongly impacts on their belief in being a part of the body of Christ, sharing in His being and reconciliation among themselves and with Christ.

### **7.2.3 The Catholic Eucharistic Celebration and the Akans' Communal Meal**

For the Church, the Eucharistic meal is regarded as the anchor and the hope for the redemption of all Christians therefore the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ is important for our spiritual growth. It is based on this understanding that Christ commanded, "... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him [her] on the last day" (John 6:53-54). It can be pointed out that, out of the sacrifice on the Cross that Christ urges all Christians to celebrate this memorial meal and eat His Body and Blood as sharing in his redemption of the world. Both archbishops Anokye and Sarpong reiterated this salvific importance of the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist in their interviews. In my observation, their rationale of emphasizing on the importance regarding the reception of the Eucharist is purposely on the salvation of the human being and it is upon this ground that, an inculturated Eucharistic celebration is significant for a full, active and conscious participation. It is in this direction that the clergy support any innovation that inculturation brings on board as part of respecting local theologies in local Christian communities as a way of enriching the theology of the Universal Church.

In the context of culture which is an important criterion for theological development, the Akan communal meal-sharing is also regarded as a cultural practice which offers physical nourishment to the human person notwithstanding the social bond, love, friendliness and unity it brings about. Due to these social values enumerated above, every member of the family becomes

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<sup>605</sup> This issue is addressed so far in the Synodal Process only on a lighter note. Cf. General Secretariat of the Synod, *"Enlarge the space of your tent" (IS 54:2): Working Document for the Continental Stage*, Vatican 2022, <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/continental-stage/dcs/Documento-Tappa-Continentale-EN.pdf> (retrieved 14.12.2022), 39 and 94.

part of this practice and is obliged to partake. This practice of meal-sharing is also an action that does not only bind the living together, the connection between the living and the dead ancestors are also celebrated as reverence to the dead relatives. It is worthy to note that, the sacredness of these two practices are paramount to the wellbeing of its members therefore have requirements demanding that members are aligned before partaking in it. Also, meals become the endpoint of the offering of sacrifice among Akans where they eat or drink together as a sign of sharing life together and with the dead respectively. Thus, meal-sharing played a major role in reconciliatory rites among family or community members.

Essentially, the clergy and lay respondents respectively agree with the belief that inculturating the Eucharist, using the notion or knowledge of Akan communal meal as a starting point of education or catechesis can deepen the understanding of the practice and enhance participation in general. In this light, the sense of making the practice concrete by way of employing elements familiar to their cultural worldview of the local people could be in the right direction. In sum, this earlier assertion supports the stance that, if inculturation enhances understanding, it can also strengthen the zeal for it.

#### **7.2.4 The mode of catechesis concerning the celebration of the Eucharist in the understanding of a communal meal**

For the Church, the sacrament of the Eucharist is a meal which brings all the members of the Body of Christ together as one Body of Christ (*Sacramentum Unitatis*). This understanding can also be found in the Akan practice of communal meal where every member of the family participates as a sign of unity. This understanding of unity emerging out of meal-sharing outlines one of the common similarities between the sacrament of the Eucharist and Akan communal meal although there also certain differences. With this insight, teaching the Akan Christian about the sacrament of the Eucharist as a meal, first and foremost becomes understandable. This effort of presenting the sacrament in the context of a communal meal does not take away the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ which we celebrate in the unbloody sacrifice known as the Eucharistic meal. Employing the practice of communal meal in this regard is only to assist the Akan Christian have a better appreciation of the celebration of the Eucharist due to the importance they attach to their traditional meal-sharing.

### 7.3 Inculturation: a Necessary Boost for Effective Participation

The certainty for a paradigm shift in the evangelization mission of the Church which eventually saw the birth of a new principle known as inculturation was proposed by Fr. Joseph Masson, (S.J.) in expanding the universal nature of the Church. This shift at that time became inescapable since the Church, even today, was seen as European Church therefore the need to review the evangelization approach of the Church so that every member of the Church would feel part of the Church, which is the One Body of Christ. The term inculturation has therefore been defined as

“the integration of the Christian experience of a 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 so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.”<sup>606</sup>

This principle is meant to acknowledge the Church’s universality and respect for local theologies. It must be acknowledged that the process of inculturation is not a one-sided affair or process; it is a two-way process, namely *inculturation ad extra*<sup>607</sup> and *inculturation ad intra*.<sup>608</sup>

In this light, John Paul II stated in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*:

“Through inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within” (RM 52).

The above statement recognizes the need to employ the use of suitable local cultural elements in the evangelization drive of the Church. The evangelization drive of the Church encompasses all aspects of the Church’s life however in this study, the focus centers on the inculturation of the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is worthy to note that the Church acknowledges that for an effective evangelization of local Churches, inculturation becomes the necessary tool in this agenda. Through inculturation, the local people, together with their cultures, can be christianized in their communities in their cultural worldview. In this direction, the Church can use these positive cultural values and forms to enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived. This recognition by the Church affirms culture as a vital criterion for theological

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<sup>606</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ghana and First National Catholic Pastoral Congress, *Ecclesia in Ghana: On the Church in Ghana and its Evangelizing Mission in the Third Millennium, Instrumentum Laboris* (Takoradi: St. Francis Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>607</sup> It is the way in which the Christian life and message influence the cultural context of a particular church.

<sup>608</sup> This is the way in which the Christian life and message are articulated, lived and passed on to the next generation.

development which needs dialogue with people from different cultural backgrounds for successful evangelization of and by the Church.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

Since the time of missionary activities, the Catholic faith and practices have not found their proper niche or link with traditional institutions. Hence there has not been a proper “marriage” between traditional institutions and the Catholic faith with its sacramental celebrations. For instance, the sacrament of baptism can be linked with the Akan traditional naming ceremony in which a new born child is accepted and introduced into the family or community; not only of the living but the dead respectively. In this case, there is a relationship between the living and dead who make up the family lineage. Thus, during the rites of initiation, the ancestors are called upon to protect these new-born children throughout their life on earth since they have become members of the community. This cultural practice can be seen as having the same purpose as the Christian baptism which introduces or initiates the neophyte into the Christian community or the Church. By this rite, the baptized become children of God and members of the Christian community who grows in the faith and prepares themselves towards receiving Holy Communion and confirmation.

In this direction, the Akan communal meal is not idol worship or has no relation with paganism as the early missionaries thought about the African worldview. Meal sharing is a culture of the Akan people meant to foster oneness, love and solidarity among the living and the dead ancestors. This practice is comparable to celebrating the Holy Eucharist, which binds the living and the dead together. According to the findings from the fieldwork, partaking in the Akans’ communal meal is obligatory for all members of the family to partake, a norm that equates with the call of the Lord Jesus Christ that “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (Jn. 6:54). Behind this principle of Jesus Christ calling upon every member of the Church of Christ to eat his Body and drink his Blood is a sign of fraternity so that all might be saved and partake in the Kingdom of God. Relatively, an Akan cannot refuse to participate in household communal meals and still count himself or herself as part of such family which is different from the Church whereby non-communicants are still part of the Church but cannot receive Holy Communion. This is not understandable from an Akan point of view. This loss of belongingness raises the query of those who have the right to participate in the celebration and



receive Holy Communion which is different from the Akan context of a communal meal. No member of the Akan household is exempted from partaking in the Akan meal sharing but can this be said about the Holy Eucharist?

If the Eucharist is a meal which is important and vital for sharing in the life of Jesus Christ then why should the Church put impediments in the way of some people, such as staunch Christians in polygamous marriages, remarried couples, etc as not worthy for the reception of Holy Communion? In the African worldview, polygamy is not an abomination but an acceptable cultural practice, and this goes to pose another question, if the Church is a family of God, then its communal meal, the Holy Eucharist, which is meant to be a crucial practice for sharing in the life of Jesus Christ must not be selective. Furthermore, Protestants must be given the nod to participate in the Catholic Eucharistic meal and receive Holy Communion likewise Catholics should also be able to receive Communion in Protestant Churches. How come an Anglican cannot receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church and vice versa? For instance the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference could consider this mutual participation in the celebration of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper with Protestant Churches aside their usual annual ecumenical service with the Christian Council of Ghana.

In addition, through the recent Synodal process, Pope Francis acknowledges the importance of participation in the life of the Church and its mission. He states, "Without real participation by the People of God, talk about communion risks remaining a devout wish."<sup>609</sup> In my view, the call for participation by all the baptized initiates the need for hospitality to be demonstrated to all our brothers and sisters who form the Church of Christ so that as Christ said, "... that they may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you..." (John 17:21) can be achieved. This papal admonishment towards extending fraternity and hospitality towards all manner of people in this perspective could also be a stepping stone for the Catholic Church to extend this warm hand of invitation.

Indeed, the need for participation has become prominent in the new process of the synodal process or synodality and for instance, the Ghanaian Bishops Conference in their annual plenary assembly has stressed on the importance of participation in the synodal way in Ghana.<sup>610</sup> But the

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<sup>609</sup> Pope Francis, *Address for the opening of the Synod*, Vatican 09.10.2021.

<sup>610</sup> Theme of the annual plenary assembly of Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference in Donkorkrom: "For a synodal Church: Participation, communion & Mission in the Light of the New Evangelization in Ghana. (4-12 November, 2022). Front page.

question is; to what extent can we participate in the life of the Church in the midst of misunderstanding, exclusion, confusion, isolation and stigmatization? This concern of the Ghanaian Bishops regarding participation calls for the un-stigmatization of the cultural worldview of local churches and compelling them to be in consonance with that of the global church. Perhaps the philosophy behind some of these worldview or practices could be considered for a profound study by evangelizers in the bid of gaining a deeper understanding of such practices and symbols in their evangelization mission and thereby accepted by the universal Church.

In this case, the call to the Church's magisterium championed by Pope Francis on showing fraternal love and hospitality<sup>611</sup> could be a right approach in welcoming everybody to the table of the Lord.

And as a backing to this call, Kurgat believes that, the Church already views with great respect the moral and religious values of the African tradition, not only because of their meaning, but also because she sees them as providential, as the basis for spreading the gospel message and the beginning of the establishment of the new society in Christ.<sup>612</sup>

#### **7.4.1 Recommendations**

The need to consider using the concepts of the Akan communal meal as a starting point for catechesis regarding an inculturated Eucharistic celebration is emphatic since it would motivate an active, full and conscious participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is so because this study has found out through the lay and clergy respondents that, Akan Christians could have a deeper understanding of the Eucharistic meal if catechesis concerning this sacrament is presented to them in the context of their traditional communal meal. It is with this urgency that archbishop Anokye stated that, this catechesis could be factored into their 2024 archdiocesan laity week teachings as at the time of the fieldwork survey.

It is believed that the entire practice hinges on the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for the redemption of humanity and which He commanded that we celebrate it in memorial of Him in the form of a meal. This celebration reconciles the entire 'broken' human creation to God the Father because He bore all our iniquities and makes us anew. In this case,

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<sup>611</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 6.

<sup>612</sup> Kurgat, "The theology of inculturation and the African Church", 90-98.

Christianity brings healing to the cultural worldview of the local people which restores friendliness, cordiality and brings a state of harmony. The transformation which occurs through this dialogue between culture and Christianity ameliorates the vulnerability and hostilities in these cultures. However, there is also an eschatological perspective or connection in both the Holy Eucharist and Akan meal-sharing because there is a relationship between the living community and the dead that participates in this event and as well, reconciles humanity with the divine. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the culmination of any Akan sacrifice ends with meal sharing which is believed to unite both the living and the dead.

Therefore, since the Akan communal meals have no relation to paganism, they could become the basis for being adopted for liturgical inculturation, especially for the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. This can firmly stand because the Akan communal meal is one unique mean of uniting and strengthening ties. The core of the practice is being considered here, which is the act of dining together from the same source provided by the head of the family. And since one of the images of the Church is family of God, its members must be seen and treated as members of such one household and therefore every member partakes in the affairs of the family. This also has the proclivity to drive the numbers to consistently participate in the Eucharistic celebrations.

Just as partaking in the Akans' communal meal is obligatory for every member of the household for major reasons such as, to satisfy one's physical hunger, ensure unity and strengthen ties with family members, similarly is the sacrament of the Eucharist in achieving these purposes among the People of God. This calls to mind Akan Christians who are into polygamous marriages, remarried couples, brothers and sisters of different Faiths etc to which the Church does not permit such Christians to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. The question here is, if the reception of this sacrament is vital for our wellbeing, why this impediment or discrimination in the reception of Holy Communion? Catholics should be permitted to receive Communion in Protestant Churches so also Protestants must be able to receive Communion at Catholic Eucharistic celebrations. For the sake of fraternity, no human person should face isolation in the Church while the Church champions participation in its liturgy. Hence, localizing the celebration in this way, the congregation believes that the celebration of the Eucharist would be significant to the Akan Christian because even the clergy respondents agree with the belief that inculturating the Eucharist and using the Akans' communal meal can deepen the understanding of the practice and therefore enhance participation in general. Inculturation

enhances understanding, and the same can strengthen the zeal for the celebration, too, through an effective catechesis.

For instance, in Germany, the position of “*Pastoral referenten*”<sup>613</sup> is recognized and practiced in almost every diocese in the German Churches. Activities of such group of professionals can also be studied and introduced in the archdiocese of Kumasi and Ghana in general. This practice of lay ministry could also augment the work of the clergy due to the lack of priests in most dioceses in the Ghanaian Churches. These laity could undergo theological and administrative training and attain a diploma or degree as practiced in the German Church for such designated full time pastoral work so that these lay people can support the priests in their main priestly duties. For example, the Church in Ghana can liaise with the Catholic Church of Osnabrück as intra-diocesan relationship or pact or dialogue as a way of learning from each other and implement such best practices in their various Churches. It is worthy to note that pastoral work is also an important aspect of lay participation in the Church in supporting the clergy and for example, in the case of Ghana, extra-ordinary or Eucharistic ministers of the Eucharist could be trained to organize Communion services in villages and towns that do not have resident priests. This effort can contribute in solving “Eucharistic hunger” in many rural outstations and thereby emphasizing on the vitality of this sacrament to the spiritual growth of the person. In my opinion, the one hundred and twenty-three (123) extra-ordinary Eucharistic ministers as stated by the archbishop are not enough to assist the two hundred and five (205) priests in the seventy-two (72) parishes within the Kumasi archdiocese which has approximately five hundred (500) towns and villages.<sup>614</sup>

Also, it is worth reiterating that the celebration of the Eucharist is the unbloody sacrifice which is celebrated in the form of a meal that stands for the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross which binds us together around the table of the Lord brings out its communality. Among the Akans, the offering of a sacrifice is also a communal affair which brings all the people together and meal sharing takes place after the sacrifice. A critical understanding of communality is imperative at this point due to the call for participation in the celebration. In my

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<sup>613</sup> Pastoral assistants in German Churches: these men and women are theologically trained intra-diocesan to assist in the pastoral of the Church. For an introductory overview see e.g. Guido Bausenhart, “Pastoral referentinnen Und –referenten”, *Theologie Der Gegenwart* 45, no. 1 (2002): 52-60. In the case of Ghana, these laity can be trained to organize communion services in churches without resident priests and thereby solve the problem of Eucharistic hunger.

<sup>614</sup> An interview with Archbishop Gabriel Justice Anokye held in his residence on the 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.

view, catechesis is necessary at this juncture since archbishop Anokye admits that, some Catholics leave the Catholic Church and join other churches due to misunderstanding of some Church doctrines such as the teachings on the Eucharist.<sup>615</sup> For the purpose of this study, emphasis on the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist as a communal meal could assist the Akan Christian in getting a deeper understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, catechists who are into the preparation of catechumens for the reception of the sacraments of RCIA which includes the Eucharist require an up-to-date training or formation about the doctrine of the Eucharist. These catechists (men and women) must also have a profound understanding of inculturation so that they can apply its tenets in their teachings in order that, the catechumens who are undergoing catechesis would also have an understanding of inculturation. This point is important since the significance of inculturation is to lead us to a better understanding in the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. Notwithstanding, the priests must also, through their homilies, help the faithful acquire such understanding in that respect.

#### **7.4.2 Further Research**

As the global Church has begun the synodal process of considering certain emerging issues of the world of today, the following areas of study can be considered for thorough studies:

- The celebration of the Eucharist as a sacrament of unity must be considered in the context of local communal meals.
- Measuring the capacity of catechists in effectively handling teachings in relation to the Church's sacraments during the preparatory stages of catechism but in this case, the sacrament of the Eucharist which is a vivid memory of the death of Jesus Christ marking the healing and liberating presence of Christ among us.
- A study into the African practice of polygamous marriages vis-a-vis the reception of Holy Communion.
- The practice of extra-ordinary ministers or Eucharistic ministers to tackle Eucharistic hunger in local Christian communities lacking priests or Pastoral workers as compared to the German context of *Pastoralreferenten*.

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

In sum, using Akan communal meal-sharing could be an effective starting point or commencement for educating Akan Christians regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist and its relevance to their spiritual growth. Their prior knowledge and understanding concerning communal meal and its physical, social and spiritual benefits could enrich their in-depth knowledge about the Eucharist in this sense and increase their participation in this celebration. In addition, the participation of the Akan laity in the work of the Church must not be undermined but rather intensified because they must also have a role to play in the development of African theology and especially in this new process of synodality.

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