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THE SOUND TRANSMISSION OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION IN AFRICAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

In traditional Africa, the way of holding a conversation about God was determined by the sacral words of wise ancestors. The aim of this article is to relate the sound transmission of Christian revelation to African men and women rooted in their ways of receiving the authoritative words of their beloved ancestors. The Christian revelation seen as the eternal and living Word who became flesh is a new way of knowing the mystery behind the goodness of life experienced by African wise ancestors who were constantly searching for the meaning of life-forces in nature. By exploring the mystery of God from Christian revelation perspective, African Christian theology goes beyond African wisdom literature by drawing African Christians to the fascinating and delightful mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God in human history. Jesus, the eternal and living Word of God who became flesh as a human person embodies the nearest to God and God himself who can reveal the mystery of the wonderful Father who loves human beings in Jesus and through the Spirit by extending the family life of the three divine persons to all who experience an encounter with the Son sent to promote in the Spirit the abiding presence of the Holy Trinity in creation and in human lives. "The Sound Transmission of Christian Revelation in African Context" is an African Christian theology of interpretation of Revelation and Scripture for mature believers in Sub-Saharan Africa reclaiming the communal as the basic dimension of human life.

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Introduction

A sound transmission of Christian revelation in Sub-Saharan African context must meet the deepest religious needs and spiritual aspirations and expectations of people in their communal ways of life. For Sub-Saharan African people's whole belief system, mentality and religious practices, God cannot be known merely through a body of truths or a set of rules. Religious experience is the best approach of knowing God for whom Sub-Saharan African people long for a relationship of intimacy and partnership.

Before Christianity came into Africa, sub-Saharan African people used to communicate their interior life to God by paying attention to the life-forces that attract them in the good creation of God. God-fearing lineage ancestors mediate life-forces by being present and active in the life of their communities.¹ Progenitors of their communities, God-fearing lineage ancestors protect and bless their living descendants by imploring God for help and sustenance.

With the advent of Christianity in Africa, Sub-Saharan African people experienced the event of God speaking through a human person, Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee, the eternal Word of God made flesh. Jesus the Christ became the medium and the message of God's self-communication which started with the creation of the world and continues through salvation history culminating with the passion, death and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. By speaking to humans in human speech and by living the fullness of human condition except sin, Jesus the Christ is for Sub-Saharan African people, the Word of God, the authentic expression of the divine mystery that seeks to save what he assumed to himself (Heb 1:3; Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4; Jn 1:14; Rev 19:13). As an event of God's coming into the world, Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God who is seeking a home in every sub-Saharan African culture for the purpose of fulfilling the deepest religious needs and spiritual aspirations and expectations of believers who accept to be challenged and to be transformed by his call to commitment to social justice, to responsible concern for the poor and to the service of peace, unity and reconciliation.

¹C.S. Bae, "Ancestor Worship and the Challenges it Poses to Christian Mission and Ministry," PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria.

Before the coming of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa, the rituals of life-giving words were uttered by kings, traditional priests, healers, judges and elders in the settings of communal ceremonies of remembrance recalling ancestral traditions as commands, promises and blessings believed to reveal the will of the God-fearing lineage ancestors, mediators of God's Word. How do we integrate today what is good and true in the rituals of life-giving African remembrance ceremonies into the sound transmission of Christian revelation? What does contextualization mean for the sound transmission of Christian revelation in Sub-Saharan African cultures? How does a contextualization of the Word of God in Sub-Saharan African cultures lead to a convincing personal and functional Christology of God's Son as the Word of God transcending infinitely the rituals of the life-giving words of the lineage God-fearing ancestors reforming and transforming the African traditional ways of life?

1. The Theological Relevance of the Rituals of Life Giving Words of God -fearing Lineage Ancestors in Sub-Saharan African Context

Every Sub-Saharan African culture should be seen as a channel of communication of the self-understanding of the way of life of a given people. The culture is the way, the language, the structures, the symbols, the institutions by which a given people expresses their feelings, thoughts, world-view, beliefs, values, technologies, arts, literature and religious experience. The culture of a given Sub-Saharan people is the expression of the inner life of that people. Through their cultures, Sub-Saharan African people manifest their remarkable sense of communion and solidarity between the not yet born, the living and the dead.

African Traditional religion lived in extended family, in age-groups, and in tribe is based on the mystery of God, ruler of human life, delegating the government of the world to the God-fearing lineage ancestors² or beloved forebears. The category of God-fearing ancestors is a rich and inspiring belief and major cultural practice of Sub-Saharan African people. Related to those still living in the visible and vibrant world of time and space, the God-fearing lineage ancestor is a good-living dead believed to be in close friendship with God after acquiring the status of intercessor through special burial ceremonies. The process of becoming an ancestor is related to the

²Ancestors are deceased parents who acquire a supernatural power through their exemplary lives. They are venerated, and implored. They bestow on their living descendants various gifts of life such as fertility and good fortune.

way a deceased person lives his or her community life. The deceased promoted to the rank of God-fearing ancestor must have been an exemplary member of the community and left behind progeny. Venerated in the memory of the progeny, the God-fearing ancestor is the intercessor of the community before God. He or she is the protector of the community interceding for the living descendants. An ancestor is the spiritual guide of the living descendants. He or she acts as mediator between God and human family.³

But more than any sacrificial ceremony or public entreaty, the most committing form of veneration and the warmest attestation of filial piety are the one embodied in respect, fidelity and attachment to the ancestral traditions, for it serves as the living symbols of the ancestors' presence.⁴ In the acts of ancestral remembrance ceremonies, the living descendants appropriate the wisdom of their beloved forebears. The ritual ceremonies of remembrance of the words and deeds of ancestors are great moments of celebration of their wisdom and exemplary lives. The living descendants integrate in the flow of their ordinary lives the teaching that their ancestors left behind. Daily problems are solved by the living descendants by referring to the wisdom of the ancestors.

Ancestors are the progenitors of their human groups. They are seen as the good living dead appointed by God to take care of the concerns of their living descendants. They give meaning to the lives of their people by their words kept alive by the senior elders of their human groups. Depositories of the community wisdom, the lineage ancestors' words are made known during veneration ceremonies of remembrance which are community-centred events that promote the well-beings of their living descendants.

In most Sub-Saharan African cultures, the rituals of the life-giving words uttered by senior elders on account of the living dead in the setting of communal gathering affect people's life. They have the power to transform situations and communal life. They produce what they mean in people's lives. During situations of crisis such as, natural disasters, famine, open conflicts, violation of moral order, communal misfortunes, the life-giving ritual words are uttered to bring about rain, fertility, blessings, reconciliation, harmony, peace, good life and fellowship.

³John Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology" in Appiah-Kubi and Torres, ed., *African Theology en route*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979, 89.

⁴Di Mipasi Londi Boka, "Popular Religions of Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Lumen Vitae* 34, 1 (1979) 7-37.

The life-giving ritual words are speech acts that invoke the wisdom of the ancestors on various situations of communal life. They express the wisdom of the ancestors in the form of religious and moral teaching. They are always followed by joyful songs, beats of drums and dances. Songs in forms of litanies, vibrant drumming and dances impart a message of hope to the assembly that celebrates the communion between the visible and invisible world of the ancestors and God.

The practice of traditional ceremonies of remembrance seeking to let the invisible world impact the visible world is the meaningful way of celebrating the words and deeds of the ancestors that influence the living descendants. Professor Bénézet Bujo, one of the leading African Christian theologians defines the God-fearing lineage ancestors as creative models that seek the salvation of the whole person in community as the true mediators between God and humans. Lineage God fearing ancestors are:

The indispensable instruments of salvation, the way a person treats his inheritance is decisive for life and death. The ancestral traditions are gifts of God; they have a truly sacramental character, the life-giving traditions of the past must determine the present and the future since in them alone is salvation to be found.⁵

Although lineage God-fearing ancestors do not possess the power to save and do not share the divine nature, from hierarchical point of view they are superior to their living descendants and inferior to God.⁶ God fearing lineage ancestors are good models for social behaviour. They are good instruments of moral guidance. Their social virtues are praised to help their living descendants to attain maturity and sense of communal responsibility from birth through puberty to adulthood and old age. God fearing lineage ancestors are companions of the journey of life through stages of growth. They provide advice, correct way of living and hope. God fearing ancestors are celebrated during ritual meals that reinforce and heal the relationship between living descendants. They keep alive communal bonds and empower their living descendants for a better future.

A sound transmission of Christian revelation can appropriate the ceremony of the life-giving ritual words of the God fearing lineage ancestors by presenting Jesus as the ultimate good living dead who fulfils the deepest desire of Sub-Saharan African people to have in the

⁵Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Translated by John O'donohue, Nairobi: Saint Paul Publications; Maryknoll, New York, 1992.

⁶Diane B. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa, Voices of contemporary African Christology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004, 133-169.

invisible world a Saviour who is the Lord of life and who intercedes for them as a brother and as a friend. In the Eucharistic feast, closer to the remembrance ceremonies of deceased parents who have acquired the supernatural power to guide their living descendants, Sub-Saharan African God-fearing lineage ancestors united with Jesus, the saviour of the world and the Lord of life can name Christian revelation as the manifestation of a living dead who is still present and active in the world healing, leading, uniting and reconciling.

Christian worship can integrate the ways Sub-Saharan Africans relate to the life-giving words of their God-fearing ancestors by stressing the Eucharistic liturgy, the central ritual expression of the Christian faith as a communion where the good living dead south of the Sahara united with Jesus Christ are also invoked as the models of those gathered. The Roman Catholic Zairian rite does it partially.

For African Christians, the Eucharistic liturgy is the divine feast of everyday life. Jesus Christ, the revealer of the Father of all is God's wisdom fulfilling the wisdom of God-fearing lineage ancestors. Palaver around God's wisdom in Jesus Christ can enlighten African situations as it does in remembrance ceremonies where the God-fearing lineage ancestors' words and deeds are contextualized in the light of the signs of time. In a contextualized theology of Christian revelation, the ritual of life-giving words of God-fearing lineage ancestors can become a point of contact between Sub-Saharan African mystical religious experience and the Eucharistic liturgy as the sacrament of the mystical body of Jesus Christ.

God-fearing lineage ancestors will be rehabilitated in the mystical body of Jesus Christ as the appointees of God to manage the government of their households under the lead of the Spirit of God present in human heart. Their words shrouded in secrecy and revealed to the elders of the communities narrate the great events of salvation that shape the inner life of Sub-Saharan people. They impart practical knowledge about how to live the identity of their particular communities. Words of God-fearing ancestors get their people involved in the material and social well-being of their communities. They utter blessings, promises and warnings. Words of God-fearing lineage ancestors symbolize the past actualized, modified and adapted to new needs of the community standing for continuity with the flow of life coming from God through the mediation of beloved forbears. The ritual of life-giving words of lineage ancestors, express the tradition that precedes and supports the members of a particular community. They foster the sense of belonging of that particular community.

In a pre-literate society, the life-giving words remains at the level of oral communication. The utterer of the ritual of the life-giving words is a bearer of the tradition. He or she is the channel by which the God-fearing lineage ancestors say a word to the community about how life should be kept according to the principle of order in this particular community. The Sub-Saharan ritual of life-giving words is handed down in the forms of wisdom sayings, proverbs, adages, laws, hymns and narratives. These words are the meaningful answers to existential questions of human life.

With the growing complexity of modern Sub-Saharan African societies, the ritual of the life-giving words of God-fearing ancestors is insufficient to cope with new African situations. The protection of human life and ecology, the freedom and dignity of people, sustainable development, human rights and good governance are now life-situations calling for a system of laws reinterpreting radically the way ancestors used to solve community problems. In Sub-Saharan African globalized society, what then has Christian faith to do with the ritual of life-giving words of God-fearing lineage ancestors?

Following Bernard Lonergan's notion of religion as the field of self-transcending love,⁷ we can appreciate the redeeming dynamic of traditional religion in Sub-Saharan African cultures. Sub-Saharan Africans are lovers of life. They are in their concrete existence in a dynamic state of being in love with the source of life, God. The ritual words of God-fearing lineage ancestors can be seen as the "outward words of religious experience related to the prior words of love and grace."⁸ By being in love with God, Sub-Saharan Africans are prepared within their cultures to welcome the mystery of God mediated to human beings through Jesus Christ in his Spirit. This initiation into the mystery of God is the task of African Christian theology. African Christian theology must reformulate the theology of the Word of God in the anthropocentric pattern of thought of God-fearing lineage ancestors by promoting their life-giving words of salvation.

Professor Bénézet Bujo through the framework of the Christology from below has come to the meaningful theological evaluation of the person of Jesus as the ancestor par excellence or the proto-ancestor. By interpreting Jesus' earthly ministry as the radical service for life, Professor Bénézet Bujo finds a common ground between Sub-Saharan

⁷Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.

⁸Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 12.

African ritual of the life-giving words of lineage ancestors and Jesus, the final Word of God that gives the fullness of life to the sick, the lost and all human beings in search of salvation.

If we look back on the historical Jesus of Nazareth, we can see in him not only one who lived the African Ancestor-ideal in the highest degree, but one who brought that ideal to an altogether new fulfilment. Jesus worked miracles, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead to life. In short, he brought life and life-force, in its fullness.⁹ By comparing the historical Jesus with the God-fearing lineage ancestors of Sub-Saharan Africa, Professor Bénézet Bujo made a point by saying that both promote life in human communities. And Jesus could be seen as the first ancestor, the true and real ancestor par excellence of all humankind. Jesus, the giver of the fullness life is foreshadowed in the cultural and religious background of Sub-Saharan Africa (Lk 1:32; 1 Cor 15:45; Rom 5: 12).

Following the selfless example of life of Jesus Christ is the absolute model for all African Christians. In this sense, Jesus Christ is the Proto-Ancestor for the African. The laws for living as good and wise Africans came to us by the intermediary of the ancestors, the divine grace and wisdom to clothe us with the new man to us by Jesus Christ.¹⁰ This balanced Christology of Professor Bénézet Bujo is in line with the Ancestor Christology of John Pobee, the first African Christian Theologian who in 1979 successfully portrayed Jesus as an Ancestor.

For a sound transmission of Christian Revelation we must in Africa, south of the Sahara, combine the theology of the Word of God who became flesh, with the Christology of the historical Jesus, bearer of the fullness of life. In African Christian theology, Christian revelation could be made clear by using the main feature of African culture, the belief in God-fearing lineage ancestors.¹¹

2. The Paradigm of Wholesome Contextualization in African Christian Communities

God in his wisdom has chosen to reveal in a decisive way his mystery through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. By speaking his Word within the created reality, God expresses himself to all human beings in their respective cultures. Through Jesus Christ his Word,

⁹Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, 79.

¹⁰Bénézet Bujo, *God Becomes Man in Black Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, 66.

¹¹D. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christologies*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004.

God expresses his being as the absolute truth of his infinite freedom open to all who feel, think and speak. Ontological analogy between human and divine languages does open the possibility of all that is human to become the bearers of God's Word. The incarnation of the divine speaks to human situations by assuming human experiences from within, fulfilling the deepest aspirations of human beings as hearers of the Word.

The African has something to say about the mystery of incarnation, for after God has spoken to us at various times and in various places, including our ancestors, in the last days he speaks to us through his Son, whom he has established as unique ancestor, as Proto-Ancestor, from whom all life flows to his descendants (cf. Heb 1:1-2). From him derive all those longed-for prerogatives which constitute him as Ancestor. The African ancestors are in this way forerunners, or images, of the Proto-Ancestor, Jesus Christ.¹²

God the giver of faculty of expression has vested every human creature with the ability to hear his Word. This implicit word in creation became explicit word addressed to human beings in the self-manifestation of God to the covenant partners and prophets of his people. Jesus Christ is the final Word in the fullness of the self-manifestation of God in this world. As the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ is the expressive language of God in unsurpassable fashion. Personal language of God, Jesus Christ is the final and unsurpassable channel of God's self-communication. For Christians, the Word of God spoken to humankind is a person, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word uttered by God to permeate every culture.

What is really at stake in the phenomenon of *contextualization* is the identity search of a people, to whom it has become clear that this identity cannot be found either in the importation of a foreign culture (acculturation), or the restoration of its past (tribalism, nationalism). Rather, it is to be sought in the acceptance of the present conflict resulting from two heterogeneous past situations whose meeting constitutes the beginning of a new phase of its history, seen as an attitude of reconciliation in hope of two traditions which are presently clashing.¹³

Théoneste Nkeramihigo holds that Contextualization as a process of expression of the constant values of a people in a new situation of

¹²Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, 83.

¹³Théoneste Nkeramihigo, "Contextualization and the Specificity of Faith," in Ary Roest Crollius, S.J. & Théoneste Nkeramihigo, S.J., ed., "What is so New about Inculturation?" Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1984, 19-21.

confrontation or restoration is rather the healing integration of the Christian experience that creates a new communion. The right question for Sub-Saharan African contextualization of faith is put by Professor Bénédet Bujo: "In which way can Jesus Christ be an African among the Africans according to their own religious experience?"¹⁴ Contextualization means a dialogue between the Word of God and the African expression of human experience. The Word of God must take the form of all African languages. All the ways of human communication in Sub-Saharan Africa (spoken words, actions, gestures, symbols, rituals...) must be reformed and transformed by the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ.

The message of the Kingdom of God must help to reinterpret the world-view, the thinking process, the belief-system, the laws, the moral values, the customs and the ritual languages of Sub-Saharan African people. A close examination of the lifestyle and the political and economic organization of every Sub-Saharan African culture are today necessary for theological evaluation.

To be authentically Sub-Saharan African in the image of Jesus Christ, the Word of God is the goal of the theology of contextualization in most Christian communities since Vatican II. The theology of contextualization is concerned with the retranslation and reinterpretation of God's Word in African evolving realities. These realities are: Sub-Saharan African experience of traditional religions, the Cultural practices and forms of communal life, the socio-economic and political situations, the struggles for holistic liberation and the advocacy for democracy, good governance and human rights.

The life situations of people are today the ways by which the Word of God is proclaimed, appropriated and lived in Sub-Saharan African context. By taking seriously into account every Sub-Saharan African culture, the theology of contextualization is rooting the Word of God in the African heritage and contemporary realities. This process of incarnating the Word of God in Sub-Saharan African cultures implies the articulation of the Christian message in the thought-patterns and fundamental values of local people open to religious renewal. Responsible and creative theology of contextualization will make the person of Jesus Christ at home in every Sub-Saharan African culture. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Word of God should meet the communitarian outlook of people and the community-centred

¹⁴Bénédet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

orientation of all activities challenging for mutual concern, interdependence and sharing of well-being.

Hermeneutic is a central concern for African Christian theology of contextualization which interprets how God encounters Sub-Saharan African people in their religious experience of salvation. The religious experience of salvation in Sub-Sahara Africa is linked to personal change and social transformation. A trust-filled openness to the future based on hope against hope is needed to overcome massive poverty and sufferings calling for action. The chronological gap between the theological model of Exodus and the contemporary Sub-Saharan African situations, the plurality and the diversity of contexts are invitations to use the challenging and universal symbol of the Kingdom of God as the new paradigm of wholesome theology of contextualization. True theology of contextualization in Sub-Saharan Africa is indeed the revelation of God's Word in the history of people reflecting on the situations of their daily existence and relationships and seeking to transform their world under the Spirit of Jesus Christ. John S. Pobee, a Ghanaian theologian, has said in one of his books: The test of any cultural construct of the Gospel is whether it enables growth, change and transformation in and into the image and likeness of God.¹⁵

3. Jesus, the Self-gift of God, the Proto-Ancestor who Fulfils the Words of Sub-Saharan God-fearing Ancestors

Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee, in the first century setting of Judaism, was called by God to constitute a new community of repentant believers under God's rule. As a popular Jewish teacher and radical reformer, Jesus launched his prophetic ministry to establish God's final rule over Israel. Jesus, the eschatological prophet of Galilee preached the love of a gracious, caring and compassionate God. He proclaimed through words and acts of power the nearness of the Kingdom of God and called to a new way of being related to God and neighbour in the world. Forgiveness, an inclusive community of love and self-sacrifice for the sake of the neighbour are the main themes of his message. He welcomed all kinds of people – Tax collectors, public sinners, the sick, the marginalized, women, children and the Samaritans... He stood up for the social outcasts rejected by the judgmental attitudes of religious leaders of his day. Jesus is remembered for his table-fellowship with his followers and for his healing power that mediated the saving presence of God. Friend of the poor, and of the marginalized, Jesus taught them to

¹⁵John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, Nashville: Abington, 1979.

trust his Father and to experience the coming of his Kingdom in their everyday life.

Jesus questioned the fundamental elements of Judaism. He challenged the established practices of the Sabbath observance, the ceremonial ablutions, the manner and time of fasting, the religiosity of the leaders of Judaism, daily sacrifice and worship in the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus' commitment for the renewal of Judaism challenged the governing class, both Jerusalem temple authorities and Roman imperial authorities. Jesus was condemned as a threat to certain key Jerusalem temple authorities and crucified as an insurrectionist by the Romans. He died and was buried.

After the death of Jesus, his followers through their personal religious experience of his resurrection, started to proclaim the good news of his victory over evil and death. Enthusiastic faith in the resurrection of Jesus bonded the disciples who gathered in their homes for sharing with one another the Gospel message of their saviour. That proclamation gives rise to the Church as the community of those who have responded in faith and who now come together in *koinonia* and *diakonia* in order to build the body of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ These early communities were deeply committed to Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and present and worshipped in their gatherings in Rome and other cities such as Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia and Colossae. Jesus' earthly ministry of the Word of God finds its full realization in his resurrection. In the definitive and apocalyptic event of Jesus' resurrection, God reveals totally and completely his very essence as Creator who "gives life to the dead" (Rom 4:17).

As disclosure of Jesus' divine Sonship the resurrection of Jesus does not simply confirm Jesus' message; rather it throws light on his person as a whole. Because Jesus was being raised from the dead, it can be said with certitude of faith that never in any way or at any time was Jesus a person separated from God.¹⁷ Jesus as the final Word of God and God's self-communication is a storyteller. The writings of the New Testament have preserved fifty-five stories of Jesus. These stories are related to the Kingdom of God. Drawn from nature or common life, the parables of Jesus express the hope of God's immediate government as Father through the ministry of his Son. As metaphors and revelatory images, the parables of Jesus point

¹⁶Michael Lavelle Cook, *The Jesus of Faith: A Study of Christology*, New York: Paulist Press, 1981, 87.

¹⁷Cook, *The Jesus of Faith*, 70.

to the reality of the Kingdom of God shared by the hearers challenged to decide for discipleship. Called personally by Jesus Christ as the Word of God in whom the world is created, every human being who hears his Word is challenged to change the basic orientation of his life.

The grace to become a son or daughter of God in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, dead and risen and confessed as the Lord of life, is made available in human religious experience. In human religious experience, we are called to enjoy the spiritual presence of God by letting him reveal his God's self to us.

By listening to the Word of God, in our various religious experience, we are empowered to reform the social structures of our communities. Jesus, the Word of God becomes for us, the reformer of our ways of life and the transformer of our ways of life. In the Sub-Saharan African context, Jesus, the Word of God, may come to us as the self-gift of God, the Word of God that fulfils the wisdom of the God-fearing lineage ancestors. Jesus Christ as the reformer and transformer of Sub-Saharan African cultures is advocated here in the process of the sound transmission of the Word of God.

Concluding Remarks

The sound transmission of the Word of God in Sub-Saharan African context should have as its starting point the social and communal dimension of human life. Christianity garbed in foreign cultures cannot infuse the lasting influence of the Word of God into Sub-Saharan African societies. The seed of God's Word planted in Sub-Saharan African soil must be well adapted to the mentality of people and celebrated in a liturgy that is in harmony with the character of people. It should be embodied by suitable canonical legislation in the healthy institutions and customs of the locality.¹⁸

¹⁸Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, N°17.