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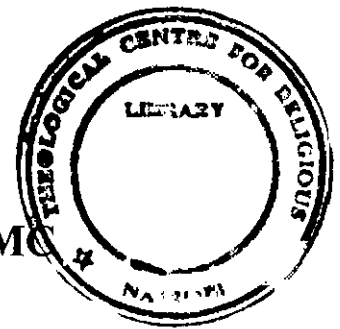
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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LITURGICAL INCULTURATION OF THE RITE OF RECONCILIATION AMONG THE BUKUSU PEOPLE OF WESTERN KENYA: A PASTORAL ISSUE

An Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
For the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

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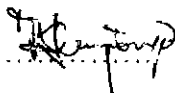
DEDICATION

To my dear mum and all those who love Justice and Peace.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned student, declare that this is my original essay, which has not been submitted to any institution for academic credit.

All the information gathered from different literature and people interviewed have been substantially acknowledged.

Signed.....

Date.....14/2/2000

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 General introduction

1.1 The Study

The approach to the study of this subject is basically drawn from the information gathered from different knowledgeable people, both formal and informal, the elders, both men and women, priests, religious sisters, and catechists. This broad collection is geared towards a comprehensive understanding of the Rite of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people and how to incorporate it in the sacrament of Reconciliation and penance in the light of liturgical inculturation.

The information was gathered within a period of six months. The greater part of it is from oral sources, which is actually the main body of my work. I used the recording system especially at some of the gatherings in big ceremonies and also from the old grandfathers and mothers who could give their information in form of stories, riddles or songs. The written sources take up the priority, as much has been written about the liturgy and inculturation, although little is said about the inculturation of the Rite of Reconciliation.

Throughout the interviews I found out that there is a common or “popular” view among the people that see little value in the sacrament of penance today. This is mainly the view of the young informants who have got several questions and misconceptions about going to the priest for confession. Although they do recognize that they commit sins, they hold that it is only God who forgives. So they ask, why go to the priest – who is just a human being like them?

However, the reference that the Lord Jesus Christ left to his disciples on the day of Pentecost (Cf. John. 20:19-23) leaves us too with something to ponder, as believers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. That at the evening of the first day of the week,

and the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. Jesus appeared, and after greeting them, He breathed on them and said:

*As the Father sends me,
So am I sending you?
Receive the Holy Spirit,
If you forgive anyone's sins,
they are forgiven,
If you retain anyone's sins,
they are retained. (John 20:22-23)*

However, when I addressed my opinions from the traditional point of view, I had a good response and appreciation of the whole idea of Reconciliation. Thus among the Bukusu people it is something that is highly valued and carried out in the community at any time wherever something went wrong. Hence this gave me a greater interest to focus on the area of inculturation. Then, what can be done that is not being done, so that our Christians today would appreciate fully the sacrament of Reconciliation? This is the question that I will try to answer in this paper. The language I used in my research was the local language called Bukusu, not excluding English and Kiswahili.

The general content of this essay, therefore, will include the explanation of terms; the basic principles of the Rite of Reconciliation, namely the Theological, Liturgical and Cultural principles; the process towards inculturation of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people and finally, I will give the general conclusion with the hope that my findings will be helpful in giving a new approach to the appreciation of the Rite of Reconciliation in our society today.

1.2 Reasons for the study of liturgical inculturation of the rite of reconciliation.

One of the motivations to study this topic was the fact that little has been written on this topic of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people and yet it is one of the common events that takes place at one time or another in our day to day life. More so, the world-wide

cry in many communities, is how people can be brought together after there has been a conflict in families, institutions, states, nations, and tribes? etc. (Just to mention the case of Rwanda & Burundi genocide, Sierra Leone ethnic conflict, and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo). I look at the case of tribal/ethnic clashes in Kenya in the years 1991-1993, mainly among the Kalenjins and the Non-Kalenjins in the Western part of Kenya- Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia Districts and in the Rift Valley Province. It was a transitional time in my life when these clashes happened. I was to leave for the Seminary in Nairobi. The Kalenjins came to the neighboring village and burnt houses and uncountable properties of people- sheep, goats, maize, beans and all that was stocked in the stores.

Now I was left in a dilemma whether to travel or not. People were running away leaving their homes. The threat was that all the Luhyas were to leave and go back to their "original" land in Bungoma. I could not easily stomach this kind of propaganda! Simply because this is the very place I was born and since my childhood my parents have all along stayed in this part of Trans-Nzoia and they have worked in the farms of the white settlers since the colonial times. So how come that now we were being told to move by the very people we have all along stayed together, grown up together, gone to school together, worshipped together and played together? More so, most of them have intermarried and entered into many other forms of interconnectedness.

My biggest questions were, why should this happen? Is there a way through which that we can restore this problem once and for all? Thus came the idea of Reconciliation. Humanly speaking this kind of happening will never come out of the minds of the people. It will always remain as a sad memory especially among the families that lost their dear ones. But the 'big' question is, should we continue to live in such a state of anarchy where people seek to revenge, "tit for tat", when anything goes wrong?

As human beings, God created us as one being and this is what we have to work for, that is, always seeking to come together (Cf. Jn.17:11). Since these acts of tribal violence

have got into the minds of the young generation, there is a high possibility that they will remain in them and they will carry them along unless they are assured that all is well. More so, it is important to assure them that the two communities are brothers and sisters and they can resolve to stay together in harmony.

Thus the elders of the two communities have a duty to come together and perform a kind of ritual asking for forgiveness and unity and thereafter inform the rest of the communities that all is well, as it was before the conflict. The Church, on the other hand, gives the sacrament of Reconciliation as a reminder or rather a call for a change of heart and attitude towards one's neighbor.

But why liturgical inculturation of the Rite of Reconciliation? With this I am interested in knowing how we can incorporate the traditional ways of reconciliation with that which is celebrated in the church. Is there anything that can be learned or borrowed from the two rites? I wanted also to know whether the Bukusu see any connection between the way of performing their rite of reconciliation and that of the church namely the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The question of inculturation is the basic requirement of evangelization and one of the greatest challenges for the Church in our present time and especially in the third millennium.

1.3 The central problem

At this point I wish to address the question: Why is it that today in the Catholic Church people don't want to go to the priest for confession? Since they have their own "popular opinion" that only God forgives sins and not man. I picked up this argument from an article in "Worship" about the sacrament of penance today. It states that it is a fact acceptable by many people today in the Roman Catholic Church that the sacrament of penance as it currently exists in the sacramental life and discipline of the Church, occupies a less important and even a marginalized role in the lives of many Catholics. Most parish

Priests report that the number of Confessions is quite a bit down from what used it to be. Houses of religious women and seminaries, where only a few years ago the canonical rules of weekly confessions was practiced quite vigorously, have now given up either in theory or at least in practice such a regimen.¹

Also from my interviews I came across one man, a devoted Catholic, who had this to share about his personal opinion on the sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic Church today. For him the sacrament of Reconciliation and confession to the priest has to be revived again in the Catholic Church. "Something must be done, there must be a problem" he says. He advocates for change.

He believes that the priest has a place in society, especially as regards the role as a representative of Christ and in the sacraments. He stated that earlier, when the Missionaries came, they were exemplary in the society and were given high esteem. But today we have got many priests who are scandalizing the Christian. And so, a number of Christians, who cannot differentiate between the office of the priest and the priest as a person, have actually lost their original Catholic faith and gone to other denominations, while others have formed their own sects because they are not ready to listen to the priest who today is found in the bar drunk...²

The other problem that I had to face in the study was that most of the Reconciliation Rites among the Bukusu people were done in the open between the two parties and the people were present to witness. This was basically to teach a lesson or rather to deter the community from falling into similar crimes or offences. Therefore, what about public and private confession if reconciliation has to do with a personal attempt of self-integration and reaffirmation of adherence to the community from which one feels estranged? What about the question of inculturation and how can it be implemented in the context of the demands

¹ Cf. Curran C.E. "Sacrament of Penance Today", in *Worship*, Vol.43, No.9, 1969, p.510.

² Mbae Justus, 57 yrs: A personal opinion on reconciliation in the Catholic Church Today. A conversational interview after a home visit, on 21st January, 1999.

of the African Synod and in the Vatican II documents? Well, the inculturation process is good, but it should be applied in the proper context, in the light of the parties concerned. People should be made aware of the changes in the rituals and Rites that are to be done. Thus catechesis would be very important in this field of inculturation.

Reconciliation means being reconciled with both God and the community. Sin is presented as an offence against both God and the community. Since sin has a social nature, this helps one to understand theologically the need for confession of sin to a priest "since every sin or act of Reconciliation must have a social dimension." The Christian community, therefore, must play a role in the reconciliation of sinners, and this is done generally through an official church leader, i.e., a Bishop or a Priest. Be it public or private confessions, both require that the official of the community be present to accept the sinner's back into the community. Therefore, the priest does not act alone, but in the name of the Church community.

1.4 The Bukusu People.

The Bukusu is one of the seventeen sub-groups that comprise the Baluhya cluster of lacustrine Bantu groups of Eastern Africa. The Luhya is a very big ethnic group, third largest in Kenya. The other Baluhya sub-groups are Batiriki, Barakoli, Banyore, Bakhayo, Bamaraki, Banyala, Basamia, Babesukha, Babatakho, Bakisa, and Barechea (living in Gem location of Luo land). Bachochoch, Bakabalasi, Batachoni, Bawanga and Bamarama (whom for linguistic reasons Babukusu prefer to call Batakhesina). The Babukusu inhabit Bungoma district in the Western province which is bordered by Kakamega district in the East, Mount Elgon in the West, Trans-Nzoia district in the North and Busia district in the South.³

The Bukusu, like any other people, possess their own cultural peculiarities, particularly with regard to language and ethnic traditions. A general survey would reveal that the Baluhya speak four dialects namely: Lubukusu, Luwanga, Luogoli, Lunyala (i.e.

³ Makila F, E., An Outline History of the Babukusu of Western Kenya, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978, p.30.

Lunyala of Kakalewa). Hence, Lubukusu is spoken by Babukusu; Lulogoli by Barakoli; Luwanga by Bawanga, Bachocho, Banyore, Batiriki, Babesukha, Babetakho, Bakisa, Bamaraki, Bakhayo, Bamarama and Bakabachosi and Lunyala by Banyala.⁴ It would be quite misleading if one talked of the Luhyas in a generalized way because the diversity of the people is so big as it is seen in their own dialects that are similar but distinct from the others. Also the way they conduct their marriage and initiation ceremonies, the singing and dancing and burying the dead are all unique.

The Bukusu are a Bantu speaking people who originated in the southern part of Egypt in a place called *Esibakala* and moved along the River Nile during the period of great migrations. They made their way into the present Kenya via Uganda and settled on the slopes of Mt. Elgon (*Sikulu ya Masaaba*). The first man was called Omubukusu hence the people were called Babukusu and he had a cousin called Omukisu who remained in Eastern Uganda and grew bananas. With this kind of movement and encounter with other people, the Bukusu people were given another name, namely: *Bambayi*, (*Bobandu halia nende babandu, khubaya babandu, khusima babanduj*), i.e. people who share meals with other people, take care of other people, and love people.

1.5 Religion and Belief of the Bukusu People.

The Bukusu people believed in ONE God, the supreme being called Wele Khakaba (ONE God) who is the creator (*Khabumbi*), provider, and caretaker. They also had their way of worship at a small house called *Namwima* (shrine or church). They used to pray early in the morning at dawn facing East (*Likwe*) while holding the *kumwendo* (a horn-like vessel), that was filled with water and beer from finger-millet, so the elder drank and spat toward the East (*Likwe*), West (*Mumbo*), North (*Wawanaswa*) and South (*Mwikhigo*), while praying or saying these words: *le walonga likulu ne liloba, wakhwikuleo wamwene*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.33-34.

*khukeshe mala ukhulotie*⁵ i.e. “God the creator of heaven and earth you have woken us up, take care of us throughout the day and bring us back safely”. At this prayer session one could tell about the coming of different events, namely rain, drought, war, etc. For instance, if the sky on the East (*Likwe*) became very red, in the morning they thought there might be war or serious calamities.

The ancestors played a great role in the Bukusu religion. For example, during the years, mainly the odd years when there would be no circumcisions, they could offer sacrifices to appease the dead. This was done purposely to avoid shedding of blood twice since they have a saying that goes: *So mama chisimba chibili tua*- it means to do one thing at a time. So the ancestors acted as intermediaries between the living and the dead. Since there were also evil spirits, the ancestors were to protect the living from the bad spirits. And so they had powers to prophesy or have visions by predicting what is to come and alert the community. For example, when the sacrifice of an animal was made and a piece of meat or food was kept in the shrine (*Namwima*), the elders could go to check and if they found that it had been eaten up by the ants, then it was a sign that the ancestors had accepted the sacrifice. If not then they had refused to accept it.

Therefore the Bukusu people had and still have a religion called *Dini ya Musambwa*, that has been headed by prophets (*Bang'osi*) such as Maina wa Nalukale, Mutonyi wa Nabukelembe and Wachie wa Naumbwa. They were there from time immemorial up to the last prophets who died in 1988, called Elijah Masinde wa Nameme, who was believed to perform magic. It is said that one of the most outspoken prophet was Maina wa Nalukale who spoke of the coming of the white people followed by a long “snake” (the train). And in

⁵ Mzee Emmanuel Simiyu Mutoro, 56 yrs: A retired chief officer of the Judicial department. An interview on the Belief and Religion of the Bukusu people, on 31 January 1999.

that process he wandered around and got lost on Mount Kenya - in Kikuyu land, that is why the Kikuyus got the name Maina".

The concept of spiritual good and evil is certainly relative, and religions which preach an aggressive and exclusive doctrine would stand no chance of salvaging values that are embedded deep down at the bottom of the spiritual fountain of the people. This is mainly the reason why it has been difficult for an African to accept every Christian or Muslim tradition that has been imported into Africa. The significance of indigenous prophets and diviners in Bukusu religious beliefs is born out by some of the popular hymns in *Dini ya Musambwa* such as the following: -

*'Wele papa wulila
Basungu bakhukosela papa
Wele papa wulila
Maina wa Nalukale khuyete papa
Basungu bakobole ewabure
Mutonyi wa Nabukelembe khuyete papa
Basungu bakobole ewabwe
Wachiye wa Naumbwa khuyete papa
Basungu bakobole ewabwe'*⁷

In one of his articles, Gidcon Were makes reference to this hymn in "Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya". The version of the hymn, as given by Were, differs from this one only in words, but not in theme. Its literal translation is as follows:

*'God, you who are our Father, hear us.
Europeans have mistreated us enough. God hear us.
Maina wa Nalukale help us'. So that these
Europeans may be driven away:
Mutonyi wa Nabukelembe help us
So that these Europeans may be driven away.
Wachiye wa Naumbwa help us
So that these Europeans may be driven away'*⁸

Consequently, according to *Dini ya Msambwa*, Mount Masaaba (Elgon) is looked

⁶ Gilbert Mukhwana Wanyama, 51 yrs: An oral interview on the religious belief on ancestors and spirits among the Bukusu people, on 15th April 1999.

⁷ Makila, F.E., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 219 - 220.

⁸ *Ibid.*

upon as a refuge or resting-place for the Bukusu prophets, and hence counted amongst the holy places of the tribe. Also the Bukusu people had their rules and regulations (the commandments) that guided their way of life. For example they had six Golden Laws or rules, “*Kamalaka*”, namely:

- 1.Omwana oria Mawe ne Rarawe we munju niwe oria wenje.
- 2.Omundu wabene alinge enyama ye mboko ukinyola khusibumba wakilia.
- 3.Okhaikikha omwana wowasio nisio akhakhohile ta.
- 4 Siabene siamoni.
- 5.Okhachakha omwana wowasio ta, Batambi, Babanani.
- 6.Kumwikale kwabene. kuwikule kukwoo.

Literal Translation.

- 1.A child who respects the mother and father of the house respects others outside.
- 2.The person from “outside” is like the meat of the Buffalo, when you find it on the dish, eat it, “an expression of a curse”
- 3.Do not lay false witness on the other person (don’t cheat)
- 4.That which is not yours see it! (Don’t steal).
- 5.Do not laugh at the other’s child, the poor, the lame etc.
- 6.The “Door” that is open is yours, the “Door” that is closed is for somebody else. (Don’t enter someone else house). Applied to the cases of adultery⁹.

And so with this kind of rules and many others among the Bukusu, when one broke any of them. the punishment was severe and especially that which required the community attention because sin against the community was taken more serious. And so, Reconciliation had to be done by all means.

1.6 Conclusion

Having looked at the study in general and at who the Bukusu people are, and their religion and belief, the fundamental point is that the Bukusu people had and still have their religion and belief that bound people into one community with some values. This means

⁹ NB, A recorded information at the symposium held at the Nairobi University under the courtesy call by the Bukusu Students, Lecturers and the Ministers from the Bungoma District in Western Kenya, on 1st August 1997. The Speech or Public Lecture was given by one of the Special Elder called, Wanyonyi Manguliechi: This Speech is usually given only during the ceremony called *Khuswala Kumuse* when a most renowned person in the Village is dead. Also the Clan called *Chikhohlo Chiswala Kumuse*- the clan that is specialized in this ritual; are said to be custodian of the Bukusu history and culture about which “Public Comforters” communicate to the audience on the occasion of a funeral.

that whatever was done by any single Bukusu person, good or bad, had great impact to the rest of the community. More so, the individual him or herself was helped to change, to become a better person. Therefore the following chapters, namely chapter two and four will give more explanations on the events of Reconciliation process among the Bukusu people. It is worth to note that their way of life and religion were inseparable.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 The Explanation of Terms

2.1 Introduction

Any kind of study involves the use of words and, more often than not, most of the words are specifically limited to the scope of that particular subject matter. And so, my topic on Liturgical inculturation of the rite of reconciliation among the Bukusu people of western Kenya has some technical terms that are either put in parenthesis and explained or translated literally. In this study I wish to look at the possible relationship between liturgy and culture, with a particular concern with the inculturation of the rite of reconciliation. Therefore some of the common words that appear in the next chapters and need explanation are: Liturgy, Culture, Incarnation, Inculturation, Acculturation, Adaptation, Metanoia, Reconciliation, Redemption, Cult, Ritual, Rite and Sacrifice.

2.2 The Meaning of Different Terms

It is a foregone statement that, the meaning of a thing is in the thing itself: and so the meaning of the words implied in this paper would be understood as one goes through it. **Liturgy** is to be distinguished from private prayer and from other pious exercises. In Vatican II, liturgy is said to be the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to the others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true church (SC, no.2). Therefore, Liturgy has to do with the vital transaction between God and human beings. In Liturgical action, the divine and human meet and pass into each other. They meet and pass in Christ who is the middleman, the mediator of this liturgical commerce. It is actually difficult to define liturgy "in se per se", because liturgy is a living

thing, simultaneously rich in content and yet one. It can be understood only through participation and cannot easily be reduced to concepts.

On the other hand, **Culture** in itself embraces the whole life of the people. Moreover cultures are in continual process of change, due to mutual influence encouraged by modern means of communications. **Inculturation** is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements, but directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.¹⁰ What took place when God became human and dwelt among us, now take places when the church and its liturgy embody the riches of the nations. "The word become flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn.11:14). **Incarnation** therefore, is a technical term that should be let aside to express the unique mystery of God, who took our human nature.

Shorter defines "**Inculturation**" as "the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures". He lists three of its notable traits: First, inculturation is an ongoing process and is relevant to every country or region where the faith has been sown. Second, Christian faith can exist in a culture form. And third, between Christian faith and culture there should be interaction and reciprocal assimilation.¹¹

By the fact that the church of Christ does not grow in isolation, the term **acculturation** means a relationship between cultures, which come into contact. It is a modification of one's culture by exposure to another one. In this, there takes place an amount of personal and cultural transformation which is necessary for the growth of any culture and individual. Hence Shorter defines **acculturation** as "the encounter between two cultures". One important aspect of such an encounter, he explains, is that the

¹⁰ Schineller, P., A Handbook on Inculturation, N.Y: Paulist Press, 1990, p.6.

¹¹ Shorter., Towards a Theology of Inculturation, N.Y. Orbis Books, 1988, p.11.

communication between the two cultures comes about “on a footing of mutual respect and tolerance.”¹²

According to Waliggo, **adaptation** is explained as a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them within rituals where there was any apparent similarity.¹³ Adaptation denotes the general program of updating, while inculturation is one of the ways to achieve it. The Constitution on the liturgy (SC. No 37-40) proposes two ways to achieve this: revision of the existing rites and adaptation to the needs of the time. This is why the cultural adaptation of the liturgy is a gradual process and the responsibility and creativity is left to the local churches.

Reconciliation is the central theme in this paper and is actually an achievement, a goal in the life of the human community. It suggests the divisions and hostilities found among nations and people, within societies and families, between people and their environment and even within each person. Therefore, reconciliation is indeed the work of God to which we are invited. We enter that work and rediscover in a new way our own humility. As O'Malley puts it, “Reconciliation is the prodigal returning to the father, to be welcomed-unconditionally-home”.¹⁴ Given this state of affairs, reconciliation necessarily requires the overcoming of sin by means of repentance and forgiveness, and ultimately by an inner transformation that eliminates the tendency to sin and alienation (Jer.31:33, Ez:36:25-28 Ps; 51:10).¹⁵ This is what then we would call a **Metanoia** (term in Greek: Metanoete) literally means, “change of idea” or “change of heart”. Jesus was inviting persons to move in a new direction, to change their lives radically. After all, any change of ideas or hearts must be manifested in concrete decisions in “works worthy of conversion”

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6-7.

¹³ Waliggo, J.M., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, Nairobi: St. Paul Publications, 1986, p.11

¹⁴ O'Malley, P.W., *Sacrament's Rite of Passage*, Thomas More, 1995, p.92.

¹⁵ Walter, J.Woods, “Reconciliation and Priesthood”, in Fink, P. E., (ed.) *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*. Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1990, p.1035.

(Cf. Lk.3:8). Jesus repeatedly asked conversion of his hearers (Mt. 11:20-21;12:41 Lk 13:3,5;15:7-10).¹⁶

Consequently, **Redemption** is the act or an instance of redeeming or the condition of being redeemed. In theological terms it is the salvation from sin through Christ's death on the cross. **Ritual**, from the New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, is seen as an essential element in the development, integration and sustenance of the human person and the social community.¹⁷ Since liturgical services are not private functions but celebrations of the Church... (SC. No 26), a public form of worship should predominate over a private form, and the **Rite** (i.e. the well defined manner and form of a religious function), should be short and clear, free from useless repetition and formulated within the ordinary person's power of comprehension, that is not requiring extrusive explanation.

Ritual is never individualistic or private. It is the behavior of and within the community. Just as in the traditional customs, any ritual seeks to attain a particular goal. Whereas, **Cult** is a system or a community of religious worship and ritual especially one focusing upon a single deity or spirit. **Cult** and **culture** are necessarily interwoven whatever else it leads to by way of thought, reflection or institution, the particularity of a culture is found in the realm of imagination. Its most fundamental expression in rite and symbol, it is on this root symbol that the aesthetic imagination elaborates its artistic creation.¹⁸ As regards the term **Sacrifice** as applied in the context of this paper, it simply means the act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or person for this purpose.

¹⁶ The Theological-Historical commission for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000; God the Father of Mercy, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1998, p.60.

¹⁷ George S Worgul., "Ritual", in Fink Peter E.,(ed.) The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1990, p 1101

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 493

2.3 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I wish to consider the most fundamental terminology that has not come out so clearly but is indeed the core around which my topic evolves. This is '**Contextualization**'. If the liturgy has to be inculturated as in the sense of adaptation, then it follows that various concepts have to be inserted in the given culture and tradition of the people. The gospel is what it is today because Christ was able to insert himself in the social, economic and political situation of the time. More so, the climax is the incarnation: the Word becoming flesh and living among us. In my opinion the relevance that has to be adapted if and when reconciliation has to make an impact on our society. Therefore, the dynamism of the church and the cultures with all their constitutive elements can be met in the terms expressed above, only if there is receptivity to the present reality.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 The Basic Principles of the Rite of Reconciliation

3.1 Introduction

After explaining various terms in the previous chapter. I wish to present the three basic principles of the Rite of Reconciliation namely: Theological, Liturgical and Cultural, that will highlight the scope of this topic in this paper. A lot has been written by different scholars especially in the area of liturgy. May be because liturgy is understood as our way of living as Christians and its nature can only be located within the economy of salvation. Thus it can only be understood through our participation, but not merely by the concepts. More so, Vatican II (SC.43-46) speaks of liturgical actions when referring to terms such as “rites”, “ceremonies” and “functions”, as to each of the units that make up the liturgy.

The question of inculturation is the most crucial topic that I will try to incorporate in the study of this chapter. The cultural adaptation and acculturation of the liturgy is a gradual process. This is dictated by the organic or homogeneous growth of the liturgy as well as by pastoral principles. Existing possibilities of adaptation should be tried more fully, before pressing on to creativity. In this connection therefore, the formation and acquisition of personnel should be a priority in the agenda of local churches.

As regards the rite of Reconciliation, its changes and renewal, one must first have a better understanding of the theological, liturgical and cultural elements, that fit into the sacrament of penance. Thus it is only in the light of a better and more complete understanding of the meaning of penance, that it will be possible for people to participate more meaningfully in penitential celebrations. Hence a change of ritual in itself, although badly needed, is not sufficient, for rites and signs have to fulfill their function of pointing to a deeper reality.

3.2 Theological Principles

The reconciliation of penitents in the church's life begins by showing that the mystery of reconciliation is the key to perceiving God's work in our world and understanding redemption, conversion, and the sacraments. This mystery gives focus to the church's mission and ministry. Though initiation (Baptism and Eucharist) is the primary sacramental experience of reconciliation, the mystery is powerfully present in the Church's reconciliation of penitents.¹⁹

Therefore, the main reason for adaptation must be sought in the nature of the Church as the prolongation in time and space of the incarnation of the word of God. Hence in the final analysis, the mystery of the incarnation is the theological principle of adaptation. The word of God, in assuming the condition of man except sin, bound himself to the history, culture, traditions and religion of his own people.²⁰ This is a clear manifestation of what reconciliation is all about. Just as Christ was able to enter into the history, culture, tradition and religion of his people, because he lived his life openly without committing sin.

Something that is clearly seen in our society is that when one does wrong to the other person, there arises a gap between the two people which is even extended to the society at large, thus lacking harmonious living. And so, for people to be able to live well, Christ set an example by becoming a Jew, a member of the chosen people. We too can be able to make our families and communities real homes for our better living with a sense of togetherness, only if we insert ourselves in its totality. The following are three aspects that would help to clarify the understanding of the theological principle.

¹⁹ Dallen, J., The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance, New York: Pueblo Publication Company, 1986 p.250.

²⁰ Chupungo, A., Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy, New York: Paulist Press. 1982, p. 58.

(a). Reconciliation and salvation

God always takes the initiative, as is clearest in Jesus, who shows divine compassion by calling people to conversion and welcoming sinners. The Salvation-history deviates from God's fundamental principle of saving and sanctifying people as individuals and as a community in the Church. In accordance with this principle, the Christian must understand that salvation for him/her, is an individual affair because it is a free choice on his or her part to cooperate with God's grace. But it also has a communitarian dimension, since to be truly Christian means sharing the life of the community, a life that is based on faith in Christ. This communitarian nature of salvation in and through the church finds fulfillment in the very basic Christian concepts which are communitarian and not merely individualistic. Christian love for instance refers not only to the relationship between the individuals and God but also forms the basis of fellowship among all those who acknowledge God as their Father in a common profession of faith through the sacrament of Baptism.²¹

Consequently using the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Romans 6, It says: "In Baptism we die with Christ to sin and rise with him to live for God". In the Eucharist, his saving power is present to forgive sin and unite us in the spirit. Whereas in the ministry exercised in the sacrament of penance, divine grace is renewed in those who have sinned. Therefore, it is God who reconciles us to Himself; it is not our human work (cf. Rom.5:10-11).

(b). Redemption

The mystery of redemption is the obvious context or horizon for understanding the sacrament of reconciliation, since faith in Christ as redeemer enables believers to recognize and deal with sin and guilt. "Through the redemptive work of Christ, salvation is promised to human beings in a way that can never be reversed. This salvation which Christ brought remains present and attainable through the ages in the Church as a concrete sign of salvation

²¹ Ambe, J. B., Meaningful Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Africa, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publication, 1992, p.42.

until the Lord returns. One can know and approach the Father only through Christ, but the work of the risen Christ is continued in the world today by the Spirit within the Church. For a Christian, therefore salvation comes through the Church in which he/she is so intimately incorporated by virtue of his /her baptism.²²

Jesus, Son of God, came into the world "to bear witness to the truth"(John 18:37). He is the Lamb of God, "who takes away the sin of world", (John 1:29). These statements from John's gospel guide us to continue our reflection on the "Truth that makes us free". And so the liberating truth is in many respects by virtue of grace, the premise and fruit of the sacrament of Reconciliation. Thus it is possible to free someone from evil only if he/she is aware of it as being evil. Pope John Paul II, addressing the members of the Apostolic Penitentiary on Monday 17 march, 1997, said:

*"As we meditate on the unfathomable riches of Redemption, we will obtain the gift of experiencing within ourselves the saving divine Mercy and so increasingly, after the example of Christ, we will be teachers who illumine, and fathers who welcome in God's name and by his authority."*²³

(c). Conversion

*"The mystery of reconciliation is, at the same time, the mystery of conversion: Conversion is for the sake of reconciliation as well as a consequence of it. Just as the divine and human elements and contributions cannot be isolated from one another in salvation history, the same occurs in the mystery of conversion and reconciliation: divine initiative and human response are inseparable. "Metanoia" or Conversion, is in fact a process in which the penitent is so deeply and personally engaged as a human and Christian -though a sinful one - that the personal involvement and response contribute to the constitution of the sacrament".*²⁴

As believers in God, we have to strive for the holiness of life. At its strong touch, our inner eye, the eye of faith, opens in us. We, then, experience a state of restlessness in

²² *Ibid*, p. 43.

²³ Alphonse, Diaz., "Truth is fruit and premise of Reconciliation," Listening to the Pope's Teaching, April-July, 1997, p.3.

²⁴ Dallen, J., The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance, N. Y: Pueblo Publication Company, 1986, p.253.

the depth of our hearts. We further see ourselves in our strengths and utter wretchedness. Consequently, to a God fearing person, sin is felt as a great elimination of life. It actually harasses the individual's mind, heart and life. The redeeming grace of God makes a person realize the beauty and mercy of God in him or her. It creates an atmosphere in which the individual concerned understands the ugliness of sin and experiences the great need to turn to the loving Lord. This is the grace of conversion. The story of the prodigal son presents to us clearly how one can get lost in the worldly engagement of sin. He spent money and other properties on living recklessly and on women. He then experienced his utter poverty, degradation and wretchedness in the absence of his loving and caring father. At some point he bitterly notices and regrets his mistakes and resolves to return home. When he gets there, his father's warm reception meets him and there is a great celebration at his father's house.

'But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice because your Brother here was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found'. (Lk.15:32)

Moreover the episode of St. Paul in Acts 9, shows how conversion can really build a person a new, getting inserted into a new experience and even a new context of life. Thus conversion is seen as a process rather than a decision and the opposite of sin as faith rather than morally correct behavior.

3.3 Liturgical Principles

Power, writing an article in *Worship* said; liturgy is the primary language of faith, for which reasons it can be called "theologia prima". It is a kind of theology, because it is already an attempt to express the movement of heart towards God in Christ. It is faith coming to maturity, within the living community of God's people. It is primary because

ritual and symbolic language is the core language of religious reality and faith.²⁵ On the other hand it is good to note that the inculturation of the liturgy is an on-going process and so, since the beginning of the development of the Church and the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, there have been various changes. For example the public penance that was practical in the patristic age proved rather hard and humiliating both to the penitent and to the rest of the community in later ages. Hence the whole process was to be reviewed.

If sin really means being out of a relationship with God, being disconnected so to speak, then no matter how severe the penance may be, sin can never be fully expiated. And so the search for healing by the sinner is the right attitude to receive God's grace. Consequently, as O'Malley puts it, the sacrament of reconciliation is a complete honesty with oneself, to submit to the truth, to be humble into freedom. Through that honesty we can begin to transform the power of our vices into the grace of God's liveliness...²⁶ Therefore, when we approach the sacrament of forgiveness, we take one liberating step away from self-deception. We become not just the observers of our weakness, but its accusers. We move beyond admission of guilt, beyond even recognition of a need for forgiveness; we now desire to be whole again. That is how we shall be welcomed with this words; "Hurry! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the fat calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead but now is alive; he was lost but now has been found" (Lk.15:22-24).

Therefore, if penance is liturgy and a ritual prayer, its focus must be God rather than forgiveness. The realization of sin and the experience of sorrow must grow together with a conviction of God's mercy in order to be more than request or remorse. Confession must be a confident and humble proclamation of the church's faith in a loyal God and gratitude and thankfulness for God's gift of forgiveness - in the spirit, if not the form, of the berakah and exomologesis - before its admission of one's sins. The act of penance must show the

²⁵ Cf. Power, D., "Cult to Culture: Theological Foundation of Liturgy", in *Worship*, 54(6) 1980, p. 482.

²⁶ Cf. O'Malley J.W., *Sacramentals Rite of Passage*, Allen, Texas, Thomas More 1995, p.183.

intention to re-orient one's life as worship, experiencing and proclaiming God's mercy there.²⁷ Moreover, a proper understanding of the priest's role was necessary, that is, to be a forgiving father. This is so by the very words of Jesus, "Be merciful just as your father is merciful" (Lk.6:36). Therefore, the priest and penitents together should share and celebrate the liturgy by which the Church herself seeks and receives renewal in the Spirit of Jesus. Jesus healed people despite the Sabbath and despite them being foreigners. In the Lord's prayer we acknowledge that we will be forgiven only in so far as we forgive. Forgiveness is, in fact, the sole reason why Jesus came: to declare the Amnesty of God (Lk. 4:19); "This is my blood which seals Gods covenant, my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins" (Mtt. 26:28). St Paul continues:

It is all God's work: he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not holding anyone's fault against them but, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God. (2Cor5:18-20)

Providing for penance's liturgical celebration, is a radical change from recent practice. The reconciliation reforms made in the Constitution on the sacred liturgy insisted that the social and ecclesial nature as well as the effects of the sacrament of reconciliation on the Church should be expressed more clearly.²⁸ Therefore, Dalles, recommended that, to separate the acknowledgement of sin and sorrow from the praise of God accomplished in the joy of the Spirit is to risk losing both. It is to fail to realize that penance, as an act of worship, is a means of participating in the Easter mystery and thus a form of Eucharist to be completed in the Eucharistic assembly.²⁹ Consequently, when the new rite of penance was officially published in 1974, the personal and social dimensions of sins and those of the penance and reconciliation in the Church were clearly brought out. The rite even went

²⁷Dallen, J., Op.Cit., p.298.

²⁸ Vatican II, S.C. No.72 (as quoted by, Ambe, J.B.,Op.Cit., p.57).

²⁹ Dallen, J., Op.Cit., p.299.

further to say that the sacrament of reconciliation remains essentially a liturgical act of worship and the way in which the Church renews herself, even when celebrated only by an individual penitent and the priest. The implication of this statement is that, even with the so-called “private confession”, the celebration is still seen essentially as an ecclesial act.³⁰

Meanwhile, in Sacrosanctum Concilium No. 110, the council further emphasizes the point that penance, especially during Lent, should not only be internal and individual, but also external and social as follows:

*During Lent, penance should not only be internal and individual but also external and social. The practice of penance fostered according to the possibilities of the present day and of a given area, as well as of individual circumstances. Such practice should be encouraged by the authorities mentioned in article 22*³¹

Ambe continued to state that, “though in his Apostolic Exhortation on reconciliation and penance in the mission of the Church today (Reconciliation et Paenitentia), Pope John Paul II notes that sin is a deeply personal matter, he does not forget to emphasize its social character as well, thus admitting that it is the whole ecclesial community which welcomes anew, the repentant and forgiven sinner.³² Hence, the above document proves that the Church considers the sacrament of reconciliation and its celebration as radically social in nature as the Church which the Vatican council has reminded us ‘the people of God’.³³

³⁰Cf. Ordo Paenitentiae; The Rite of Penance: Praenotanda, no.5, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1974, pp.11-12: “By the hidden and Loving mystery of God’s Design men are joined together in the bonds of supernatural solidarity, so much so that the sin of one harms the other just as the holiness of one benefits the other. Penance always entails reconciliation with our brothers and sisters who are always harmed by our sins.

“In fact, Men frequently join together to commit injustice. It is thus only fitting that they should help others in doing penance. Those who are freed from sin by the grace of Christ may work with all men of good will for justice and peace in the World”. (as quoted by Ambe J.B., Op.Cit p57).

³¹ Vat. II., S.C. no. 110, p.47.

³² Cf. Paul II, J., Reconciliation et Paenitentia no.31; “Thus we understand why the Confession of Sin must ordinarily be individual and not collective, just as sin is a deeply personal matter. But at the same time this confession in a way forces sin out of the secret of the heart and thus out of the area of pure individuality, emphasizing its social character as well, for through the minister of Penance it is the ecclesial Community, which has been wounded by Sin, that welcomes a new the repentant and forgiven Sinner.”(as quoted by Ambe J.B., Op.Cit p.58).

³³ Cf.. Cook, B.J., Op.Cit p.183.

3.4 Cultural Principles

Chupungco, in answering the question of inculturation, said that liturgical inculturation may be described as the process whereby a pre-Christian rite is endowed with Christian meaning. The original structure of the rite together with its ritual and celebrative elements is not subjected to radical change, but its meaning is altered by the Church to express the Christian mystery. While acculturation induces a change or modification of the Roman genius through the assumption of the cultural elements, inculturation brings about a change in the culture through the entry of the Christian message. The latter process is a form of conversion to the faith, a metanoia of pre-Christian rites.³⁴

From the historical background of SC 37-40 a significant fact has emerged. Adaptation is not primarily a missionary concern but a cultural exigency. The motive is not merely to facilitate the activity of the Church in mission lands, but to make the liturgy available and relevant to every culture. Indeed Vatican II's liturgical reform was premised on the need to meet the circumstances and needs of the modern times," as SC 4 has declared.³⁵

Therefore liturgical adaptation is a complex question because it touches on theology, Christian sources, history, liturgical legislations and culture. And so, as it is foreseen in SC 40, there will be greater difficulties of adaptation in mission lands and hence there will be need of experts who can collaborate with Episcopal Conferences. But the difficulty exists also in non-missionary situations where culture is evolving and there is fluidity in theological thought. This shows that adaptation is an on-going process, because both human and ecclesiastical conditions are in a process of continuous change. Liturgical adaptation cannot be an isolated task. It has to be in harmony with the religious culture of the people and be framed within the broader outlines of adaptation in the Church.

³⁴ Chupungco, *Op.Cit.*, p.84 (Cf. LG.13, AG.22).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.75.

It is properly said that in Africa the areas that require special attention are: community celebration of reconciliation, the language barrier and other current tendencies in the administration of the sacrament of reconciliation which are particular concerns to the Church in Africa today. Whereas there are different opinions regarding the importance of the community celebrations of reconciliation in Christian communities. To some people these are the best ways of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation in the Church, but others favor the private form where the penitent, the priest and God are involved. However, a closer look at the theological and psychological reasons show that a total exclusion of communal penitential services in the Church in Africa would be detrimental to most African Christians.⁴⁶

A communal celebration expresses better the joy of being forgiven and being welcomed back into the holy community, like the prodigal son who was welcomed home by his father and they all had to celebrate. The community sees how it must take the life's pains in a spirit of satisfaction for sin and that it will carry the Lord's cross in the Church today. Therefore the following African values, namely the personal and social dimensions of sin, the strong sense of solidarity and community, the consideration of a moral offence as not only affecting the individual, but also as well as a rejection of kingship ties and an irresponsibility towards dead and living relatives, the involvement of the process of punishing or correcting an offending member of the same community support the fact that the celebration of and the catechesis on the sacrament of reconciliation in African societies cannot and should never be seen excessively as an individual affair.

For the African, there is need for private and communal accountability for their actions. For this reason, communal celebrations of reconciliation are highly effective. Therefore, the communal celebrations of reconciliation in African societies are appropriate because sin and reconciliation in Africa is not limited to an individual, objective and

⁴⁶ Ambe, J., *Op.Cit.*, pp.58-59.

impersonal act, which more often than not, is seen essentially as mechanical and legal. But the whole community, as is also the case with the Christian community, sees itself as forming an integral part of the reconciling process. Thus, in the sacrament of reconciliation “there can be an integration of social consciousness and personal piety if it is understood that the sacraments are acts of community life and form personal spirituality. This in turn requires the participation of the assembled people of God; the Church, through which He chooses to be present perceptibly in human society and history!”³⁷

In most African societies, same as the Bukusu people, there is clear evidence that personal guilt and responsibility are taken very seriously although a collective conscience and collective responsibility also exist. A typical African then will examine his or her conscience not only as far as his or her actions affect him or her, but also in so far as they affect the whole community. Ambe giving an example of the Bafut community of Cameroon, says that apart from the feeling of personal guilt which accompanies any offence, the offender has to examine his or her conscience against the background of the following points which affect his or her relationship with other people, for instance, the community in which he or she lives, that is:

*Have I killed or physically harmed any person? Have I annoyed or cursed the gods or the ancestors by refusing to obey the traditions of the tribe? Have I committed adultery especially with any of the Fon's wives? Have I deprived any person of his/her property? Did I refuse to pay back what I owe?*³⁸

With this kind of perception, the way a typical African examines his or her conscience before God, is bound to be the way he or she would be moved to approach the sacrament of reconciliation, if it has to mean anything to him or her. There is a practical problem for which the solutions seem to be communal celebrations of Reconciliation in African society. It is the language barrier.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

There are situations, Especially in mission countries, where the priest finds himself unable to understand and advise penitents adequately during the confession because of inability to speak the local language. Faced with such unfortunate situation, it would seem that the only option left for such a priest would be a penitential service whereby, with the help of interpreters, the penitents will, before a private confession, share the word of God, receive advice through well prepared scripture readings as well as prayers and a homily relevant to the occasion.

Though this does not solve the language problem between the penitent and the confessor, it makes room for the use of interpreters to explain before the actual confession of sins. This may enable the penitents to go home with a better understanding of the nature of sin, the merciful love of God towards sinners and the call to the community, which leads to true repentance.

3.5 Conclusion

Finally I would say that the Theological, Liturgical and Cultural principles presented in this chapter have been essential in as far as the approach to the Rite of reconciliation is concerned in the Catholic Church traditions. Contemporary Theology is more inclined to view conversion as a process rather than a decision and the opposite of sin as faith rather than morally correct behavior.

Therefore, efforts to renew the sacrament of penance must see this renewal in terms of a better theological understanding of the meaning of the sacrament. The role of reconciliation finds more scope in the liturgy because it refers back not only to the saving action of God in the past but also to the origins of all mankind. However we are indeed invited to cooperate in the process of reconciliation, since it is God who invites us and brings about reconciliation.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Towards the Inculturation of Reconciliation Among the Bukusu People

4.1 Introduction

We are all born into a family and a clan. When someone within the family or the clan breaks the law, the elders pass judgment on the case and impose a fine. When the fine has been paid or the damage repaired, the culprit is forgiven and peace is restored.

Consequently, from the Christian understanding, Reconciliation does not take place first and foremost in the confessional. It is reconciliation between people, between ourselves and God. The Sacrament consists in accepting the Spirit to enable us to live in reconciliation. That is, when I forgive my brother or sister I become the sacrament of forgiveness. I unveil the face of God who forgives as Jesus himself did.

Therefore, the inculturation of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people should be understood as a gradual process. And so the cultural adaptation has to ensure that the teaching of Christ is instilled in the minds of the people in such a way that Christianity strikes root that helps the true growth of a local church. Reconciliation is thus understood as the work of God. God goes about restoring the damaged humanity, thus personal reconciliation is about restoring and healing a personal humanity. Social reconciliation is about the reconstruction of a more just and safe society in which the violence of the past wrongdoing will be prevented from occurring again in the future. The quest for social reconciliation is a process that is intended to bring this new society about.

Therefore, in this chapter we wish to present the idea of reconciliation among the Bukusu people and how they used to perform this Rite in the past and today. Also we will look at the comparison between the Bukusu rite of Reconciliation and the Catholic rite of

Reconciliation, then look at the hope that the Rite of Reconciliation can give to the Bukusu people and finally give the conclusion.

4.2 The idea of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people.

Among the Bukusu people there were several instances in which a person could find him/herself in the wrong as an individual or at the community level and these wrong acts affected the continued lifestyle of the whole community. Just to mention some of them: theft cases, fighting, adultery, the cases of children insulting their parents, disputes with other communities, torching of other peoples houses or properties, the child getting lost or a person disappearing from home, the issue of death etc.

Quite often when a person was found to have committed any of the above crime, he/she was to face a severe punishment. With the case of conflict with other tribes/communities, they were to fight. But then for this person or people to continue living together in harmony, they had to call for a reconciliatory meeting and the community of elders. It was often done in public for the purpose of teaching them a lesson or to deter them from doing the same again.

Therefore, at this point I would say that there was the idea of Reconciliation i.e. *Sibelwa* or *Khubelanila* as it was called among the Bukusu people. In my interviews it was affirmed that the reconciliation process is an old traditional practice that has been and is still there. The Bukusu people, the so-called, *Babandu be Kumulembe*, that is people who love peace, have a name which is drawn from their greetings *-(Mulembe)-* “How are you?” or “Peace”. Hence the Reconciliation that was done within the family or clan was called *Khuosia* or *Khukhweosia* - to appease or to return back the lost peace.

4.3 The Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation itself

(a) How it was performed before

The Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation was carried out by some elderly men in the community who had an outstanding reputation. This process had more or less the same procedural features, namely. The elders - (*Baasakhulu be Kimisango*), whose duty was to perform the ritual, would gather together. Then there should be a sheep or a bull that would be slaughtered and the stomach content (*Buse*) would be used for cleansing/ appeasing the ancestors, the meat would be roasted and eaten first by the two parties in question, and then by the rest of the people. present followed by the final words of advice. Then the beer (*Kamalwa*) would be drunk and then the people present, in joy would sing, dance and then disperse.

I hereby wish to present different circumstances and how they were handled.

(i) **Fighting:** For the case of two people fighting and then one is hit with a stone by the other, this was commonly done by the young children in the village, where a child from one family fought and hit the neighbor's child's eye or caused a scar, or shed blood. The ritual called *kububusha Engokho* was done. Thus an elder was called and they took a chicken holding the legs while letting the wings pat on the heads of the two antagonists. Then the chicken was strangled and roasted on an open fire, and eaten first by the two parties then the rest of the people present. The two parties shook hands as a sign of forgiveness and Reconciliation. Finally the last words from the elders were said, for example: *Menya namusimana bubi buweo mubee sindu silala*, "stay by loving and respecting each other". And the two would promise him and the Community that they would do so. This was done mainly in the afternoon.³⁹

³⁹ Timothy Wabuge., 39 yrs, a KRCHN and Roselyn Nyongesa, 32 yrs, a teacher: Shared views on some rituals concerning family quarrel and fighting among the Bukusu People, at their home, on 2nd January, 1999.

(ii) Adultery: (*Silukhi*) This was taken very seriously, when a man was found in the house with the wife of another. The penalty was to pay a cow or a sheep, And when found outside the house he had to pay a cow only. If found again the penalty was death. He had to admit before the elders the sin committed, then a day was set for the meeting at around ten to twelve o'clock. After some inquiries, a lamb was slaughtered, and it was said that the woman in question was never present only the husband. So the accused man had to vow before the elders and people present that he would never do it again. After washing their hands in the *Buse*, the stomach content of the sheep- they shook the hands as sign of reconciling one another. Then followed the final words from the elders to the offender: *Okhasajalila mungo mwabene lunda ta, kumwikule kwabene, kumwikale kukwoo*. Never enter somebody else's House. for that which is closed is not yours, rather that which is open is yours.⁴⁰

(iii) Dispute between two communities: (*Khulia Embwa*) This instance happened between the Bukusu community and the Teso community. For a long time there was a war between them regarding boundary disputes. And so, the elders (*Bakasa*) of the two parties called for a reconciliatory meeting and it was said they took a puppy that was cut alive into two halves then, the enemy went with the behind part of the dog and the front part of the dog remained with the other party. This was performed around 10.a.m. in an open grounds called *Ekewa*⁴¹

(iv) Torching/burning of somebody's house: (*Khukhwosha enju ya bene*) This was not so common but whenever it happened then the elders came to curse (*Khulaama*) whoever did such an act. They often used (*Enyuli*) some kind of hammer or the axe while cursing the one who did it: "May he be cursed in the name of God, Wele Khakaba and ancestors." It is only when the one who did the act came up that they performed the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Wamalwa Mark Xavier, 62 yrs: A shared interview, by a former chief inspector of police and now a Herbalist and a local elder of the Balonja Clan in Bukusu Land, on 6th January, 1999.

sacrifice by slaughtering the sheep, using its stomach content for cleansing. If not they continued cursing until the victim came out, otherwise it was believed something worse is to happen, e.g. death.⁴²

(v) The child who got lost or disappeared from home: When a member of the family got lost (son/daughter) and was found, the clan members came together and slaughtered a monochromatic bull, preferably white, and they built a shrine *Namwima*. People sat in a circle and an elder would give a speech while pointing the stick *Esimbo* to the boy at the centre. He expresses how they missed him in the family and how they needed him back. Then there followed eating, drinking and dancing while singing the following song:

Nalulingo khoya akobole,
Mutua weafye akobole,
Nalulingo khoya akobole. x2
Ece Ee Ee,
Nalulingo khoya akobole. (X2)⁴³

The song is literally asking for the returning back of their only child, their last born child.

(vi) Death: The dead among the Bukusu people were highly respected and it was believed that those who died went to the good spirits, the so-called "living dead" - Ancestors, the others were referred to as bad spirits - *Balosi*. And so, there were three ceremonies that were done for the purpose of uniting those who are living now with those who died. This is believed to be a strong reconciliatory process because if a particular clan or family failed to carry out these ceremonies then it was believed that more often, they would be haunted by the dead spirit, and they might not be successful in whatever they do.

The first ceremony is called *Khumala silindwa*, to cement the grave. When the date of the ceremony was set, people of the clan gathered, and at midnight a woman (a widow) would smear the grave with the wet mud. A bull was slaughtered and each person present

⁴² Edward Kibiriti, 41 yrs: A shared information from a teacher of Busakala Secondary School, Chwele, Bungoma Distric, on 3rd January, 1999.

⁴³ Naliaka Anyensi, about 88 yrs: A recorded information, on 4th January, 1999.

ate and carried a piece of meat home. There was also local beer (*kamalwa*) to be drunk and washing hands with the stomach content (*Buse*) of a sheep as a sign of purification.

The second one is called *Khukhalaka kimikoe*, to appease the dead. This was done in the afternoon before sunset. A bull that is smeared with mud was brought and killed, then eaten and some meat shared to be carried home. The beer that was brought was drunk and people celebrated and danced while singing the following song:

Wabilo, x2 Wangasha ... (x3)

Literally it means, "someone has gone ahead or passed away..."

The third ceremony was that of *Khuuisha*, to transfer the dead. This took place during the morning session before midday. It involved taking a piece of stone at the graveside that was carried by a special woman elder in the clan and cows were escorted in front while the people followed behind. Young men, dressed in leopard skin, tied bells on their feet, with spears and shield jumping up and shouting. As they neared the home they blew the horns to alert the people that they have arrived. On the way, they sang the following song while naming the clans:

Chapuyaa, x3 ooh aaa chapuyaa chapuyaa chapuyaa
oh oh ooh chapuyaa. (x2)⁴⁴

Literally it means, "they have moved or gone..."

These ceremonies as presented above were strictly performed consecutively, failure to perform one of them meant that there would still be no peace and the family would be haunted by the evil spirit in one way or another. Usually it was believed to happen in some events such as when one is searching for a job and failing to get one, or if he or she found the job, there may arise misunderstanding at the working place etc. Others even when going for a journey might be involved in an accident or something of the kind. Lack of fortune is

⁴⁴ Edward Kiberit, 41yrs, and Nakhanu Maria, about 90 yrs: At the evening oral folktale that I was fortunate to share and record stories about the Bukusu traditions regarding the dead and other customs.

the central belief in this kind of situation. So the only way was to reconcile with the ancestors so as to restore the lost glory.

(b) How the Reconciliation Rites are performed today.

From my interview, it was a common consensus that most of the traditions and customs are being held as before. Although with the coming of the new age things are changing and the traditional rites and beliefs are affected, for example the civil courts have practically taken up some issues that were solved at home. Also the Church and its evangelization process have had great impact on the traditional beliefs and customs.

When one sins, for example, one has to go to the priest for confession. The civil society and the church are asking people to have dialogue and understanding wherever there are conflicts or disputes in the family or in the society at large. Indeed the inculturation process of Reconciliation is taking many roots as time goes by. The Bukusu people have a saying that goes: *Engila sebolela okenda ta* - its Literal meaning is that, the way/road does not tell the one who is walking or traveling. It is only when he or she arrives at the destination that he or she can tell or rather say, yes at last we have arrived. Therefore the cultural adaptation of the rite of Reconciliation has to be a gradual process and it is also a task of every individual.

From the above explanations on how the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation was performed and how it is performed today, I would say that there were several ways of reconciliatory Rites depending with the type of offence or sin that one had committed or if the dead had to be appeased. However, the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation was performed when members of the community were present and it had the following common basic elements that can be incorporated in the Catholic Rite of Reconciliation, namely:

1. The Introductory Rite

- Act done

- Gathering in silence
- 2. Examination of conscience
 - Recognition of the mistake (sign of acceptance)
- 3. An Elder come in to officiate the Rite
 - The community presence (witness)
 - Words are said (welcoming and explaining the reasons for the gathering)
- 4. The Rite itself (Reconciling the two parties)
 - Sacrificing, sheep or a young bull
 - Stomach contents (*buse*) used for cleansing/appeasing
 - Blood for casting out the evils that might still be there (i.e. by spitting)
 - Meat is roasted and eaten first by the offended and the offender themselves, then given to all the people present
 - Words are said in a form of prayer (*khusaya*), the climax of forgiveness. Each one is asked not to repeat again and they promise to do so
 - All shake hands (sign of peace and joy)
 - Drinking of beer (*kamalwa*) as they sing and dance
- 5. Concluding Rite
 - Final blessing from the elders, asking people to go home in peace (*khukenda ne kimilembe*)
 - All disperse⁴⁵

4.4 Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation and the Catholic Rite of Reconciliation

Both the Bukusu and the Catholic Rites of Reconciliation involve a preparation such that when that ceremony is done, it has to involve the total awareness of the wrong and the sins committed by the individual.

They both involve the use of some symbols and signs, for example water, herbs, foods and drinks, the stomach content of the sheep or cow, in case of the Bukusu rite, and for the Catholic rite there are ashes, candles, going barefoot, exclusion of penitents from the assembly, interrogations as to worthiness for readmission to the community. The Bukusu rite gives more reverence to the ancestors, the living dead and spirits whereas the Catholic rite gives more reverence to the saints, angels and the spirits. The place of worship for the Bukusu was called *Namwima* (Shrine), whereas for the Catholics is the church.

Both rites have got the presence of an elders, i.e. the clan elder (*Omukasa*), and the Priest. While the Bukusu rite of reconciliation involved the paying of a price in terms of

⁴⁵ Wamalwa Mark Xavier, Interviewed on 6th January 1999.

bulls or sheep sacrifices, blood and meat, the Catholic rite is more in the belief of the grace and mercy that God grants to the sinner who repents.

While the Bukusu rite is done in broad light and in public for all the community to witness, the Catholic rite is in most cases private and involves an individual commitment.

The Bukusu rite of Reconciliation has common features such as, killing of an animal, taking the stomach content from it. cleansing, the words used by the elders as a warning or teaching, after which there is singing and dancing. Thus it differs from the Catholic rite of reconciliation for several penitents with individual confession and absolution, that has the following procedure, namely:

- I. The introductory Rite
 - a. Song
 - b. Greetings
 - c. Opening prayer
- II. Celebration of the word of God
 - a. Homily
- III. Examination of Conscience
- IV. Rite of Reconciliation
 - a. General confession of sins
 - b. Individual confession and absolution
- V. Proclamation of praise for God`s mercy
 - a. Concluding prayer of thanksgiving
- VI. Concluding Rite⁴⁶

Both the Bukusu and Catholic rites have an emphasis on the social dimension of sin and reconciliation, in which the relationship with God is embedded.

While the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation ends with a meal, the Catholic rite of Reconciliation does not end in that form it only has the final prayer and the blessing.

4.5 The Hope the Rite of Reconciliation gives to the Bukusu People

Just as the Catholic rite of reconciliation offers help to reach that perfect contrition which comes from charity and enables the faithful to attain God`s grace through a desire for

⁴⁶ ICEL (translation), The Rites of the Catholic Church, Pueblo Publishing Company, Inc. New York: 1983 PP.357-358.

the sacrament of penance, so it is also meant to give a new hope and a rebirth, a change of heart - metanoia, to the persons who accept to celebrate it. The Bukusu rite of reconciliation too brings much hope to the Bukusu people and the entire community. It is a new beginning of freedom for both parties that had offended each other. Thus not having any suspicion in terms of their relationship, one sees him or herself as having been forgiven and that there is room for improvement (better life).

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Bukusu are people of *Kimilembe* - that is lovers of peace. The rite of Reconciliation is the search for peace and love, and so the Bukusu people are said to be *Sianja Barendé*, people who love all people both good or bad without favoritism's. Those moments of gathering brought people of the same clan together, especially those from distant places. Hence, it was an opportunity for the people of the same clan to know each other so as to avoid marriages within the same clan.

They were also moments for the relief of the bad omens (*Lisubila*). The appeasing of the ancestors, especially in naming of children after them, or killing a cow, was all but meant to bring back the lost link or relationship with the living dead. Therefore, since the Bukusu people believed in life after death, then it was vital for them to practice these customs so as to restore their relationship with the dead, so that the clan or the entire community may have a normal living.

4.6 Conclusion

Just as it was indicated in the introduction of this chapter, inculturation of the rite of reconciliation among the Bukusu people is a process, therefore, I wish to end with the words of Jesus in Matt.5:23-24 that say: "So then if you bring your sacrifice to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering".

Therefore, this message has been carried out from time immemorial by the Bukusu people in giving a strong appeal in both private and public reconciliation processes. So the traditional rituals and customs are first of all intended to reconcile people, but then this reconciliation is experienced deeply as a means to reconcile with God. Therefore, we would say that inculturation of the gospel took place long before in the customs and traditions of the people especially among the Bukusu people. However, since it is still taking root, there is need to employ the right approach towards the inculturation of the rite of reconciliation among the Bukusu people.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The general remark on this topic of the Liturgical Inculturation among the Bukusu People of Western Kenya goes in line with my motivation to write this paper. From my findings, I would say that this topic is worth to be shared in our present society, because it touches the innermost part of our life on how we have to relate to God and to our fellow human beings. As we celebrate the 2000 years of Christianity, we must remember that Christ's coming into the World had one sole purpose of saving mankind from the slavery of sin. And so, if we are to be men and women who have experienced the love of Christ, then we stand a better chance to seek for a change in our own life.

However, it might not look easy for one to change if we are still living on this planet earth where we encounter each other in every form of life. Our daily interaction brings about some differences and so we are bound to be at loggerheads with one another. In the long run we create enmity and misunderstanding with each other. Therefore, losing confidence amongst ourselves as human beings, our relationship with God is also being jeopardized. That is why Christ's message for us becomes more relevant. Thus we ought to strengthen relationships among ourselves first, and then with God. *...Since whoever does not love the brother whom he can see cannot love God whom he has not seen...(Cf. 1Jn.4:19-21).*

What is explicit in the whole essay is the complexity entailed by the inculturation of the Rite of Reconciliation. This is because it touches not only culture but also, even more, theology, Christian sources, history and liturgical legislation. Culture is dynamic and because of this dynamism, inculturation too becomes an on-going process, a gradual growth since both human and ecclesiastical conditions are in a process of continuous change and realization.

Therefore, my appeal would be that there be need for a new approach to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance in the Catholic Church. My proposal to

inculturate the Catholic Rite in the perspective of the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation would be to take some of the elements from the Bukusu Rite and incorporate them in the Catholic Rite. For example, different Dioceses or Parishes can organize a reconciliation service. Thus a day, place and time should be set aside that are most convenient to all the Christians, preferably during the Lenten season, to gather together at least once year, then an animal, either a sheep or a young bull, should be provided for the Rite. The Priest should dress in traditional reconciliation regalia and may start with a session of prayers, then the slaughtering of the animal by the chosen elders should follow. The use of the stomach contents from the animal for washing one's hands and the spitting of blood on the people using the *kumwendo* (a horn-like vessel) have a great significance and leave a mark on one to remember. The meat from the slaughtered animal would be roasted and eaten by all, followed by the words of encouragement and forgiveness from an elder or priest. The eating together had a very strong meaning among the Bukusu people just like in many other African communities, simply because it was/is believed that as we share a meal together, the person who has evil intentions would be easily identified, either by his/her refusal to share the meal or by his/her going away before the ceremony is concluded.

The criticism leveled at the Catholic Rite of Reconciliation today has its own weight and it would be unfair to dismiss it. And so I feel that if we have to evangelize people and reach the depth of the self-realization of one's faith, then some Rites like that of Reconciliation and Penance have to be evaluated by the Congregation for the Liturgy and Rites, so as to come out with a new approach. If in the Catholic Rite of Reconciliation, the fear of the people is to go to the Priest to confess their sins, namely private confession, then the communal Rite of Reconciliation with general confession and absolution can be given priority so that those who feel uneasy with private confession may have more chance to attend the communal rite of reconciliation. Also the problem of scandals caused by some priest may be looked into both by avoiding to hear confession in a hidden place, where one

may be tempted, and by training and ordaining priests who are more mature and more disciplined.

On the other hand, looking at the Bukusu rite of Reconciliation, the communal celebration takes the priority and so the popular opinion is that in African society a typical examination of conscience is always based on social as well as personal values. An integral Sacrament of Reconciliation has to begin with a thorough examination of conscience on the part of the penitent. His or her conscience is the ultimate judge. That is why in most African societies, just like the Bukusu people, justice cannot be done to the people's conscience in matters of sacramental confession, if the communal and social aspects which are best expressed in a communal penitential service, are neglected.

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APPENDIX

1. A PASTORAL QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE RITE OF RECONCILIATION AMONG THE BUKUSU PEOPLE OF WESTERN KENYA

Q.1. Who are the Bukusu people?

Q.2. Religion and Belief of the Bukusu people:

(a). What kind of God do the Bukusu people Believe in? (Is it ONE Supreme Being or Many?)

(b). What was the Role of the Ancestors in Bukusu Religion?

Q.3. What is Reconciliation according to you?

Q.4. Is/Was there the idea of Reconciliation among the Bukusu people?

Q.5. The Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation:

(a). Were there other names (terms) used for Reconciliation?

(b). What were the symbols involved

(c). How was it performed?

(d). How is it performed?

Q.6. Were there some prayers said before or after?

(a). State whether they were sung or recited.

(b). Give examples of such prayers

Q.7. On which occasions was it performed?

(a). At what time of the day?

Q.8. Who is/ was the Leader?

Q.9. Who are the participants?

Q.10. Do you think that the present way you celebrate Reconciliation in the Catholic Church is meaningful to the Bukusu people? Explain

Q.11. What relationship is there between the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation and the Catholic Rite of Reconciliation?

Q. 12. What hope did/does the Bukusu Rite of Reconciliation give to the Bukusu people?

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2. Chumbe B. Emmanuel, 34 years old. A student at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, Box 30517 Nairobi: Interviewed on 10th October, 1999.
3. Kibiriti Edward, 41 years old. A teacher, Box 11 Chwele: Interviewed on 4th January 1999.
4. Kibiriti Francis, 75 years old. Retired Policeman, Box 1191, Bungoma: Interviewed on 3rd January 1999.
5. Mutoro Simiyu Emmanuel, 56 years old. A retired officer of the Judicial department, Box 1125 Kitale: Interviewed on 31st January 1999.
6. Naliaka Anyesi, 88 years old, and Nakhanu Maria 90 years old. Box 632 Bungoma: Recorded interview on 4th January 1999.
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