

**CONVERSION IN MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY, NORTHWEST TANZANIA: A  
CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF METHODS AND THEIR IMPACT ON HAYA  
CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**By**

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(PhD) in the Faculty of theology at the University of Stellenbosch**

The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a blue field containing a white cross and a red field containing a white cross. The shield is topped by a crown and surrounded by red and white decorative elements. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto "Pecunia non vincit cultus recti".

**Supervisor: Dr. D.X. (Xolile) Simon**

**December 2012**

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work of this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any University for a Degree.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary missiological study. It engages the sociological theory of structuration to critically explore the missionary Christianity approach and methods of conversion in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania, and their impact on the Haya Christian life. To this end, a theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion is explored based on biblical and theological understanding, social theories of conversion, patterns and models of conversion. It is also pointed out that conversion is not only a theological but also a social phenomenon. Consequently, the Haya religio-cultural spiritual life and worldview are further investigated. The methods that were employed by missionary Christianity to missionize Northwest Tanzania are also explored based on the missionaries' home socio-political cultural context that informed these methods. Lastly, the Haya's earlier and later responses to the methods are highlighted and analyzed.

The dissertation argues that the missionary Christianity approach and methods of conversion were important in that they accelerated social change through modernization, new ways of dressing, accessibility to western medicine and appropriation of western education that was instrumental in the production of both church and national potential leaders who later brought about political awareness, modern development and socio-political transformation. Nonetheless, the research has ascertained that the missionary Christianity approach and methods of conversion produced mainly dual converts who remained adherents of both Christianity and Haya traditional religion. This was because from the outset most western missionaries aimed at almost perverting Haya religion and culture in the placement of Christianity that was intrinsically embedded in western culture.

This suggests the reasons for the inadequacy of the missionary Christianity conversion strategic approach to seriously take cognizance of the Haya religio-cultural spirituality and worldview which, as it was unpacked in the study, inherently embraces both the physical and metaphysical existential realm. Thus for the Haya, if this fact is not taken seriously, conversion seems irrelevant. That is why Haya Christians tend to actualize "real" conversion within the Revival Movements and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches' form of Christianity instead of maintaining loyalty to the doctrine of their mother churches, for

this spiritual form of Christianity has to a greater extent demonstrated the ability to attempt to indigenize Christianity among them as, without ignoring modern ways of life, it addresses the Haya religio-cultural spirituality and worldview.

Engaging structuration theory analysis, the study argues that the Haya realization of what seems “real” conversion within the revival framework and other spiritual movements and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity by most Haya Lutheran Christians in Northwest Tanzania, is an attempt to indigenize Haya missionary Christianity conversion. This is because for the Haya’s comprehension and praxis of conversion is not only determined by missionary Christianity activity, but to some degree their traditional religio-cultural context plays a role in shaping and structuring conversion that makes sense to them. Since social structure comprises rules and resources (Giddens 1984; Wuthnow 1987; Richard 1994) which human agents draw on and reproduce as they act and yet remain open for transformation, the Haya traditional social structure therefore provides an arena for them to draw on religiosity and other spiritual resources and reproduce them even as they convert to Christianity.

The study further proposes that the sociological theory of structuration in an interdisciplinary study of conversion provides a useful tool in attempting to understand the dynamics of conversion among the Haya within the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania, along with their tendency to actualize their “real” conversion within the revivalist or Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. Since “real” conversion cannot be limited or absolutized in these forms of Christianity, the research proposes an “integrative model of conversion” as the most relevant approach to our contemporary missionary preoccupation and engagement. This model suggests the hermeneutics and ecclesial praxis of conversion that is based on religio-cultural sensitivity that suggests harnessing spirituality and religio-cultural rules and resources from within the framework of Haya traditional religion, missionary Christianity, East African Revival and the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity through a mutual dialogue.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie dissertasie is 'n interdisiplinêre missiologiese studie. Dit maak gebruik van die sosiologiese strukturasie-teorie om kritiese ondersoek in te stel na missionêre Christelike benaderings en metodes van bekering in die Lutherse Kerk in Noordwes Tanzanië, en die impak daarvan op die Haya se Christelike lewe. 'n Teoretiese gesteierde bekerings-matriks word verken gebaseer op Bybelse en teologiese begrip, sosiale bekerings-teorieë, patrone en modelle van bekering. Daar word ook op gewys dat bekering nie net 'n teologiese verskynsel is nie, maar ook 'n sosiale een. Daarna word die Haya godsdiens-kulturele spiritualiteit en wêreldbeskouing verder ondersoek. Die metodes wat ingespan is deur die missionêre Christendom om Noordwes Tanzanië te missionaliseer is ook ondersoek met verwysing na sendelinge se eie sosio-politieke kulturele konteks wat hierdie metodes geïnfomeer het. Laastens is die Haya se vroeëre en latere reaksie op die metodes geïdentifiseer en ontleed.

Die dissertasie betoog dat die missionêre Christelike benadering en metodes van bekering belangrik was aangesien dit sosiale verandering versnel het deur modernisasie, nuwe style van kleredrag, toegang tot Westerse medisyne en die toe-eiening van Westerse opvoedkunde. Dit was weer instrumenteel in die vorming van potensiële kerklike en nasionale leiers wat later politieke gewaarwording, moderne ontwikkeling en sosio-politieke transformasie meegebring het. Die navorsing het egter ook aangedui dat die missionêre Christelike benadering en bekeringsmetodes hoofsaaklik tweeledige bekeerlinge geproduseer het wat beide die Christelike en die tradisionele Haya godsdiens aangehang het. Dit was omdat die meeste sendelinge in hul pogings om die Christelike godsdiens, wat intrinsiek in die Westerse kultuur gegrond was, te vestig, die Haya godsdiens probeer demoniseer het.

Dit dui aan dat die redes vir die ontoereikendheid van die missionêre Christelike bekeringstrategie moet ernstig kennis neem van die Haya godsdiens-kulturele spiritualiteit en wêreldbeskouing wat, soos die in die studie uiteengesit word, inherent beide die fisiese en godsdiensstige eksistensiële ryke omarm. As hierdie feit nie ernstig bejeën word nie, is

bekering dus vir die Haya irrelevant. Haya Christene geneig is om “ware” bekering te aktualiseer in Herlewingsbewegings en Pinkster-Charismatiese kerke se vorm van Christelikheid pleks daarvan om lojaal te bly aan die leer van hul moederkerke, want hierdie spirituele vorm van Christelikheid demonstreer tot ’n groter mate die strewende om Christelikheid onder hulle inheems te maak deur die Haya godsdiens-kulturele spiritualiteit en wêreldbeskouing aan te spreek sonder om die modern leefwyse te verontagsaam.

Die studie maak gebruik van strukturasie-teorie analise om te betoog dat die meeste Haya Lutherse Christene in Noordwes Tanzanië se gewaarwording van “ware” bekering binne die Herlewings-raamwerk en ander spirituele bewegings en Pinkster-Charismatiese vorms van Christelikheid is ’n poging om Haya missionale Christelike bekering inheems te maak. Vir die Hayas word die begrip en praxis van bekering nie net bepaal deur missionale Christelike aktiwiteit nie, maar tot ’n mate speel hul tradisionele godsdiens-kulturele konteks ook ’n rol in die vorming en strukturering van ’n bekering wat vir hulle sin maak. Omdat sosiale strukture bestaan uit reëls en bronne (Giddens 1984; Wuthnow 1987; Richard 1994) waaruit mense put, wat hulle reproduseer en wat tog oop bly vir transformasie, voorsien die Haya tradisionele sosiale struktuur dus ’n arena waarin hulle kan put uit godsdienstigheid en ander spirituele bronne en dit reproduseer, selfs as hulle hulle bekeer tot die Christendom.

Die studie voer voorts aan dat die sosiologiese teorie van strukturasie in ’n interdisiplinêre studie van bekering ’n nuttige werktuig bied om die dinamiek van bekering onder die Haya in die Lutherse Kerk in Noordwes Tanzanië te verstaan, tesame met hul neiging om hul “ware” bekering te aktualiseer in Herlewingsbewegings of in Pinkster-Charismatiese vorms van Christelikheid. Aangesien “ware” bekering nie in hierdie vorms van Christelikheid beperk of verabsoluteer kan word nie, stel die navorsing ’n “integreerende model van bekering” voor as die mees relevante benadering tot ons kontemporêre missionêre fokus en betrokkenheid. Hierdie model stel voordat ’n hermeneutiese en ekklesiale praxis van bekering wat gebaseer is op godsdiens-kulturele sensitiwiteit en spiritualiteit en godsdiens-kulturele reëls vanuit die raamwerk van Haya tradisionele

godsdien, missionale Christelikheid, Oos-Afrika Herlewingsbewegings en die Pinkster-Charismatiese vorms van Christelikheid deur wedersydse dialoog.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my Beloved wife Neema and our Children Stephen, Timothy and Miriam who were my backbone during my entire pursuit of this Doctoral study. I owe them beyond words my utmost gratitude for their cherished love, smiles and untiring support throughout my study.

I also dedicate this work to my late beloved parents, Ma Gaudensia Nyanjura and Ta Alphonse Binamungu, whose labour and efforts not only exposed me to education but more importantly to Christianity whereby I came to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of my life. To me that was indeed a real conversion. Thank you all!



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I also wish to wholeheartedly extend my gratitude to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Northwestern Diocese which through United Evangelical Mission (UEM) granted me a scholarship to pursue my doctoral studies in South Africa at Stellenbosch University. I particularly thank the Diocesan leadership, Bishop Elisa Buberwa and Mr. Godwin Rwezaura, who through their administrative endeavours enabled my family to stay back home when I was away for my studies. I furthermore thank them for being supportive when God later made it possible for my family to join me in South Africa.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### RESEARCH FOCUS AND OUTLINE

#### 1.1 Introduction

Chapter one as an introductory chapter of the whole dissertation summarizes the background of the study that seeks to deal with the question as to why the conversional model in the Lutheran church Northwest Tanzania that teach that conversion is realized and actualized during baptism and confirmation, appears to some Haya ordinary church members inadequate to the extent of seeking “re-conversion” within East African Revivals or Pentecostal-charismatic form of Christianity. As it shall be stated in the problem location and the problematization of the study, while this to some other Lutheran Christians demand leaving their mother church, to some other Christians “reconversion” doesn’t necessarily mean leaving their mother church.

The chapter as the background of the whole dissertation will, along with its methodological research, apply the literature review to locate the theoretical conceptual background of the study whereby the role of both East African Revival – a dominant historical revival among the Haya Mainline Christianity in the area, and the Charismatic-pentecostal Christianity as a more recent trend of Christian expression in the Northwest Tanzania and in the country as a whole will be discussed. It will later be indicated how these attempt to indigenize conversion among the Haya Lutheran Christians as it draws rules and resources from Haya traditional religious spirituality and African worldview in general to make sense for Haya ordinary Christians, a case that the whole dissertation makes in a broader sense.

For that matter, chapter one highlights the dissertation’s general introductory background. It lays down the plot of the research. It states the background of the study, the research problems, research questions, significance of study, hypotheses, research methodology and methods, literature review, the focus and delimitation of the research. It further briefly outlines the research topics as approached throughout the entire dissertation. In approaching the study I start with the background of it to set the scene.



## 1.2 The Background of the Study

The study of mission history as far as Africa is concerned has clearly indicated that the African societies have experienced different approaches and strategies to introduce Christianity in Africa. In most cases, the introduction of Christianity in Africa by the western missionaries was commonly through conversion, being accompanied by rituals and structures like Baptism, Confirmation, and literacy (Kraft 2002:328).

In some areas the main method of such an approach was mass conversion. As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 (4.5.2), this method mainly involved king's conversion whereby a king would be converted to Christianity with his subjects. In this case his subjects were obliged to believe the way a king believed because, in the words of Bishop Bengt Sundkler (1980:64)<sup>1</sup>, "not to follow the king's pious example was a crime similar to incest." Hence to believe as the king believes (*ekishomo ky'omukama*) was a common expression and technical term among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania (Sundkler 1980:65, also Lesley Stevens<sup>2</sup> 1991:4).

According to Sylvester Kahakwa (2003:14), Haya theologian and a Lutheran pastor in Northwest Tanzania, the king's conversion opened the way for a mass conversion as people entered a new faith. Bishop Sebastian Kolowa (1991:11), a former presiding Lutheran Bishop of Tanzania, also cites an example of mass conversion whereby a chief was baptized with his many wives and children. Along with conversion, Baptism was highly elevated as an imperative prerequisite for conversion to Christianity from the

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<sup>1</sup>Professor Bishop Bengt Sundkler was a Swedish Lutheran missionary, first in South Africa (Kwazulu Natal province) and later in Northwest Tanzania, where he became the first Lutheran Bishop in the Lutheran church, Northwestern Diocese. He is well known as a missionary and a missiologist in Africa and other parts of the world. He was a former professor in Uppsala, Sweden (cf. Kahakwa 2006:243).

<sup>2</sup> Lesley Stevens (1991:3-4) in his paper on *Religious change in a Haya village, Tanzania*, maintains that "the Haya are one of the most Christianized populations in Tanzania, and indeed in East Africa. They have a long history of conversion, not least among their kings, most of whom became Christian early in the British period." He also observes that through the contact with missionaries during the colonial period, Haya were exposed to formal education that did not only lead to their Christianization but also to social change. According to him education became a tool for conversion; hence Christianity was associated with education. For that matter, the term "reader" was used by Haya to refer to a Christian convert.

viewpoint that Baptism and conversion are inseparable as far as missionary Christianity doctrine was concerned<sup>3</sup>.

New converts were instructed in their catechetical classes to abandon their traditional ways of life, including their traditional names. They, therefore, were to be baptized with new western names. Along these lines, during Baptism converts were given new names which were considered to be “Christian names”, resulting in undermining traditional names because people who became Christians identified themselves with new names. Professor Wilson Niwagila (1972: 121), one of the Haya and a Lutheran pastor, echoes this when he says that missionaries at that time did not support the use of indigenous names. Having European or Biblical names was a true indication that a person had surrendered him/herself to the Christian faith. It was as if Christian identity is being determined by a nominal identification with foreign names. Also converts were obliged to embrace European culture which was closely associated with missionary Christianity.

At the same time Haya converts were told to renounce their cultural and religious values and practices such as traditional dress, music and dances before and after Baptism (cf. Kijanga 1978:74). These were completely discouraged as they were considered to be devilish and unworthy of one entering into God’s kingdom (Niwagila 1972:118-119). In most cases this was done without careful scrutiny of the necessity of African culture for their comprehension of Christianity, hence it was looked down on as if it had nothing to contribute to the inception and understanding of conversion. It was therefore a paradox to see that while the missionaries saw little connection between Christianity and African culture, at the same time they acted as carriers of both Christianity and western culture. As

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<sup>3</sup>These views are still maintained in post missionary Christianity by some Christians and theologians in the Lutheran churches. The doctrinal teaching of the mainline Protestant churches such as Lutheran emphasize Baptism and Confirmation for one to obtain conversion, or rather to be incorporated in the community of believers. This understanding, however, doesn’t seem appealing to some Christians who testify their “real conversion” to have taken place in their later years mostly within the Revival Movements or Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. These see that Baptism and Confirmation did not grant them a “real conversion” for they did it to fulfill their church’s formality and rituals. This leads us to raise some critical questions related to the relevance and authenticity of church teachings on conversional theology to the ordinary Haya Christians. This dissertation among other things seeks to address these questions further on (see details in chapter 5).

Bosch (1991:291) suggests, “their feelings of religious superiority would spawn beliefs about [their] cultural superiority” hence, most of them failing to critique their own culture.

As Peter Kijanga (1978:75), a Lutheran theologian in Tanzania, in his book *Ujamaa and the role of Church in Tanzania* put it, Christianity was generally presented as an essential element of western culture which African converts were to embrace in order to undergo what was said to be “civilization”. Furthermore, missionary Christianity along western culture lines was accompanied by institutions like hospitals, schools and so forth, a fact which portrayed them as agents of modern development. According to Bairu Tafla (1977:41), the African converts of missionary Christianity regarded Christianity as a symbol which distinguished them from other people in their respective society as it was seen as a source of divine assistance. On this note Thomas Spear (1999:6) in his work, *East African expressions of Christianity*, emphasizes that “for many [converts] the initial attractions were more socio-political and materialistic” than religious motivation.

This, obviously, would attract Africans to become Christians mainly not for spiritual or religious reasons, but essentially for social, material and modernity reasons. Benezet Bujo (1992:49) in *African Theology in its social context* argues that some Africans became Christians not because of the religious motive, but rather they joined it in order to have access to western knowledge, technology and civilization that would be seen as external socio-structural motivation (cf. Keshomshahara 2008:24-25; Spear 1999:6). Supporting this argument, Professor Israel Katoke (1976:103), a Haya/Nyambo and a Tanzanian anthropologist writing from Tanzanian context, has this to say:

...a good number of people were converted to Christianity not because of its spiritual importance but because of the material “gains” they derived from such conversion. [They] were converted to Christianity because of the medicine, clothes and food they were given by missionaries. Since this approach of material “bribery” helped in raising the number of the converts, missionaries continued using it by pouring in more material aid from Europe and America, forgetting that this practice was producing a class of ... spiritual dwarfs and beggars.

Since new converts were introduced to western education, this readily created a new paradigm shift from oral tradition to literacy. Some western missionaries regarded the process of conversion as a process of social change. It led some of the Protestant missionaries to aim at changing individuals whom they psychologically and socially segregated into *special communities* called Christian villages (mission compounds) in order to provide a new social environment for a different way of behaviour. But others sought to subvert the entire existing community in order to separate new converts from non-Christians (Kijanga 1978:75).

In such situations missionary Christianity and its strategic approach of conversion was to a certain extent perceived as a phenomenon of western ideological, economic, cultural and socio-political process and less of a spiritual process. Due to these reasons it did not touch or rather percolate deeply into most new converts' hearts, that is, it didn't have deep roots in the hearts of African Haya converts.

Most people who became Christians did not experience spiritual conversion but rather a multi-faceted conversion consisting of social, cultural, political, economic and educational conversion (Kraft 2002:340-341). This is verified by the fact that some years later, during the "East African Revival Movement" in the years between 1930 and 1940, Haya converts realized that they needed a kind of conversion that would fit into their religio-cultural context. Those who were already converted into missionary Christianity were to be re-converted and become members of the East African Revival Movement (Niwagila 1991:256-247). Although they were baptized and had been given "Christian names" (western names), yet they maintained that they were not yet "saved" or real Christians. These regarded themselves as a new community in Christ in a special way (*aboluganda*). In this kind of revival, revivalists had little interest in their mother church's model of conversion as this didn't adequately meet their spiritual needs.

As shall be discussed at length in chapter five (5:4.2.1), the Haya Christians after being touched by the power of the Holy Spirit in the East African Revival, which most Haya theologians and some missionaries regarded as an indigenous movement (Sundkler 1980;

Spear 1999; Kibira 1974), experienced “re-conversion”. It was as if they had discovered what it meant to be a Christian in a new way. In this revival, what appeared to most of the Haya Christians to be a real conversion took place. Most people who experienced this kind of revival felt at home with this type of Christianity the impacts of which were and still are significant, not only in the mainline churches of Northwest Tanzania but also in other churches in Tanzania as a whole, indeed in the whole of East Africa and beyond. As Kibira (1974:9) and Spear (1999:8-9) contend, most of the church leaders including pastors, evangelists and bishops in the country emanated from this movement.

The later revival which was Pentecostal by nature was the Charismatic Movement. It motivated the baptized Haya Christians from the Lutheran Church and other mainline churches to be re-converted in order to experience what is called to be “born again”, or to experience conversion (*okulokoka*) in accordance with the Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival terms and understanding. This entails experiencing a personal relationship with Christ. Charismatic revivalists who quit their former churches claim that their former mainline churches were not able to solve both their spiritual and physical problems.

On the other hand, non-revivalist Christians who do not quit their churches are resolving their problems that are believed to be religious in nature outside their churches’ orthodoxy. These find solutions for their existential problems in the African traditional religious system (Mbiti 1975:12-13; Bevans 2003:60). This poses a question: To what extent did the missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods try to solve the Haya peoples’ problems? Whatever the answer, this shows that the missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods need careful and critical investigation as far as Christians converts’ problems in contemporary missionary work are concerned.

### **1.3 Problem Formulation and Problematization of the Study**

It is assumed that conversion attempts by missionary Christianity and later by the church today among the Haya didn’t fully achieve the intended goal because the way it was applied and introduced did not take into account both biblical and cultural contexts of the people. This led people to misunderstand and misconceive it in relation to their Christian

life. In most cases Haya converts experienced cultural conversion accompanied by a new culture consisting of new names and a new style of living, as if Christianity was nothing but western civilization (Sundkler 1980:90, 118; cf. Kraft 2002:339). It implied relating and limiting conversion to western civilization (cf. Mbiti 1980:216; Kalu 2008:293-306). Consequently, cultural conversion did not help them spiritually, hence, for spiritual, social and physical problems most Haya Christians revert to their former African Religion for solutions. Thus, they maintain dual allegiance to both African Religion and Christianity at the same time because Christianity cannot help them to solve their life problems.

One of the consequences of missionary Christianity's conversion approach is the presence of diversified perceptions of conversion by Christians of the same Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania. In the first place, for most Christians, conversion is complete when one undergoes Baptism and Confirmation and therefore at that level, salvation is obtained. On the other hand, most "born again" Christians (*abalokoke*), assert that conversion is not just a baptismal name or Confirmation, but a personal encounter with Christ by which one obtains salvation. Niwagila (1991:254), a church historian who did extensive research among the Haya at different levels, writes that for the East African Revivalists, the sacrament of Baptism and Holy Communion made sense within the East African Revival only if one accepted Jesus as Lord and personal saviour (cf. Lugazia 2010: 82).

While most Haya Christians of the first view have remained in the church, some Christians of the second view have moved from their original church to join other churches from the viewpoint that there is no salvation in their former church and that real conversion is obtained in the new movement churches, namely Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and in the Revival Movements<sup>4</sup> (Lugazia 2010:82; cf. Lazaro 1990:32; cf.

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<sup>4</sup>It should be emphasized here that not all who hold the second view move outside their mother denomination but the fact of the matter is that some of these while seeing the inadequacy of their church model of conversion- through baptism and confirmation, they remain in their churches but they undergo "reconversion" within the revival and charismatic Pentecostal model of conversion. In the case of East African Revival Movement especially, with an exception of few who joined the church of the Holy Spirit, majority of Haya East African Revivalist remained loyal members of the Lutheran church hence East African Revival became an integral part of the Lutheran and other Protestant Mainline Christianity in Buhaya and elsewhere in the Country.

Balcomb 2010:4-5). According to the latter view, it seems as if missionary Christianity conversion became not only part of the solution but also part of the problem.

The situation challenges the church today. Shall it continue to apply its past or traditional method of conversion which has caused these problems, or shall it change its conversional methodological approach that suits the needs of its ordinary members so as to remain relevant? Shall it close its eyes to this problem whereby some of its members are moving day after day and some of those remaining do not seem to really understand what conversion means to them? If not, what would be the position of the church today and tomorrow? If yes, what is to be done by the church in order to shape and apply a conversion approach that will lead Haya Christians in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania to experience conversion that makes sense to them as they enjoy salvation in their Lord Jesus Christ within their church tradition?

Being challenged by this situation and related questions, I have been motivated to do research focusing on Conversion in Missionary Christianity: A Critical Assessment of the Methods and their Impacts on Haya Christian Life, as a way of not only seeking answers to these questions, but also addressing the nature of the problem.

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This study aims at investigating conversion in missionary Christianity, critically assessing missionaries' strategic approach and methods of conversion in Lutheran Church Northwest Tanzania and its impact on Haya Christians' lives. The study seeks to find a conversion model of approach that suits the Haya cultural and contextual frame of reference for the relevant contemporary Christian mission engagement.

This aim will be implemented along related objectives:

1. To investigate some of the biblical contexts and patterns of conversion from missiological perspectives.
2. To investigate how conversion was seen and applied by missionary Christianity.

3. An investigation on western missionaries' attitudes towards Haya culture and religion in the process of conversion.
4. To explore the missionary Christianity strategic approach and application of conversion and its impacts on Haya Christians' contemporary life in Northwest Tanzania.
5. An investigation into the Haya's reaction in response to missionary Christianity conversion.
6. To explore the situation whereby some Christians are leaving their churches and what can be done by the church about the question of re-conversion within and outside the church.

### **1.5 Research Key Questions**

The following are some of the preliminary questions that will guide the research:

1. Is a traditional approach to conversion applicable in a contemporary time?
2. Does conversion imply changing or shaping one's cultural and religious identity?  
If yes, at what levels?
3. Is the missionary Christianity of conversion which was and still is practiced in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania relevant to the Haya African Christians?
4. How does the discourse on re-evangelization, reconversion or continuing Conversion impact traditional approaches?
5. What does it mean and what are the implications for Haya Christians and western missionaries when it is suggested that African Christians are the agents of these processes?

### **1.6 Interpretive (working) Hypotheses**

An interpretive (working) hypothesis in a qualitative hermeneutical research is needed to guide the researcher by delimiting the area of research and to keep him/her on the right track. Therefore, the hypothesis sharpens the researcher's thinking and focuses attention on the more important facets of the problem (Smith 2008:139). Hence, according to



Kothari (2004:13), a research hypothesis is defined as a tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical consequences. Along this line of thought this research will be governed and guided by the following two working hypotheses.

### **1.6.1 The First Interpretive Hypothesis**

The first interpretive (working) hypothesis relates the current and previous perception and praxis of conversion among the Haya Lutheran Christians in Northwest Tanzania with the missionary Christianity approach and methods that were applied during early missionaries' missionization. It states that:

*Since missionary Christianity conversion was introduced and applied among the Haya people being accompanied by western cultural worldviews and values, it was perceived to be more cultural conversion and less religious conversion leading to negative consequences for their Christian life.*

### **1.6.2 The Second interpretive Hypothesis**

The second interpretive (working) hypothesis of the study relates the Haya perception and praxis of Christian conversion in their current Christian life with their religio-cultural context to which they belonged prior to the reception of Christianity. It states that:

*The Haya's perception of indigenous religion as a totality of life that incorporates one's whole existence has moulded their perception of strict religious adherence, and is continuing to impact and shape their perception of Christian conversion in general and Christian life in particular.*

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study investigates the western missionaries' approach and conversion methods in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania. It explores how this approach based on their method of conversion impacted either positively or negatively on the Haya Christian life. It attempts to answer the question of why some Haya Christians in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania, apart from church orthodoxy on conversion and salvation as was

presented by missionary Christianity, seemed to and still seems inadequate to most of Haya Christians such that they see a necessity to realize what seems to them a real conversion in either East African Revival or Charismatic-Pentecostal movement churches. As stated earlier, some of those who don't do so maintain dualism in both Christianity and Haya traditional religious discourse, especially when faced with existential crises.

The significance of this study therefore is multifaceted. First, from a missiological perspective it will attempt to investigate the reason for such a conversion complexity among the Haya in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania. This will help the Lutheran Church and other mainline churches that share similar experiences to understand this conversion dynamic, thus attempting to find a sustainable solution. Engaging sociological theory of structuration, the study will try to demonstrate how East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity have attempted to create a base for the indigenization of conversion among the Haya. This is because, these forms of Christianity attempt to draw rules and resources from African traditional spirituality and worldview, hence tending to attract most Haya people, even if they are already Christians (converts) through Baptism and Confirmation in their respective churches.

Secondly, the study will contribute to the missiological scholarly research on conversion based on its approach and methods from within African religio-cultural perspective in Northwest Tanzania. Current missionary engagement in this area, in Africa, and elsewhere will find it one of the useful resources that, from a sociological-missiological integrative perspective, promotes socio-cultural dignity and proposes sensitivity to people's traditional religious discourses before they are reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the study will propose an integrative approach model of conversion that will take into account other forms of spirituality and Christianity. An integrative approach model of conversion, as it will be argued, can provide a useful dimension at a key point of conversional presentation and indigenization. The model, it is believed, may stimulate more discussions and research on conversion that is indigenized within the Haya in particular and in Africa in general in order, among other things, for Africans to experience

Christian conversion that is deeply rooted in their religio-cultural spirituality and worldview and hence a relevant Christian conversion.

## **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

Smith (2008:140) defines delimitations in research as “self-imposed limitations, that is, the ways you choose to limit the scope of your research”. It helps to demarcate boundaries of the research and make the research manageable through reducing its scope. Along these lines, this study is basically a missiological study although it intergrated some sociological aspects and theories of conversion in the tradition of sociology of mission and mission in sociology of religion. The main focus is on conversion in missionary Christianity, Northwest Tanzania. It limits itself to missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods in the early time of missionization and their impacts of Haya Christian life. It also endeavours to investigate critically both the earlier and later Haya Christians’ responses towards the missionaries’ approach of conversion and its implication for the current Haya Christian life.

The geographical research area of the study has been limited to the Haya Lutheran Christians found in the Northwestern part of Tanzania. Although the focus of the research is mainly on the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania, I am aware that the same research problems addressed in this dissertation can apply to other Lutherans, and indeed other mainline churches in the country and elsewhere that share similar challenges.

## **1.9 Literature Review**

A literature review is important as one embarks on a new research study so, as Smith (2008:130) observes, to identify academic writings related to the topic in question to see what has been done and what questions remain unanswered. This helps the researcher to be able to channel the study into a research gap. In a similar way Komidar (in Kahakwa 2003:14) argues that no new research can be undertaken without a reference to the research that has already been done in the field. Therefore before embarking on a new study, a researcher has to consider previous research done in that particular field. This leads to the understanding of what is known and not known so as to ascertain gaps,

consistencies, or inconsistencies, as well as to reveal unanswered questions in the previous research about the problem (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber 1994:115).

On that note, with regards to our research topic on “Conversion in Missionary Christianity: A Critical Assessment of the Methods and their Impacts on the Haya Christian Life”, there is no adequate research that has already been done so far to address the nature and scope of issues raised in this research. Most of the studies that have been conducted in the research area and elsewhere in Tanzania have attempted to address the question of conversion in early Christianity in general but none of them, to my knowledge, have engaged conversion specifically in relation to the missionary Christianity methods and approach in line with the questions and problem addressed in this research.

However, several researches that have been done in Northwest Tanzania among the Haya touch some fundamental issues on Christian conversion in general, some methods of missionary Christianity conversion and approach and some studies have implicitly tried to indicate that the East African Revival Movement as indigenous movement has to some extent indigenized Christian conversion among the Haya. This preliminary work among the Haya and in Tanzania at large will help to inform a conceptual theoretical background for our study. I approach this section by applying a thematic approach.

### **1.9.1 Conversion: Spiritual and Physical Transformation**

Scholars such as Gaventa (1986), Rambo (1983; 1993), Kraft (2002) and others, provide biblical-theological conversion narratives that are critical in understanding conversion as the spiritual and physical transformation of a convert. It entails a change of perspective from his/her former life to a new life characterized by his/her faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Gaventa (1986) in her book, *From darkness to light: Aspects of conversion in the New Testament*, examines key biblical texts, especially in Luke, Acts, Paul, John and 1Peter. In her work she highlights some key aspects on what conversion and transformation meant in the context of first century Christianity and compares that with understanding being “born

again”. She studies the function of conversion languages and conversion narratives from the perspective of comparative religion and social psychology. In her discussion on what it means by conversion she distinguishes between alternation, transformation and conversion. She finally proposes a threefold typology of personal change, alternation, conversion, and transformation<sup>5</sup> for understanding conversion in the first century and today. Gaventa’s views on conversion shed light on the understanding of our research topic from a biblical-theological dimension.

Similarly Rambo (1983) as professor of psychology and religion, in his article “Conversion” in the *Dictionary of pastoral care and counselling* (229-229) defines conversion by giving different explanations based on different theories from which conversion is defined. However he gives a general definition of conversion by pointing out that it is a lifelong process of breaking away from any obstacle or idol and turning to the living God and to the needs of other human beings. He also points out different stages of conversion. He puts it clearly that such conversion is made possible through the gift of God’s transcendent grace.

In his later work in his famous book *Understanding religious conversion* (1993) Rambo has contributed remarkably to the area of conversion. Rambo discusses the dynamics of conversion, presenting it as a multifaceted process of change with personal, cultural, social, and religious implications. Drawing insights on psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, theology, and missiology, as well as on interviews with converts from various backgrounds, Rambo explores the forces that shape the conversion experience. He considers various theories of conversion, examines the role of cultural and social factors in the conversion process, and describes how different religions and disciplines view conversion. While acknowledging the individual nature of each conversion experience, Rambo discerns stages that are illuminating to conversion phenomena.

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<sup>5</sup> These conversion typologies and others are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.7.

Furthermore, Kraft (2002) in his book, *Christianity in culture: A study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspective*, also gives more detailed information on conversion. Kraft goes a step further by pointing out that a Christian conversion is a dynamic process. He explains what is meant by biblical conversion and then makes a detailed distinction between what he calls “cultural conversion” and “Christian conversion”<sup>6</sup>. He later points out that Christian conversion shouldn’t be imposed on people, rather using their culture to understand it. His work helps contribute to the conversion approach that doesn’t have to ignore the culture of potential converts.

### **1.9.2 Missionary Christianity’s Conversion Approach: It’s Implication to Haya’s Social Change**

With regards to conversion among the Haya, the scant amount of literature that exists in the area and which touches some fundamental issues around conversion as was presented by western missionaries, includes the work of Birgitta Larson (1991) on *Conversion to a greater freedom? Women, church and social change in the Northwestern Tanzania under Colonial rule*. Larson provides a critical observation on how conversion among the Haya contributed significantly to social change in the Haya community particularly among the women. As a former Swedish missionary among the Haya, she discusses conversion from a social-theological perspective, presenting a set of aspects of women as actors in response to Christianity and social change. She makes a case that when missionary Christianity was introduced along with western education; women were exposed to education which gave them social freedom, based on privileges that education could provide.

Larson sees also that the East African Revival provided an equal opportunity for women to serve the church. She contends that revival, among other things, provided a better division of labour in the church and at home if both husband and wife were part of the revival. The Revival Movements, according to her, also protected women, as revivalists were not expected to send their wives away and take other wives. She also points out that the revival gave a religious legitimating to a radical break with customary marriage, and

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<sup>6</sup> For more discussions on cultural conversion and Christian conversion see chapter 2.8.3.

therefore it became a refuge for younger women who wished to escape unwanted marriages and sexual exploitation.

Larson, being one of the missionaries from the West, she doesn't seem to approach critically the missionaries' approach and methods of conversion among the Haya, but she contributes significantly in understanding conversion mainly from a social perspective. Conversion in this case is seen not only as a spiritual but also a socio-cultural power of transformation of human beings and the entire society.

However, on the other hand, Bishop Josiah Kibira (1974), a first Bishop among the Haya Lutherans and who later became a president of the Lutheran World Federation, in his book *Church, clan, and the world*, sees the missionary approach of conversion with critical eyes. His views on missionary Christianity conversion are both critical and appreciative. Kibira, while admitting that the missionaries exposed the Haya to the Gospel through which they discovered Christ, doesn't hesitate to see that missionary Christianity acted as a divisive factor whereby a new culture (western culture that was introduced with Christianity from the western countries) caused a confrontation with indigenous culture. Above all, he says, the foreign religion (missionary Christianity) endeavoured to replace indigenous religion and African culture.

In similar vein, other Haya pastors and theologians who did research on the western missionaries' conversion approach such as Professor Wilson Niwagila (1972; 1991) and Sylvester Kahakwa (2003; 2010) maintain that the missionary conversion approach and methods served as instruments for social change and less for religious change, hence they didn't adequately touch the hearts of converts in the way foreign missionaries would have expected.

Niwagila (1972) in his Master's Thesis on *A sociological-theological study of the Haya "tribe" in Tanzania* discussed how Christianity was introduced among the Haya by early missionaries by discouraging traditional practices among the new converts. These, he says, were considered devilish by missionaries on the assertion that they could prevent

one from entering into the kingdom of God. Niwagila goes further by saying that education that was provided by missionaries was western oriented and it played a key role in new converts breaking away from their culture and traditional beliefs. He mentions that at that time new converts were to be baptized with European names which were thought to be Christian names.

In his later work, *From the catacomb to a Self-government Church*, (Niwagila 1991) writing from a mission historiography approach, despite acknowledging the contribution of some of the methods of conversion like schools and hospitals as important for the development of the Haya in terms of social change, he still maintains that these strategies were used to break the new Haya converts away from their own socio-religious system into western civilization. Nonetheless, Niwagila observes that some missionaries like Johansen from Germany had a positive view of African culture. Niwagila in this case helps us to see that not all early missionaries had a negative approach to African cultures hence avoiding generalization in dealing with the missionary Christianity conversion approach.

Other scholarly research that touches on conversion among the Haya in relation to the missionary Christianity approach includes the recent work of Kahakwa (2010), *A Haya-African interpretation of the Christian concept of God*. Although his main concern in this book is about the Haya interpretation of the Christian concept of God that emerged through the Haya interaction with the missionary Christianity's missionaries, it has contributed by offering some of the missionaries' conversion methods. These methods included conversion of a king, supplying schools and hospitals and he indicates how these served as instruments of conversion.

Within the framework of the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism, Kahakwa also attempted to investigate levels of interactions between missionary Christianity's missionaries and the Haya in general, and Haya converts in particular. He has revealed the fact that Haya Christians had responded positively to Christian conversion, but later on an implicit basis interpreted Christianity and its concept of God according to their primal



religious experience of God and religion. Kahakwa's submission in his work implies that understanding of the Christian concept of God didn't solely depend on missionaries' transmission, but the Haya cultural context contributed to the indigenization of the concept of God that makes sense to them from their conceptual frame of reference.

Based on the early missionary Christianity approach of Christianisation and the Haya responses to Christianity on conversion, Kibira (1974), Mushemba (1979), Sundkler (1980) and Niwagila (1991) see that the Revival Movement that came later after the western missionaries' activity in among the Haya helped to remedy some shortcomings of the missionary conversion approach. Through this movement the Haya Christians experienced conversion that, to a greater extent, impacted their spiritual and social life within their community and to the country of Tanzania and beyond.

### **1.9.3 The Contribution of East African Revival to the Hayas' Christian Life and Conversion**

Most of the scholarly literature available that touches conversion within East African Revival admits that the role played by the Revival towards the growth of the church in Buhaya (Haya area) is enormous. It is regarded by both missionaries and the indigenous scholars as an indigenous movement that helped towards indigenizing the Haya Christian conversion.

Bishop Kibira (1974), who was also a member of East African Revival but also critical of some of its theology and practice, regarded the East African Revival Movement, which came after missionary Christianity conversion in the early start of the mission work in Buhaya, as a contribution to the indigenous Church's theology. He understood East African Revival as "God's answer to the unconverted, beginning of the great part of the church and of some clergy". Through it, Kibira says, the African church has built faith in God and thus has become a missionary church for Christ. To him, Revival is the very life of the church in Buhaya.

In the same line of thought Bishop Sundkler as Swedish missionary (1980) in his book, *Bara Bukoba*, went a step further by seeing very clearly that East African Revival was a typically indigenous movement that indigenized conversion. As we will discuss in more detail in chapter five (5:4:2:2), Sundkler who was not only a missionary but a first bishop in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania among the Haya, admitted that the initial attraction of the Haya to conversion was mainly due to the accessibility of western education and what was regarded as development – *maendeleo* – rather than religious motives. So according to him the Revival Movement was necessary for conveying a conversion that would be relevant to the Haya people. On this note, Sundkler views the Revival Movement as an African response towards indigenizing conversion.

Earlier, Bishop S. Mushemba (1979) in his Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) paper, *The history of the Revival Movement in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, North Western Diocese analysis and evaluation*, from a historiographical perspective analysed and evaluated the role of the East Africa Revival in the church in Buhaya, Northwest Tanzania. He points out how the Revival Movement impacted the life of Christians during the missionary Christianity whereby baptized Christians were being challenged by revivalists to be “saved” (reconverted).

In the same way later, Niwagila (1991) argued that the East African Revival Movement which challenged the missionary Christianity’s conversion that was based on the classical doctrines. To the revivalists, Niwagila says, sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist have no meaning unless one repents of one’s sins and receives Jesus Christ as one’s personal saviour. For those revivalist churches sacraments such as Baptism and Holy Communion were irrelevant if one was not revived and repented of one’s sins in a way that revivalists understood it. He finally points out that this revival contributed much to the rapid growth of Christianity in Buhaya.

Both Mushemba (1979) and Niwagila (1991) see that the evangelization in Buhaya was dynamically accelerated by the indigenous revivalists, and many church workers such as

evangelists, pastors and bishops are the offspring of that revival. So to them, according to their research, Haya indigenous Christians under the influence of this revival were the agents of mission for their fellow Hayas' conversion. However, this doesn't mean that the role of missionaries' approach in conversion in the area should be underestimated. I would immediately agree with Bishop Kibira (1974) who earlier maintained that, whatever western missionaries' mistakes might have been during early missionization to the Haya community, they brought the Bible (the Gospel) to the Haya and through it they have discovered Christ.

Other recent research that has been conducted among the Haya in the area of conversion and revival includes the work of Pastor Simon Kibigumila (2005) in his Doctoral research on *Conversion and revival: A critical analysis of the Revival Movement among Lutheran Christians in the North Western Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania*. In his work he critically analyses the understanding and practice of conversion among the Lutheran Christians, including East African revivalists (*abalokole*), in their Christian life. His aim was to provide a new pastoral understanding of how to help people understand deeply the transformation that comes with conversion. Based on the findings, he contends that Lutherans in the Northwestern Diocese understand conversion and revival differently, so to some conversion means salvation, being born again, and others associate salvation with revival and spiritual experience, and to some it implies knowing Jesus Christ. He argues that East African Revival has played a significant role in challenging the Diocese to revisit its traditional understanding of conversion.

Although Kabigumila's interest is not in conversion in missionary Christianity's approach and impacts on Haya Christian life, his work contributes to our understanding of how the Haya understand conversion differently from the formal conversion presented in missionary Christianity. He shows how East African Revival challenges traditional understanding. This, one may argue, calls for an approach that will indigenize conversion among the Haya.

Along this line of thought, other research done in the context of Tanzania on conversion is the work of Bishop Owdenberg Mdegella (2005). Mdegella in his Doctoral dissertation on *Authenticity of Christian conversion in the African context*, writing from Hehe context in the southern part of Tanzania, generally contends that Christian conversion in the African context has been authentic because of the translatability of the event of Christ. He argues from a missiological perspective, but also draws on social anthropological, systematic theology and historiographical approaches (2005:17). The event of Christ is defined as the incarnation, the suffering and death on the cross and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Through these events God made the calling of all humanity including Africans, for transformation unto salvation. He put it clearly that God is perceived as the originator and initiator of Christian conversion, while human beings and their culture are perceived as recipients and channels of God's mission. He therefore asserts that the combination of the concepts of evangelical preparation, the translatability of the event of Christ and the theology of the cross are the basis of the theological deliberations of his thesis.

Mdegella's dissertation contends further that with the proclamation of the Gospel Christians moved together with the wave of modernization. Due to the continuity of translation, Christianity strengthened its influence and became the Word of God in the Hehe vernacular. In that way Christianity was naturally indigenized and continually contextualized in the Hehe culture and belief was thus deeply entrenched in their daily life and could be rightly described as renewed Hehe (African) Religion. Therefore, the Hehe accepted Christianity because God appeared in the human (Hehe) nature through Jesus Christ and dwelt in the Hehe community and shared everything with them. God through Jesus Christ participated in the daily suffering. He was humiliated and became vulnerable and weak. Through the translation of the Word, God was no longer the ineffable beyond.

Mdellega's arguments are based on four lines of thoughts that are posed by critiques of the authenticity of African conversion which are summarized as follows:

1. Africans should have remained with African Religion instead of converting to Christianity because in African Religion they lived a more authentic life than in Christianity.
2. The conversion of Africans from African Religion to Christianity cannot be authentic because Christianity was established under imperialism and colonialism.
3. Most Africans converted to Christianity because they were seeking alleviation from poverty; some were seeking food aid against hunger and whatever western missionaries could offer. Under such circumstances conversion couldn't be considered as authentic.
4. Christianization of Africans through western missionaries was detrimental to culture, religion and African identity, thus establishing the kind of Christianity that is a mere replica of European Christianity and civilization. Such Christianity must also lack authenticity.

Dealing critically with the above lines of thoughts, Mdegella argues that the Hehe believed prior to Christianization and how the encounter of that kind of belief with Christian faith brought forth an effect of cross-fertilization that became instrumental in opening the door for Christianization. The criticism against the authenticity of African conversion, according to Mdegella, might apply to any time, people and place, but unfortunately they have been directed towards Africa. Therefore his thesis is an attempt to respond to these lines of thought from a very specific context of the Hehe people in Iringa, Southern Tanzania.

Mdegella, just like other African scholars such as Sanneh (1990; 1993; 2003), Bediako (1995; 1996 and Walls (1996; 2010) see that African Christianity, despite the missionaries' shortcomings of their approach with regards to their attitude towards African culture, was indigenized in African soil due to its translatability. However, I assumed that this approach doesn't intend to limit the indigenization of Christianity in Africa within the East Africa Revival Movement and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. However, Balcomb (2010), in his work, *A hundred miles wide, but only a few inches deep!?* – *Sounding the depth of Christian Faith in Africa*, has concluded by

arguing that these spirituality notions, that have been seen by some African scholars as resonant with African worldview, could themselves be seen as translation of the message of the Gospel in Africa.

Mdegella's approach and his research findings and other aforementioned research among the Haya around conversion and revival are very helpful in laying a foundation for our research with regards to how Haya Christians strive to deepen and indigenize their conversion in revivals and other forms of Christianity that resonate their African religious-cultural worldview, as will be discussed at length in chapter five.

The questions, nevertheless, remain as: Has conversion among the Haya Christians been fully indigenized by the translatability of the Gospel through East African and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity? What about those who don't identify themselves with this movement? Is their conversion authentic? Is missionary Christianity conversion totally wrong? Can the church find a model of conversion approach that can accommodate both missionary Christianity approach and conversion in other forms of Christianity so that Haya Christians will feel fully at home with their conversion without necessarily leaving their churches or deviating from their traditional teaching on conversion? These questions, to my knowledge, have not been adequately dealt with in previous research. In this research, therefore, among other issues, I will try to address these questions in chapter five and six.

### **1.10 Research Design: Methodology and Methods**

There is a relationship between research design and research methodology. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:72) research design is intrinsically tied to the methods used for research. Whereas research is a systematic way of investigating a certain problem, research methodology is defined as a science of studying how it is being done (Kothari 2004:8). Research design, therefore, according to Kothari (2004:31) is "the conceptual structure within which research is conducted."

Babbie and Mouton (2001:74) further define research design as “a plan or a blueprint of how you intend conducting the research”. Morton helps to distinguish between research design and research methodology, two terms that often confuse, by employing the analogy of building a house. The research design is compared with the architectural plan or blueprint of the house and research methodology is related to the means, methods or construction process that you employ to have your house completely built. Examples of these processes are such as “laying the foundation, bricklaying, plastering and so on” (Mouton 2001: 74-75).

The research design of this study is aligned with the research problem and questions with regards to the theological and sociological dimensions of conversion approach in Haya Christian life as influenced by the missionary Christianity approach and methods during early Christianization. For that matter, the study is an interdisciplinary missiological research that falls under the qualitative research category. Qualitative research is defined as a broad methodological category which encompasses a variety of approaches to interpretive research (Enoch Wan 2003:2). The importance of qualitative assessment in this research lies in the fact that it deals with the assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour in a literary study of foreign missionaries and Haya Christian converts during early Christianization of Northwest Tanzania and their later responses at different levels (Kothari 2004:3-5), as will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

Richard R. Osmer (2008:4, 8) emphasizes that in order to understand and be able to explain why some patterns and dynamics in the field of research occur the way they do, we need to draw on theories of the arts and social sciences. For this reason in this study I will apply what Professor Enoch Wan (2003)<sup>7</sup> terms as integrative missiological research

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<sup>7</sup>Professor Enoch Wan (2003) in *Rethinking Missiological research methodology: Exploring a new direction* provides an invaluable contribution to missiological research. In his paper, he explores various categories of missiological research and suggests that integrative missiological research theory and methodology have been a recent and relevant method of research in missiological discipline. He further points out that “in the theological world, the convergence of social theory and theological methodologies is becoming a necessity”. He further argues that “in missiological terms there is still a need for an integrated interdisciplinary missiological research that takes into account the dimension that common grace allows (science, and the social sciences), biblical Christianity requires and competent Christian scholarship offers for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God by fulfilling the missionary mandate of evangelism and discipleship”. To verify his submission, Wan cites some prominent scholars such as Charles Kraft (1979,

theory and methodology. I will employ the integrated interdisciplinary missiological research that applies the convergence of missiological and sociological theory (Wan 2003). In this dissertation the theory of structuration by a famous sociologist, Anthony Giddens, will be used as a conceptual framework towards analyzing and understanding conversion dynamics in both missionary Christianity and post missionary Christianity and their responses to missionary conversion methods and approach in the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania among the Haya Christian life. Structuration theory offers an adequate account of social change that can be of importance in analyzing conversion from a social perspective (Chester 2003:4).

In chapter two (2:10:2), the theory of structuration is discussed at length. Nevertheless, it is important to point out at this stage that structuration theory is a sociological theory that can provide a helpful framework for analyzing some conversion dynamics, for conversion is not only a theological but also a sociological phenomenon<sup>8</sup>. Structuration theory has been regarded as a meta-theory rather than a domain-theory that can be proved or disproved. Being a non-positivist social theory in a qualitative paradigm, it is not intended to generate a testable hypothesis. It is a general theory that can be applied in various studies (Yates 1997:181). Giddens (1991:213) suggests that this theory can be applied to analyze human actions, social institutions and the interaction between actions and institutions and he suggests that it should be regarded as “sensitizing devices to be used in a selective way in thinking about research questions or interpreting findings”, in this case missiological studies along conversion.

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1980, 1983), David J. Bosch (1991) and Mark Woodhouse (1996) who apply integration research methods by integrating several disciplines in their academic works. Bosch (1991), for example, in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission* used a model of philosophy of science, particularly Hans Kuhn's, *The structure of scientific revolution* and Kung's paradigm shifts in the history of Christianity, to understand the development of theology of mission. He finally concludes by pointing out that interdisciplinary, integrative research will be the direction of missiological methodology at the end of the twentieth century leading to the new millennium (Wan 2003:8-10).

<sup>8</sup> See details on conversion as a theological and social reality as discussed under 2.6.



### **9.10.1 Data from Written Sources**

The research is mainly conceptual in nature. It uses literature and other documents found in libraries and online accessed through the internet. Materials used include both published books and unpublished documents. These data will comprise some records written during earlier interaction between Haya and missionaries and those written later. The literature includes both local and international books and articles. Local written sources include the works of Haya theologians, clergy and laity and some missionaries who worked among the Haya (these include the works of Sundkler and Birgitta). Some of other missionaries voices are presented within the literatures consulted. Although some local books used in this research may appear to be of some years back, they are too important to be left out as they represent strong local voices in the field of this study.

Other materials consulted in this research include church hymnals, the liturgy and catechisms. Books, articles, journals and academic papers have also provided more written data. Many of them were collected from Makumira University library in Tanzania and Stellenbosch University library and its cluster libraries in South Africa. The international materials are also used as references to support local views and findings.

Some first generation converts and later converts within both East African Revival and Charismatic-Pentecostal form of Christianity will be presented from the literatures available. As stated above under research design and methodology, and as will be also discussed in chapter 2 .10.2, their “re-conversion” narrative stories and other written works on Haya first experience of conversion within missionary Christianity and their later “re-conversion” within East African and Charismatic-Pentecost Revivals will be analysed and interpreted within structuration theoretical framework.

### **1.11 Research Organization**

The research has been divided into seven chapters, chapter one serves as a background of the study with regards to conversion approach and methods in missionary Christianity among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania. It seeks to broadly survey the justification and rationale of research based on conversion and critical assessment of the methods and the

impact on Haya Christian life. The first chapter raises key questions, hypotheses, delimitations, and lays a methodology with which to carry out the research.

Chapter two discusses the theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion. It lays a general conceptual foundation for a better understanding of conversion from an interdisciplinary approach. Conversion from biblical-missiological, theological, anthropological and sociological perspectives has been investigated. Various conversion patterns, models, typologies and theories of conversion have been identified. It was ascertained from this part of the study that conversion is a complex phenomenon and seeking for a general understanding of it is unintelligible, hence a contextual understanding and definition of it should be an inevitable undertaking. From this background a definition of conversion that takes into account people's religio-cultural context that does not ignore the past, but looks at it in a new way was developed, and a theory of structuration was adapted as a relevant framework for our research analysis.

In chapter three, drawing on some insights from anthropology of religion, sociology, missiology, particularly theology of mission and theology of religions, a study of a Haya religion and culture in context is explored. It discusses the Hayas' life in general and religious life in particular. The chapter investigates the Haya concept of God, holism and community life and how this shaped their cosmological spirituality and worldview. The Haya religion and spirituality is discussed in relation to how this shaped their reception, comprehension and praxis of conversion that would make sense to them in accordance with their religio-cultural frame of reference.

The chapter demonstrates how Haya traditional religion and spirituality that was embedded within their religio-cultural life prepared them for Christian conversion. It has been argued that the Haya traditional religion served as *praeparatio evangelica* among the Haya, which could serve as point of contact between Christianity and African religion, yet affirm the power of transformation by the Gospel as an element that was ignored by most western missionaries. Nevertheless, in this chapter it is argued that the internalization and assimilation of Christianity did not only depend on the methods of western missionaries'

conversion but, perhaps to a large extent, the religious fertile soil that was already cultivated within the Haya religio-cultural context as *praeparatio evangelica* played a significant role in the later response of Haya converts in their endeavours to indigenize Christianity.

Chapter four explores conversion methods that were applied by western missionaries during missionization of the Haya people. Based on African missiological literature and a missionary historiography approach, the chapter briefly outlines various missionaries who missionized this part of Africa. The missionaries' background is a context for our understanding of the factors that informed their approach and methods used to convert the Haya people during their efforts of evangelization. The chapter also analyzes and evaluates the missionary Christianity's conversion methods and approach to the Haya people and their impact on the contemporary Christian life. The positive and negative impact of the missionaries' approach is pointed out and a conclusion is reached based on this impact.

In chapter five we investigate the Haya responses towards missionary Christianity's conversion methods and approach. These responses are categorized on two levels. The first level is the earlier response and the second one is the later response. The earlier response is based on the Hayas' uncritical reception of missionary Christianity upon the introduction of Christianity among them and the later response is centred on their reaction to their conceptual creativity in attempting to indigenize conversion that resonates their religio-cultural worldview. The chapter attempts to answer the basic research question as to why Christians who are converted according to their churches' orthodoxy within the mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania find this conversion inadequate and therefore opt for another conversion advocated within the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity.

The chapter briefly unpacks the missionary and post missionary orthodox teachings of conversion within the Lutheran Church and how the presentation of it by missionary Christianity failed to make sense to the ordinary Haya Christians. The influence of Haya

traditional religion and cultural spirituality on their understanding of conversion is also discussed. Eventually the place of the East African Revival Movement and the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in indigenizing missionaries' Christianity conversion through its theology, structuring and shaping Haya conversion is also unpacked.

In chapter six we evaluate and analyse the missionary conversion methods and approach within the framework of structuration theory. Based on findings, it is argued that the Haya religio-cultural context and worldview constitutes social systems and structures in which Haya converts within their mainline churches draw on rules and resources in realizing conversion that makes sense to their own world. The Haya understanding of conversion therefore is not only determined by the missionary Christianity methods and approach, or by the catechetical teachings that embody the theology of conversion as presented by missionaries, but also by social systems and structures where Haya Christians belong which to a certain degree shape and structure Christian conversion within the Haya cultural system.

East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity attempts to provide an arena for indigenizing conversion among the Haya as issues related to the Haya ontological worldview are addressed. Under this chapter I also suggest for an integrative model of conversion in our contemporary missionary engagement. The model is regarded as a relevant approach in effecting conversion that takes into account the necessity of harnessing wisdom and spirituality from a Haya traditional religious worldview, integrating some key religious elements from the missionary Christianity conversional model, East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic movements without ignoring modern ways of life, through a mutual dialogue.

Chapter seven marks the conclusion of the dissertation. The chapter summarizes the research findings, gives recommendations and suggestions. It is also pointed out that for the Lutheran church in Northwest Tanzania to remain relevant to its people, the church must not only be critical of herself but also be open to learn from Haya African Traditional Religion and other forms of Christianity through which people are

experiencing conversion that appears to indigenize their conversion. The future research is finally suggested and some concluding remarks are drawn at the end of the chapter.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

In chapter one we have laid a foundation for the dissertation that serves as an introduction of the entire work. Problems that instigated the research, research questions, methods and methodology, hypotheses, focus and delimitation, preliminary book reviews, the significance of the study and the outline of the research topics have been stated.

The next topic will deal with the theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion. It seeks to lay a theoretical conceptual foundation for the general and broader understanding of conversion. It conceptualizes conversion through drawing some insights on biblical-missiological, theological, anthropological and sociological perspective. The chapter will, among other things, identify some patterns, models, typology and theories of conversion. It will suggest a suitable social theory as a framework for conceptualizing and analyzing conversion from both theological and sociological perspective, as conversion is considered to be not only a theological but a sociological phenomenon as well.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL SCAFFOLDING MATRIX OF CONVERSION

#### 2.1 Introduction

In chapter two I construct the theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion by exploring *Missio Dei* theory of conversion, some social theories applied in conversion, typology, patterns and models of conversion. I set out to lay a general theoretical conceptual foundation for a better understanding of conversion from an interdisciplinary approach based on biblical-missiological, theological, anthropological and sociological perspectives as it is believed that conversion is not only spiritual, but also a sociological reality.

It is assumed that each level of this discussion will be dealt with bearing in mind the possible methods that could be applied in the Haya socio-cultural context and their impacts on the converts as influenced by such understanding. This, in the next chapters, will help us to see how missionary Christianity understood conversion and which methods and patterns they applied and why, and what the impacts of the methods were on the Haya Christian life.

It is argued in this chapter that conversion is a complex phenomenon and seeking for a general understanding of it is unintelligible, hence a contextual understanding and definition of it should be an inevitable undertaking. From this background a definition of conversion that takes into account people's religio-cultural context that does not ignore the past, but looks at it in a new way is developed. For that matter, in order to engage this discussion, my working definition of conversion that takes into account the reality of both continuity and discontinuity is adopted. In this study, therefore, I shall define conversion as:

A conscious transformative process of a person whereby after encountering a new reality – in this case Christian faith – as presented to him in a way that portrays faithfully the work of God in Jesus Christ through His earthly ministry, death and resurrection as true indication of His *agape* to a sinful humanity for His salvation,

one undergoes a spiritual transformative change of perspective which does not necessarily mean a rejection or negation of the past or previously held values but looking at them in a new way.

In other words, conversion in this work will mean a conscious spiritual transformative change whereby one views life in new perception in relation to new faith and life in Jesus Christ within one's social-cultural setting (cf. Bosch1991:126).

Based on this, conversion in Africa in general and among the Haya in particular should take into consideration the African spirituality and religious worldview and at the same time be perceived within their socio-cultural context. In line with these views, Faith Lugazia (2010:15) in her PhD dissertation *Towards an African inculturation Bible Pneumatology: A response to the rise of new Pentecostalism in Tanzanian Christianity*, has argued that:

African spirituality and worldviews should be seen as a fertile ground for the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By tending to ignore its contribution to African Christianity, mainline Christianity in Africa remains, for many Africans – including those who attend their churches – alien to their experience of God.

It is further argued that conversion in Missionary Christianity, Northwest Tanzania as far as the topic of our dissertation is concerned, can well be explained within the wider range of understanding of Christian conversion.<sup>9</sup> In this chapter it is expected that some of the research questions with regard to conversion raised in the introductory chapter will be addressed and a social theory of structuration is adopted as analytical framework.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Discussing the concept of conversion in this study, more particularly in this chapter, I limit myself to Christian conversion since conversion if not described within the limit of its context, can be misleading. The term conversion is complex, general and vague. It can generally refer to a number of things that include: change or transforming a certain object from one form into the other. For instance people talk of conversion of money, conversion of raw material into energy, etcetera. Conversion can also refer to social change from a certain kind of system of life or belief to another, for instance conversion from capitalism to communalism, from addiction to alcohol to a sober life, from Judaism to Confucianism, from Islam to Judaism, among others. See for example, V. Bailey Gillespie, *The dynamics of religious conversion, identity and transformation* (1991:12). Gillespie gives a wide range of clarification on what the term conversion can mean from various disciplines and contexts (cf. Derek J. Tidball, *The social construction of evangelical conversion* 2006: 84).

<sup>10</sup> cf. Chapter two (2.10.2), also chapter one (1:10).

## 2.2 Towards Conceptualization of Conversion: General Definition

To start with, it is better to deal with the question of what conversion means in an interdisciplinary research. Religious conversion according to most scholars is a complex phenomenon. Rambo (1993:165,170), for example, makes it clear that “conversion is a complex, multifaceted process involving personal, cultural, social and religious dimensions.” His conclusion on what conversion is all about with regards to its complexity summarizes his general understanding of it. Rambo’s book (1993:176) concludes:

Conversion is paradoxical. It is elusive. It is inclusive. It destroys and it saves. Conversion is sudden and it is gradual. It is created totally by the action of God, and it is created by the action of humans. Conversion is personal and communal, private and public. It is a solution of conflict and an empowerment to go into the world and to confront, if not create, conflict. Conversion is an event and a process. It is an ending and a beginning. It is final and open ended. Conversion leaves us devastated – and transformed.

Gaventa (1986:ix), a New Testament scholar, integrating conversion from a perspective of social psychology and comparative religion, also admits the complexity and varied ways of understanding conversion. She then adds that the term conversion “has been differently understood, ranging in meaning from a change of religious belief and practice to a renewal of faith and devotion [even] within a religious tradition”. On the other hand, Chester (2003:xiii), who also integrates Pauline theology and social theory of structuration in the study of conversion, views conversion as not only a complex phenomenon but also a controversial and unavoidable feature of a contemporary society.

Achtemeier and others (1971:197), in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, summarize the reason for this complexity in relation to biblical meaning when they assert:

Conversion is a concept whose biblical meaning is especially difficult to understand because of many connotations associated with the term as a rallying point of various contemporary religious groups. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the realities associated with the concept in biblical writings cannot be subsumed adequately under a single lexicographical entry.



Mdegella (2005:108) advocates the use of the term conversion in a specified form because he feels that it is complex and can sometimes lead to confusion.

Thus, this observation suggests that scholars have not reached agreement of having a single and a general definition of the term religious conversion due to its complexity and its varied application in various traditions. We can summarise that the meaning of the term “conversion” has been articulated and expounded differently by its proponents with regards to the context and perspective from which one writes. However, scholars agree on one thing, that it is not easy to have a general understanding of the term religious conversion, for what is termed “conversion” varies from one religion to another (Hanciles 2004:157; Rambo 1993:3-5; Chester 2003:319-320).

In this vein people like Rambo have gone to the extent of suggesting that conversion is what a group or person says it is when he says: “varied use of the word by many people in many situations leads one to believe that it means just what a given group wants it to mean, neither more nor less” (Rambo 1993: 3; cf. Chester 2003; Paloutzian 1999; Kraft 2002). Furthermore, Hanciles (2004:158) makes it clear that what is termed as genuine conversion differs from one tradition to another. In order to do away with the ambiguity that may arise from the definition of it, he also succumbs to Rambo’s statement: “conversion is what a group or a person say it is” (Rambo 1993:3,7).

Consequently, scholars like Stephen Neil, a renowned missiologist, have gone a little bit far to suggest that due to these conflicting opinions and controversy which the concept of conversion evokes, it might be well to avoid the word altogether (1957: 35-52)<sup>11</sup>. Neil’s view may sound as an absolute solution but, in my opinion, his idea in this regard is subject to criticism. His argument may seem to be more extreme and based on a general discourse that seeks to avoid complexity, but it really doesn’t solve the problem. How can one, for example, avoid talking of conversion when it is a reality in religious circles? His suggestion could probably be of more relevance only if the practice of conversion is also

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Neil seems to favour sticking to the defining element of conversion as change. Change in the personality’s structure or in the surrender of human will, as ego is displaced from the centre and replaced by the living God. For him the change may be realized extremely gradually or may be sudden.

to be avoided altogether. But as long as conversion itself continues to exist in religious circles, we need to continue to seek for a proper term that suits the contextual meaning. In this case, I would rather support Chester's (2003:319) views when he suggests that: "If there are significant differences in the way conversion is understood even within a single tradition, then a quest for a universal and inclusive understanding or definition of conversion is unlikely to be helpful." Chester's opinion suggests that we should not seek a universal definition, but rather a contextual definition.

On the other hand, Rambo (1993:3,2) provides a clue on how it may be defined as a religious conversion in general terms when he argues that religious conversion means "turning from and to new religious groups, ways of life systems of belief and models of relating to a deity or the nature of reality." It may also mean a simple change from the absence of faith to a faith commitment or from a religious alliance with one faith system to another within a single faith system. This being a general definition of conversion, we turn to a specific understanding of conversion from selected biblical-theological perspective. The Bible forms a base for our understanding of conversion from a biblical-missiological perspective.

### **2.3 Theology of Christian Conversion: Understanding of Conversion from a Biblical -Missiological Perspective**

In trying to explore the biblical theological and contextual meaning of Christian conversion, I concur with Walsh and Middleton (2008:196), when they point out that "any understanding of Christian conversion must begin with the Bible". This is because understanding of conversion from a missiological perspective demands a specific context (Bosch 1991:20-22). Although biblical understanding doesn't capture the single word conversion, some words used may help us to understand conversion in the light of biblical perspective. Thus, despite the various interpretations and definitions of the term conversion as it has been expounded and articulated by different scholars of conversion, the understanding of it, however, needs to be explored from its biblical background. We start with the understanding of conversion as presented in the Old Testament, then we will look at it in the New Testament as well.

### 2.3.1 Conversion in the Old Testament

To start with the Old Testament, conversion is expressed primarily by two Hebrew words: *nhm*, which means to neglect or to be sorry. The second word used is *sub*, which means to turn, return or repent (Walsh & Middleton 2008:196; Rambo 1993:3; Loffler 1967:5). Furthermore, Walsh and Middleton (2008:196) continue to point out that the term *Sub* is very important in the Bible for it is used hundreds of times signifying a change of heart. This term was used to call the people or Israelites to turn away from the ways of sin or evil into God's ways and holiness. The term *sub* was mostly used to address the people of God – Israelites – seldom to those outside the covenant, that is, the Gentiles (Gillespie 1991:26-27; Hanciles 2004:157; Kraft 2002:333). Emphasizing whether the term used for conversion was not limited to the unbelievers (the Gentiles) alone but also to the Israelites, the chosen people of God, Hanciles (2004:157) maintains that the biblical term refers to two contextual meanings. In the first place it refers to the person or people in the Jewish community who repent after violating fundamental principles of God's covenant, but people who were outside the covenant could also be incorporated in the community of faith.

As will be discussed further on in this chapter, the general idea learned from such an Old Testament understanding sheds lights on the view that conversion needs to be both intrareligious and interreligious. This is justified by the fact that conversion in Old Testament times applied not only to the Gentiles, but also to the Jews. In today's context unlike the way it has more often been thought of, conversion, apart from being for inviting the unbelievers to become a believing community, it should also apply to the believing community as well.

The Old Testament concept of conversion suggests that believers in Christian churches need also be reminded to constantly turn to God as the way of internalizing their faith in Christ. Members in the church should undergo what may be termed intrareligious conversion – conversion within the church, which does not necessarily involve moving away from their denominations. Rambo refers to this pattern of conversion as intensification of faith (1993:39).

### 2.3.1 Conversion in the New Testament

As we come to the understanding of conversion from a New Testament perspective, we find that there are also two Greek words used to describe what we refer to as conversion. The first term is *epistrophe*, which means turning around or reversing the direction or going in the opposite direction<sup>12</sup>. In Christian context, the term denotes one turning from the way of sin to the way of Jesus (Walsh & Middleton, 2008:196; Kraft 2002:333).

Another Greek term, however, from which conversion is translated is *metanoia* (repentance), implying a change of mind. Gillespie (1991:26) elaborates: “*Metanoia* seems to have several connotations of conversion including a change of mind after reflection; a going beyond the present attitude, status, or outlook; or repentance, which is also its translation”. *Metanoia* also implies turning, but as Peace (2004:8) puts it “... it focuses on the inner, cognitive decision to make a break with the past (cf. Gaventa 1986:3).

*Metanoia* expresses the idea of repentance as an alteration in the total moral attitude. It has to do with a profound change in one’s life direction and it is a conversion that affects one’s life’s conduct (Strahler 2010:21). Most scholars of conversion agree that *metanoia*, however, must be combined with *pistis* (faith) in order to bring about conversion (*epistrophe*) (see for example, Peace 2004:8; Walsh & Middleton 2008:196). Grudem (1994:713) emphasises that faith and repentance are two important aspects that must go together in order to effect conversion.

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<sup>12</sup> Montgomery defines conversion from its etymological understanding whereby he derives the Latin words *verto* (versus), meaning “turn”, and *con* (cum) which here has an intensive or strengthening function, and is perhaps best translated as “completely/thoroughly/altogether.” Conversion, then, according to Montgomery, has the etymological meaning of “a thorough turning”, or “a turning completely around.” See also Snow and Machalek, in their work, “The sociology of conversion” in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.10, 1984, pp. 167-190. For Snow and Machalek, the biblical Greek words: *epistrophein*, *strephein* and *metanoia* indicate a dramatic change, a turning from one viewpoint to another, or a return to principles from which one has strayed.

In the New Testament teachings the Greek word *pistis*, which means to believe what someone says. It has to do with accepting a statement, particularly of a religious nature, as true. It has to do with having a personal trust and not a mere credence or belief (Erickson 1985:939). Furthermore, Grudem (1994:709) argues that, “true saving faith includes knowledge, approval and personal trust.” In a more biblical-theologically sound view of conversion, repentance and faith go together. From this observation we therefore sum up with the words of Strahler (2010:23) when he writes: “Conversion in the biblical understanding refers to a person accepting a new set of beliefs and switching his or her religious allegiance to Jesus Christ as his or her supreme authority, as Lord. It means to repent from sin and to put one’s faith in Christ as saviour”. As we strive to define conversion which is theologically and contextually sound with a contextual definition, it is of importance, however, to understand what may be termed as Christian conversion.

## **2.4 Defining Christian Conversion**

Having briefly explored the Greek words from which the word conversion stems as far as the New Testament is concerned, we have to ask ourselves: what is Christian conversion then? Again, most conversion scholars believe that Christian conversion, just like conversion in general, has also not been easy to define. Richard N. Longenecker (1977:xi) for example, denotes that “understanding Christian conversion ... has often been difficult”. The reason he gives is that Christian conversion “has been analyzed from a comparative religious perspective and social-psychology approach.” Nonetheless, it is important to confine ourselves to the theological definition, as has been stated earlier.

Therefore, to understand Christian conversion from a biblical-theological perspective, Gaventa (1986:1) provides a helpful general metaphor of conversion when she says that conversion involves a change from “darkness to light”. She adds:

In Acts 26:18 Paul explains to Agrippa that his own mission was to preach to Gentiles, that they might “turn from darkness to light.” First Peter 2:9 recalls conversion as God’s call “out of darkness into the marvellous light”. Paul may have conversion in mind when he writes, “For it is he God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2Cor. 4:6). For all of these

writers, conversion involves a movement so radical that only the image of darkness and light can capture it.

It is obvious that Gaventa sums up conversion from various New Testament biblical citations into the metaphorical image of darkness and light proposed by Paul. To convert, in other words, is to move from spiritual darkness to a spiritual light. Gaventa, moreover, sees Christian conversion as being able to bring to a convert a new life, transformed mind, a new community as well as a new perspective (1986:152). Moreover, Gaventa (1986:150) continues to provide a useful explanation that underscores the understanding of Christian conversion from a New Testament perspective when she says that “conversion in the New Testament requires the acknowledgement that Jesus is the obedient and chosen Messiah of God, and that acknowledgement in turn requires a life of obedience”. Life of obedience to converts entails a life of love and commitment to Jesus and service to Him and His community. It entails a life of discipleship to Christ and fellowship with one another, an aspect that reflects a new community of believers’ life that does not necessarily require one to completely negate the past, but draws resources from the past to make sense of the new life in Christ.

Richard Peace (2004:8) in his work, *Conflicting understanding of Christian conversion: A missiological challenge*, provides characteristics of what he sees as a Christian conversion. He writes:

Christian conversion is characterized by a decision (repentance) based on understanding (awareness, consciousness, conviction) to turn around from a life of sin (darkness, disobedience, waywardness) to the way of Jesus (light, God, holiness), with a resultant new way of living in the context of the kingdom of God.

He continues to say, “in theological terms, conversion is the human experience of salvation (vs. the inner reality of regeneration, which is the hidden work of God).” David Wells (1989:149)<sup>13</sup> provides a comprehensive explanation of what he sees as a genuine conversion in a theological sense when he states:

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<sup>13</sup> See also Gillespie (1991:249), *The dynamics of religious conversion: Identity and transformation*. Gillespie acknowledges that Well’s stress on conversion based on God’s interest in changing us in every aspect of our life – total transformation – is so powerful.

The test of conversion, then, is whether a sinner continues to see sin as displeasing to God and continues to turn from it, continues to seek Christ and trust him for life, forgiveness, grace, and guidance. It is whether believing in Christ leads to following him by denying ourselves and daily taking up our cross and following him, seeking his kingdom above our interests, loving and serving his people because of his love for us. It is whether the graces of Christian character begin to appear. It is whether we begin to learn how to live in God's world on his terms, recognizing him as a sovereign creator and sustainer of all, thankfully accepting from him the good gifts and experiences he gives us and accepting the disappointments with the kind of submission that can come only from a deep sense of his binding goodness. When conversion leads to love of God and his glory and a commitment to serve and honor him in all that we do, then the conversion is genuine. It is in these ways, the ways of a life of faith, that we are given the only evidence of the reality of a person's profession of faith.

We can therefore assert that conversion in a Christian-theological perspective primarily involves confession and repentance of sin and decision to live a life that is "holy" and acceptable to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is worthwhile, moreover, to point out that conversion in a missiological-*Missio Dei* perspective (Bosch 1991:389-393; Brian Stanley 2006:158) the observation and argument on conversion are critical. Stanley links what he calls "conversion to Christ" with the work of a human being and that of God through His Spirit. Studies of conversion in the New Testament, according to him, show clearly that conversion is not merely the work of a human being, be it a missionary or evangelist. The human being is an instrument of God to effect conversion to Christ.

Stanley (2006:158-159) argues that conversion to Christ cannot be reduced to the work of a human being only as far more than a human being is required. Emphasizing how conversion to Christ is the work of God through His spirit and that human beings are agents in God's economy, Stanley (2006:159) asserts:

... whatever validity social scientific analysis of conversion may possess in relation to the general phenomenon of conversion from one religion to another, Christian theology cannot rest content with any understanding of conversion to Christ as purely a matter of human agency, whether on the part of evangelist or the convert. The New Testament compels Christians to insist that *conversion to Christ*

is an act in which the agency of the holy spirit of God is primary and that of the evangelist and the convert merely secondary (2006:159).

Stanley's points of views are very important as they allude to the centrality of the work of God through His Spirit as an essential aspect in conversion from a *missio Dei* perspective that may sometimes be overlooked in trying to understand conversion theologically. It calls for humility in the human agency in effecting conversion, knowing that conversion is not primarily human work but God's work, even though both God and human beings are important in the realization of what may be seen as an authentic conversion – which Stanley refers to as “conversion to Christ”. Nonetheless, as shall be discussed later, conversion to Christ takes place in a social context that leads a convert to realize a conversion that is relevant to his socio-cultural worldview (Stanley 2006:169). In the following section we explore the question of what makes people converts.

## **2.5 Reasons for Conversion**

Why do people convert or what motivates people to convert? Is conversion necessary? Conversion motivation is multifaceted and can be discussed from various perspectives. Motivation may include religious, emotional and intellectual reasons. Although, Reinhold Strahler (2010:37), in *Coming to faith in Christ, understanding conversion*, agrees with these motives, he sees religious motives as the main motive for conversion. Rambo from a psychology of religion perspective, and Snow and Machelek from a sociological dimension, provide some clues in the discussion.

Rambo (1993:4) contends that, “there is a hunger within every human being for the kind of meaningfulness associated with new life, new love, and new beginnings. Religious conversion offers that hope and provides that reality to millions of people.” To him, human beings are fragile beings who confront the realities which include not only fears, but also doubts and dreams. He therefore believes that “religious conversion is one of humanity's ways of approaching its self-conscious predicament, of solving or resolving the mystery of human origins, meaning and destiny” (1993:2). He further asserts:



Through conversion an individual may gain some sense of ultimate worth, and may participate in a community of faith that connects him or her to both a rich past and an ordered and exciting present which generates a vision of the future that mobilizes energy and inspires confidence. Affiliating with a group and subscribing to a philosophy may offer nurture, guidance, a focus for loyalty, and a framework for action. Involvement in mystic, ritual, and symbolic systems gives life order and meaning. Sharing with those systems with like-minded people makes it possible to connect with other human beings on deeper intellectual and emotional levels.

Moreover, sociologists of religion like Snow and Machalek (1984:178) provide in a most detailed way, six reasons for conversion. These reasons are outlined as: psycho-physiological responses to coercion and induced stress, predisposing personality traits and cognitive orientations, situational factors that induce stress, predisposition to social tributes, a variety of social influences, and casual process explanations involving the confluence of a range of elements.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, conversion motives as pointed out by Rambo, Snow and Machalek depict conversion far more from socio-psychology lenses and less from the spiritual-theological dimension. They also seem to lack some empirical relevance to some other contexts such as in some parts of Africa where world religions fail to meet the expectations of African Christian converts, as pointed out above, and so they keep on moving from one religion or church to another searching for a relevant conversion or re-conversion.

Lazaro (1990:26), for example, did research in the northern part of Tanzania on why people move from one church to another, which according to Rambo (1993:13-14) is regarded as an institutional transition type of conversion. In his study on why people move from the Lutheran Church to other denominations, he points out that the major reason is related to how Christians understand conversion and so they search for conversion in other denominations in the assertion that there is no true conversion in the Lutheran church. According to Lazaro these people feel that the mainline churches like Lutheran, Anglican and others lack spirituality, which other churches like Pentecostals and the Charismatic movement offer.

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<sup>14</sup>For more details read Snow and Machalek, 1984 in *The sociology of conversion* pp. 178-1184.

Furthermore, Lugazia (2010:88), in her recent Doctoral research based on Tanzanian context among other things, discusses the reasons why people leave their former traditional churches and convert to new movement churches. She has pointed out that the reasons for moving is related to quenching their spiritual thirst. Most people when asked why they leave their former churches, answered because they were lacking something in their faith, they wanted to exercise spiritual gifts in a free way, they wanted to know more about Jesus, they wanted to increase their Bible knowledge, they wanted to learn more about the Holy Spirit, or they wanted to express their faith in a more joyful way, things which their traditional churches do not adequately offer.

This kind of tendency has been noted in some parts of the world as well. Writing from the context of England, Golden Lynch (2006:32) points out some social and contextual integrative reasons why people were moving from the mainline churches. He reports that attendance at the Evangelical churches in England fell slightly between 1989 and 1996. At the same time, he says, between 1989 and 1996 although other new members joined the Baptist church in New Zealand, 10 118 people left the church during the same time<sup>15</sup>. The reasons given are that their personal and spiritual development could not be contained within the confines of Evangelical church schema. Some who had left the church, according to Lynch, pointed out that the church did not meet their needs so they decided to go to another church where they could connect the church with the rest of their life.

Lynch (2006: 36-37) moreover, believes that exposure to cultural pluralism in the modern world can also contribute to such a kind of conversion, especially among the western middle class people who have the opportunity to consume media information and so are exposed to many options. This reason, in my opinion, may also apply to the African context, especially in the urban areas where people are exposed to information through various kinds of mass media and hence to a variety of options.

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<sup>15</sup> It should be remembered that this tendency of moving from one church to another is categorized as institutional transition or intrareligious conversion (Rambo 1993:13-14, Gillespie 1991:15).

The question of conversion motives may vary from one person to another and from one context to another. However, it is made clear that conversion motives shouldn't be confined to religious ones only, but can be social and psychological as well. This partly explains why African Christian converts go back to their primal religion, when conversion to Christianity fails to meet both spiritual and existential needs.

Conversion among the Haya, as we shall discuss later in this dissertation in the context of existential crisis (chapter 5), is related to a search for meaningfulness, prosperity, guidance and overcoming fear. Kahakwa (2006:260), who researched African Religion, focuses on the Haya of Northwest Tanzania arguing why people revert to their former primal religion in times of crisis, maintains that Africans even if converted to the world religions, basically remain with their primal religions because that is where they feel at home, for African Religion is strongly immersed in their culture.

According to Kahakwa, upon crisis, Africans be they Christians, they revert to their former religion not only to satisfy their spiritual hunger, but to have also their problems solved since for most African Religion scholars, African Religion has been regarded as “a problem solving phenomena”. The reason for that is because it includes regular contact with spiritual powers such as the Deity, divinities, spirits, and the ancestors, where they address their needs and problems.

Although Kahakwa's contention in this regard seems to be too general as if conversion for Africans has not much effect on their spiritual transformation, he helps to see that conversion is not just a total break from the past, but rather the past is shaped in a new way. The old is given a new meaning in the life of a convert. The task remains as to how Christian conversion in African perspective can be relevant and meaningful as it seeks to address not only spiritual but also physical needs of new converts.

It has been clear to African scholars of religion that African ways of solving problems have not been taken into account by most Christian theologians and church leaders due to negligence, ignorance of African ways of dealing with problems that include illness, or

due to the negative attitude they have to African Religion which may be a result of their traditional, ecclesiastical and theological backgrounds (Kahakwa 2004: 16-17)<sup>16</sup>. Hence it is of importance to admit that the reasons for conversion are multidimensional, although when limited to conversion to Christ it is a response to God's divine invitation to an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ by the influence of Holy Spirit whereby the past is seen with a new mind. Therefore it is also important to understand and interpret how people, for example Christians, experience, talk about conversion. Hence other scholars have approached conversion from a social phenomenological approach.

## 2.6 Christian Conversion: A Social Phenomenon?

The study of conversion suggests that whether in the Old Testament, New Testament or in the Haya Christian social context, conversion does not take place in a vacuum, but rather in the society and community and in fact, in a specific cultural context. Does this suggest that conversion is also a social phenomenon? This section tries to explore conversion from a sociological aspect in the assertion that any understanding of conversion ought not to be divorced from the social context from which it takes place. The realization of it is, apart from the influence of the Gospel itself, in part influenced by the social context to which a convert belongs.

As has been pointed out previously, conversion involves transformative changes, changes from one religion to another or changes within the same religion, to use the language of David Snow, "a change in one's universe of discourse" (1984:170)<sup>17</sup>. Therefore from this perspective, I argue that Christian conversion is not only a spiritual or a theological reality, but also a social phenomenon as it doesn't take place in isolation from the socio-cultural milieu of a convert.

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<sup>16</sup>Kahakwa S, *Christ and the Ancestors in African Theology*. Paper presented at Kempton Park Conference Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26-30/9/2004 on Lutheran World Federation: African Study Seminar.

<sup>17</sup> Snow and Machalek argue that conversion doesn't only concern a change in values, beliefs, and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the "displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority". They further make a point that, "such a conception doesn't restrict conversion only to changes from one religion to another or to adopt a worldview where one was previously absent". See their work *Theology of conversion* (1984:170).

Snow and Machalek in *Sociological theory* (1983:260) describe a convert as a social type.<sup>18</sup> They see that a convert changes his or her behaviour as he or she interacts with the group or movement joined. The change involves how the convert talks and reasons. They argue that, “it is by the form of the converts’ talk and reason that they can be distinguished from other socio-types. However, they associate the social change that takes place within the converts with what they refer to as a ‘universe of discourse’”. They point out that a universe of discourse “provides a broad interpretive framework in terms of which people live and organize experience” (1983:265). Hence their social phenomenological approach falls within the interpretive traditional of conversion scholarship.

Snow and Machalek further point out that a convert normally describes the past behaviour in a more exaggerated negative way in order to justify the current position and the changes that he/she has gone through (1983:267). Generally for them, conversion is more a process than an event – a universe of discourse. Talking and reasoning plays a key role in identifying the convert from other groups (1984:168,170).

Nevertheless, later, in 1987 their work was assessed by Staples and Mauss in their article *Conversion or commitment?* They came up with an alternative view with regards to Snow and Machalek’s theory of “rhetoric indicator of conversions”. They see that this theory fails to distinguish religious converts from people who though not converted, are religiously committed. So they believe that Snow and Machalek fail to distinguish between conversion and commitment as two distinct phenomena (1987:134). For Staples and Mauss (1987:146) conversion, therefore should be viewed as a process and this process is fundamentally that of the “self-transformation, that self-transformation is achieved primarily through language and that the convert plays an active role in his or her own self-transformation” (1987:146). Here their emphasis is based on a convert in relation to the whole process of conversion, as an aspect that seemed to be overlooked by Snow and Machalek.

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<sup>18</sup> See the whole article, David A. Snow and Richard Machalek, “The convert as a social type”, in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 1, (1983), pp. 259-289. See also their later work “The sociology of conversion” in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 10 (1984), pp 167-190).

Furthermore, in trying to see the connection between socialization and conversion, Derek J. Tidball (2006:102) in his work on *The social construction of evangelical conversion*, from a perspective of constructionist approach, has suggested that "... 'language of conversion' ought perhaps to be replaced by the language of 'socialization' and the moment of so-called conversion seen more as an affirmation of commitment, one of several, which those maturing in the faith will experience." Tidball (2006: 89) came to that conclusion based on the research conducted at his theological institution, London School of Theology, whereby students who enrolled there were to be asked how they came to convert into Christian faith. He points out that most of the students who came to study there and claimed to be converted were from the Christian family. The research revealed beyond doubt that parents, relatives and friends had played a significant role in their coming to faith. In a context like this Tinball believes that this kind of faith seems to be socially constructed and he looks at conversion as a matter of socialization rather than crisis experience.<sup>19</sup>

Although the sociological approach of conversion like that of Tidball is of paramount importance as it enriches the understanding of conversion from another angle, it needs to be critically examined. First of all, his observation may seem to suggest the following points. First, conversion is just a process. Second, conversion is natural as it takes place within the social context of the community of believers. Third, the community of believers induces the conversion of a non-believer. Such an understanding of conversion, at least in a Christian perspective, tends to reduce it to being just a social reality, which may create a danger of overlooking the possibility of an abrupt conversion and negates the role of God and His Spirit in the process of conversion as a whole.

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<sup>19</sup> For more information read the whole work, Derick J. Tidball, "The social construction of Evangelical conversion, a sideways glance", in Partridge, C and Reid, H. (eds.) *Studies in religion and culture: Finding and losing faith, studies in conversion*, 84-102. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.

Despite the fact that conversion has to be seen in the light of the social reality<sup>20</sup>, I argue that it is of importance to see it beyond being just a mere social phenomena but rather, to see the social context as a soil through which converts are nurtured and matured. It is common that most religions, including Christianity, have systems and rituals that proceed after conversion. In the mainline churches such as Lutheran, for example, a new convert is expected to undergo catechetical teachings and other church rituals like Baptism and Confirmation before she or he is incorporated fully in the church, a practice which may be viewed from a sociological perspective as a socialization process into the Lutheran community of believers. So a convert in the Lutheran church may not necessarily be the same convert in other church tradition in terms of social conducts and faith practices. It should be born in mind, however, that Christian conversion is primarily the work of God through the Holy Spirit, although it is important to agree with Reinhold Strahler (2010:26), who has recently put it, “the influence of God and human influence work together in conversion process.”

In line with these views, although writing from a theological perspective, Gaventa (1986:151) admits that, “Conversion moves the individual believer into a community of believers”, a fact that suggests that converts do not exist in isolation but in community which in turn shapes their behaviour, practices and conduct (cf. Gillespie 1991:242). Rambo, similarly, argues that the process of conversion is a product of the interaction among convert’s aspirations, needs and orientations, the nature of the group into which she or he is being converted, and the particular social context in which these processes are taking place. He further contends: “We are all inherently connected through the social cultural world, and perceived spiritual realities are generally shared, not unique. All conversions (even Saul’s on the road to Damascus) are mediated through people, institutions, communities and groups” (1993:1). Thus, conversion may be portrayed as a continuing process, which involves entering a new community, adopting specific forms of behaviour, and participating in a community of discourse, including rituals. Alan Segar (in

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<sup>20</sup> It should be remembered that how converts experience and talk about their conversion, about other people, is not just a theological but a social reality.

Chester 2003:8) makes an insightful narration of conversion from social perspective when he says:

Conversion resembles a new and conscious choice to socialize to a particular group – resocialization. The converts build up a new structure of reality, corresponding to the structure of the group joined. The values of the new group form the convert’s new reality. The degree of resocialization depends on the distance the converts must travel between the old and new communities and the strength of the new commitment.

Conversion transforms a convert not only spiritually and mentally, but it also changes the sense of who one is and how one belongs in the social situation. Snow and Machalek (1984:170) argue, and I tend to agree with them, that:

Conversion concerns not only a change in values, beliefs, and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority.

Furthermore, Andrew Bucker and Stephen D. Glazier in the book “*Anthropology of conversion*” (2003:xi), argue that conversion is not just a moment of inspiration but it is rather a change of both individual consciousness and social belonging, mental attitude and of physical experience, whose unfolding depends both on its cultural setting and on the distinct individuals who undergo it. According to them, conversion is usually an individual process which involves a change of the worldview of a single person, which occurs “within a context of institutional procedures and social relationship.” They further maintain that the religious groups in many cases structure the ways in which adherents may move in and out whereby in turn they place converts in a unique social position (2003:xi).

From these ideas we learn that though conversion primarily involves an individual, it has to be viewed within the socio-cultural context. It is therefore not easy to isolate conversion and the convert from his own socio-cultural context where he belonged and to where he moves. Hence, conversion should not be treated or rather comprehended just only as a theological but also as a socio-theological phenomenon. According to the



constructed theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion of this part of the dissertation, I integrate the two views – theological and sociological approach – in order to address the challenges and problems of missionary Christianity and Haya Christian life with regards to resocialization (reconversion) and the distance between African Traditional Religion and Haya Christian life.

## **2.7 Typologies of Conversion**

The importance of typologies of conversion in this section lies in the fact that it attempts to reduce and integrate the theological and social dimension of conversion, hence clarifying the theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion applied in this dissertation. De Vos, in *Research at grassroots* (2002:37), defines typology as “a conceptual framework in which phenomena are classified in terms of characteristics that they have in common with other phenomena.” Thus with regards to conversion, scholars like Gaventa (1986), Gillespie (1991), Rambo (1993), and Hanciles (2004) have suggested typologies of conversion that can best describe conversion based on the type and nature in which conversion takes place (also Paloutzian et al 1999).

Nevertheless, scholars differ in the way they classify conversion. For example, when Gaventa speaks of a threefold typology of conversion – alteration, pendulum-like conversion and transformation – which she believes can be helpful in understanding conversion (1986:148), others like Rambo, Gillespie, Hancilles and Paloutzian speak of a typology of conversion based on other types of conversion namely: apostasy or defection, intensification, affiliation, institutional transition and traditional transition. According to these scholars these types of conversion are helpful in better understanding the nature and the process of conversion. Rambo (1993:13), for example, believes that his typology “portrays the nature of conversion in terms of how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert.”

For clarity reasons, I will describe typologies of conversion based on each type of conversion as classified by the scholars of conversion. These typologies include: alteration, pendulum-like conversion, transformation, apostasy or defection,

intensification, affiliation, institutional transition and traditional transitions. I believe that this will help us to see how conversion can be understood today in relation to how it has been understood in history and continues to be understood by different groups of Christians, and how each understanding may have influenced and continues to influence the application of conversion among the non-Christians religions as the church engages in doing mission. Such understanding may enrich our discussion in the later pages on how missionaries applied conversion among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania and the impact of their approach on their Christian life. Some contents in these typologies relate to some issues discussed in the previous sections.

To begin with, alteration is a kind of conversion which involves changes that grow out of individuals' past behaviour. Gaventa (1986:148) describes this kind of conversion as the "logical consequence of previous choice." To expound more clearly on what she means by alteration in this context, Gaventa provides several examples from the New Testament, such as people like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), and Centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:2). She maintains that these biblical characters' conversion did not require the rejection of past thought or action, but instead their conversion came as a logical sequence of their previous choices. As the Bible puts it, these people were already God fearing. For example, the Bible records Centurion Cornelius as a "devout man who feared God with his entire household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God" (Acts 10:2). According to Gaventa (1986:48), this implies that "the conversion of Cornelius comes in recognition of his previous established faithfulness". It is clear that in this type of conversion no rejection of the past is required, but perhaps a transformation of his worldview with regard to his new faith.

Another type of conversion that Gaventa deals with is pendulum-like conversion. As Gaventa (1986:149) puts it, this kind of conversion portrays a sharp break between the past and the present. It is to be separated from one's earlier life. In this kind of conversion the past association and convictions are rejected when new ones are formed. It is when this rupture of the past and present exists in sharp contrast whereby the past is strongly portrayed mostly in negative terms (cf. Bosch 1991:126). Biblical example are like those

found in the imagery of birth from above or to be born anew in the new life, found in the Gospel of John and 1Peter (Gaventa 1986:149).

Transformation is the third type of conversion whereby the past is not rejected *per se*, but reinterpreted. According to Gaventa, transformation does not require a rejection or negation of the past or previously held faith values, but it involves a new perception and recognition of the past in a new way (Gaventa 1986:10-11, also Bosch 1991:126). Gaventa (1986:149) further writes: “[the past] takes on a different meaning because of a new set of circumstances.” Here the example of St Paul’s conversion is given whereby Paul, according to Gaventa, did not cut himself off from his fellow Jews (Rom. 9:1-5). Gaventa (1986: 148) summarises: “the apocalypse of Jesus Christ does not require the rejection of the past, but its reinterpretation – its transformation” (cf. Bosch 1991:126). In this case the past is not completely rejected because it provides a footing for one to receive the new revelation of faith.

Fourthly, apostasy or defection can be viewed or perceived as the repudiation of the previous beliefs. Apostasy is the situation whereby sometimes people are removed from some religious movements considered as a cult or false beliefs. It is not actually a conversion to a new religion, but it can be seen as a form of deconversion or the adoption of the nonreligious system of values. Rambo, unlike other fellow scholars of conversion, includes apostasy in his typology of conversion because he believes that the loss of faith constitutes an important form of change to an individual or group (Rambo 1993:13).

Fifth, intensification is a kind of conversion where a believer makes a new commitment in the same faith (Rambo 1993:39). This, according to Gillespie, is “the revitalization of the commitment of a religious body.” Gillespie (1991:15) continues to point out that the born again conversion is the intensification of the faith within the same Christian domination. Intensification is further pointed out as a “form of conversion in which the person or group does not move from one community of faith to another, but becomes more devout,

passionate, and committed within the religious tradition in which he or she was raised or had some degree of involvement” (Paloutzian et al 1999:1052-53).

Affiliation is the sixth type of conversion which denotes the movement from one community of faith to another with no or minimal commitment (Rambo 1993:13). It is where people join a church or community of believers because they just want to be affiliated to another faith community without necessarily having spiritual reasons (Gillespie 1991:15). Paloutzian et al (1999:1052), briefly put it, “affiliation is a conversion or recruitment to a new religious movement.”

The seventh type of conversion is the institutional transition. This is just a movement from one church or belief system or community to another of the same tradition, for example, from one Protestant church to another (Gillespie 1991:15). It may also involve a switching from one religious subgroup to another within a larger tradition of the different denomination, but with the same tradition, for example, from Baptist to Roman Catholic (Paloutzian et al 1999:1052; Rambo 1993:13-14). This, according to our previous discussion, may also be known as intrareligious conversion.

Lastly, traditional transition is the type of conversion that involves a movement from one religious tradition to another religion (interreligious). An example of tradition transition would be from Islam to Christianity (Paloutzian et al 1999:1052). According to Rambo, it is a movement from one’s worldview, ritual system, symbolic universe, and lifestyle to another that often takes place in a context of cross-cultural contact and conflict. He gives an example of tradition transitions based on the eighteenth and nineteenth century during colonial expansion when a massive number of people were involved in conversion to Christianity by western missionaries (Rambo 1993:14; cf. Gillespie 1991:14).

## **2.8 Patterns of Conversion**

As we have seen previously, conversion is understood differently by different individuals and church traditions. One can assume therefore that the understanding of conversion can

inevitably influence patterns, methods and an application of it inasmuch as church traditions vary, as the title of this dissertation also suggests.

Richard Peace (2004:8) speaks of three patterns that he also refers to as basic orientations to conversion, namely: socialization, liturgical acts and personal decision. He does so by giving a detailed survey on how different church traditions apply conversion. To discuss the conversion patterns I will critically draw on Peace's work which speaks extensively on various patterns of conversion which various church traditions apply based on personal decision, liturgical acts, and socialization. In this case we discuss various patterns of conversion as they have been applied in various church traditions.

### **2.8.1 Conversion through Personal Decision**

This pattern of conversion is practiced by Evangelicals, fundamentalists, Pentecostals and the Charismatic tradition. In these church traditions, preaching on conversion is central and one cannot be considered as a Christian unless one has been converted almost like St Paul was on the Damascus Road (Tidball 2006:84-85). In most cases, in this kind of conversion an individual's experience of faith is emphasized and normally the date of conversion is remembered exactly. Salvation becomes a matter of trusting Jesus for forgiveness and a prayer of commitment is made (Peace 2004:8; Walsh & Middleton 2008:196-197). Thus, conversion is perceived as a matter of individual responsibility, although the communities of believers are expected to encourage and support the new converts in their spiritual growth.

### **2.8.2 Conversion through Liturgical Acts**

Peace (2004: 10) refers to Roman Catholics and Orthodox as liturgical converts because they give so much attention to Baptism, the Eucharist and the official rites of passage. Most of the liturgical conversion tradition such as the Catholics and other mainline Christians maintain that "conversion cannot be isolated and reduced to a self-conscious moment" (Peace 2004:10). Conversion is experienced behind Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion. Despite the fact that liturgical rituals are filled with meaning and

power<sup>21</sup> in those churches following the liturgical acts conversion, Peace (2004:10) sees the danger of some converts viewing conversion as mechanical and devoid of real content and meaning. Peace believes that liturgical conversion can produce a nominal Christian when he says: “when conversion is the outcome of a ritual that is entered into for a variety of reasons – custom, expectation, family, convenience, social status, as well as genuine faith – it can result in nominal faith.” Therefore the challenge remains to maintain the sacramental view of theology while emphasizing the experiential side of conversion.

On the other hand, in the Orthodox Church which is one of the liturgically centred churches, conversion is realized within the church through Baptism. According to them salvation is found in the church community, one cannot be saved alone. If one wants to be a Christian in the Orthodox tradition one must be in the church in order to participate in and be familiar with the liturgical practices. Liturgy is an integral part of mission which is why even preaching and reading of the word are done in a liturgical tone. Liturgy itself is used as one of the methods of evangelism (Peace 2004:12). Salvation, in other words, is ecclesial and sacramental for it is through sacrament that one is made one with God. Conversion for them makes sense when one talks of inviting those outside the church into the church – the community of people of God (Peace 2004:11). With regards to Orthodox mission and conversion, Peace (2004:12) puts it:

The main task of mission is the conversion of those outside the church ... thus preaching is preaching with the purpose that people might believe and be converted. Conversion is the proper word to use, since those who are outside the church need to be introduced to the grace of God in Christ. Yet mission is not just to the outsider but also the way in which church people ... try to arouse the sleeping faith of the nominal Christians.

### **2.8.3 Conversion through Socialization**

This is another pattern of conversion mainly applied within the mainline Protestant churches. In this case one simply becomes a Christian through Baptism. Children are incorporated in the church when they are brought by their parents for Baptism (Peace

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<sup>21</sup>Rambo (1993:114) reflects more on the role of ritual in conversion. He argues that ritual among other things, “fosters the necessary orientation, the readiness of mind and soul to have a conversion experience, and it consolidates conversion after the initial experience”. For more details see pp.115-116.

2004:8). Protestant churches like the Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed, among many others, maintain that children can be initiated into the family of God on the basis of parents promising to raise them in Christian values and life. As Kraft (2002:328) puts it “this practice is intended to imply that, [at] an appropriate point in their lives, those who have already been baptized on the basis of their parents’ confession and commitments will themselves opt for Christianity.”

Post Baptism nurture in the mainline churches for both adults and children is mainly done through Sunday School instruction, Catechism and Confirmation classes. In most cases it is taken for granted that to be a Christian is to be engaged with other believers and active in a life of concern for others (Peace 2004:8). Peace, however, points out that in the mainline churches in some cases conversion is reluctantly talked about. Some maintain that the word conversion should not be used because, as he put it “[conversion] may be viewed as a power word, with those who use it seeking domination over others, defining for others what their experience must be” (2004:9).

Nevertheless, what Peace observes may be true at face value in the western context from which he writes. In my opinion, this may not be perceived in the same way in some of the African contexts. To some churches in Africa, probably many, especially in the mainline churches in Tanzania, evangelism with the aim of converting non-Christians and reviving church members forms a focal point in most diocesan departments<sup>22</sup>.

However, Peace observes an important feature in the mainline churches which is the actual reality in our context when he talks of church members with regard to their faith analogy. There are those whose faith, according to Peace (2004:8), are what he calls

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<sup>22</sup> In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania, for example, in its organization structure, the department for mission and evangelism is placed under the Bishopric’s direct responsibility to make it central and important. Apart from that, church districts and congregations are encouraged to conduct revival meetings at least annually whereby believers and nonbelievers are encouraged to convert to Christ. Furthermore, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania in general considers mission and evangelism as a backbone of the church. Mission and evangelism in this context, apart from incorporating new members into the church, is referred to as the process of nurturing and strengthening of faith of all converts. See the Lutheran church website <http://www.elct.org/mission.html>, visited on 23/8/2010. C.f more discussions and debates on mission and evangelism in Bosch (1991:409ff)

*intrinsic* and those whose faith is *extrinsic*. For the former faith is alive, real, and personal while for the latter it is more of formal, duty, tradition, and obligation. Therefore, Walsh and Middleton (2008:197) point out the challenge which faces the mainline churches in this regard, is “to help members move from extrinsic faith (nominalism) to intrinsic faith (inner conviction).” They also point out that “this kind of change is a kind of conversion itself.” Hence Peace (2004:9-10) challenges the mainline churches saying:

Mainline churches need to help their membership commit themselves consciously to what is implicit in church activity and membership. Without such consciousness, church membership becomes like club membership: you hang out with nice people, but when you go home, such membership makes little difference in [their] life and the lives of others. We need to create ways for people to grow in all aspects of faith: belief, commitment, service, relationships, justice, spirituality, and more.

It is worthwhile to acknowledge that although Peace doesn't seem to explicitly suggest ways in which Christians in the mainline churches should grow in all aspects of faith, it seems to me that his challenges are invaluable and relevant since faith in Christ needs to be internalized in order to be real. While Peace's ideas originate from the context of western perspective, in this case they may apply in African context in general and in Haya in particular to a considerable extent.

#### **2.8.4 Cultural Conversion**

What is cultural conversion? Is cultural conversion Christian conversion? These are questions we need to explore in this section. The reason I include cultural conversion in this subsection is because I regard it to be one of the conversion patterns, employed by missionaries in the nineteenth century in some parts of Africa when converting Africans to Christianity. Kraft (2002:339), a previous missionary in Africa and a professor of anthropology, discussing cultural conversion, makes a distinction between what he calls cultural conversion and Christian conversion. Cultural conversion, according to Kraft, is a conversion to a culture or a subculture that is not natural to the convert. Kraft (2002:339) speaks of cultural conversion from a negative perspective of conversion. He puts it:



It is the error of imposing upon one subculture the forms of Christianity appropriate to another subculture (the one in power) but not to that of the group in question. Missionary bodies have frequently erred in this way, requiring the members of other cultures to convert to Christ by first converting to Euro-American culture.

Kraft's arguments are worth noting when he challenges missionaries not to require non-Christians to convert to a foreign culture first before converting to Christ. For Kraft, according to the above, cultural conversion is advocating, so to speak, an indirect conversion to Christianity. But his personal views suggest that one does not need to first leave one's culture in which one has always been immersed in order to be a Christian.

Kraft (2002:340) points out the danger of doing cultural conversion in mission when he also argues that: "Conversion in response to such an approach may result in a genuine relationship with God on the part of the convert(s). Or they may simply convert to the culture of the witness without developing a saving relationship with God". He continues, "the tragedy of this later result cannot be overestimated. Many have received Christianity to be simply advocating a new cultural allegiance. The result is widespread nominalism with little real understanding of essential Christianity on the part of young churches." As will be widely discussed in chapters four and five, this kind of observation challenges the way Christianity was introduced among the Haya people by western missionaries who did not pay enough attention to the Haya religio-cultural social context.

### **2.8.5 Missionary Christianity Conversion**

Missionary Christianity in this dissertation refers to the Christianity that was introduced by western missionaries in Africa. This kind of Christianity was doubtless introduced with western culture as opposed to the African cultural values and system. Upon converting Africans to Christianity they in most cases and in some aspects did not seriously take into account the African culture and their primal religion. Professor Zablon Nthamburi (in Gitonga 2008:1) when writing a foreword in the book, *Evangelization and inculturation in African context* contends:

... early missionaries in Africa uncritically assumed that their own historical-cultural ways of being Christians were the only valid ways for all nations. In evangelizing African peoples, many missionaries from the north functioned

latently as agents of Western culture and its imposition through colonialism. Unconsciously they contributed significantly to the erosion of indigenous cultures, particularly as they endeavored to substitute their own religious practices and formulas for those in Africa.

As will be discussed later and as was briefly pointed out previously in the first chapter, this kind of Christianity was challenged by the indigenous Africans, in this case Haya Christianity, as it did not suit their own African worldview. Upon receiving new Christian faith from the western missionaries, through East African Revival and later in charismatic revival, Haya Christians discovered Christianity which suits their frame of reference.

Some African Pentecostal Christianity scholars like Kwabena Asomoah-Gyadu (2003:94-97, 76-77)<sup>23</sup>; Kwame Bediako (1995); Kalu (2007 & 2008) and others, refer to the recent Charismatic-Pentecostal renewal as another kind of conversion in Africa with which African Christians feel at home. These scholars maintain that African Pentecostalism has attempted successfully to indigenize missionary Christianity in Africa. Asomoah-Gyadu sees Charismatic-Pentecostalism in Africa as an African Christianity attempt to make missionary Christianity conversion relevant to their context as it revitalizes African spirituality that pre-existed in their former African Religion unlike missionary Christianity. Modern spiritual revival seeks to answer the question of spirituality and experiencing of God's power and activity in their lives, for it acts as a recovery of African Religious spirituality, which, as was inherited from missionary Christianity, is not greatly emphasized in the mainline churches. Bediako (1995:106) puts clearly such a distinction between missionary Christianity which was introduced by missionaries who were influenced by western theology, and African Religion as a spiritual religion when he contends:

Primal religions generally conceived of religion as a system of power and of living religiously as being in touch with the source and channels of power in the

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<sup>23</sup> Kwabebana Asomoah-Gyadu is well known in his works on African Pentecostalism Renewal. During the United Evangelical Mission's consultation on "healing in the charismatic, Pentecostal renewal movement" held in Accra, Ghana, 12-19/11/2003 he presented a paper on " Pentecostalism in context: 'Waves of Renewal' within African Christianity." See Consultation on Healing 12-19/11/2003 in Accra/Ghana GIMPA (Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (see pp.73-95).

universe; Christian theology in the west seems, on the whole, to understand the Christian Gospel as a system of ideas.

For that reason Asomoah-Gyadu points out that renewal is a challenge and an expression of dissatisfaction with missionary Christianity as he writes:

For members of indigenous [renewal] movement whose background is Christian, “previous religious affiliation” in almost every case referred to a traditional mission denomination. In this vein the existence of the various independent indigenous Pentecostal churches stands as evidence of a deep “spiritual hunger” that traditional denominations are not able to fully satisfy. To speak of “renewal” therefore, is to speak of a response to that which has become static, staid, institutionalized, legalistic, bureaucratized, formalized, routinised or moribund in the religious and spiritual life of the individual and of the church. Renewal is thus the response to the church’s perceived loss of life and vitality leading to a stultification of her growth and mission (2003:92).

Consequently, we generally assert that missionary Christianity conversion in the context of this research-work refers to and limits itself within the framework of conversion that was introduced, applied and shaped by western missionary expatriates in Africa, more particularly in our case, Northwest Tanzania. We now move to the discussion about conversion models that has been applied to explain and understand dynamics of conversion studies in the area of academic world.

## **2.9 Conversion Models**

In embarking on the models of conversion it is worthwhile, first all, to define what is meant by model. Bevans (2003:24) provides a useful description and definition of the term “model”. He describes a model as “a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated.” Bevans (2003:26) argues that a model is normally inadequate and therefore needs to be supplemented by others. Therefore, De Vos (2002:37-38) concludes by saying that a model is a “case” that is useful in simplifying a complex reality, and, although such simplification doesn’t fully capture that reality, it does yield true knowledge of it”.

Therefore, in trying to articulate the phenomenon of conversion some scholars have suggested some models that can help to understand conversion. Rambo (1993: 7ff), for example, suggests two models which, according to him, are the holistic model and the stage model (sequential stage model). Other models suggested by other scholars to be discussed in this work include: Paul's Damascus Road, and Gradual Conversion Model. For clarity reasons we discuss each one of them.

### **2.9.1 Holistic Model**

For the holistic model Rambo (1993:7) argues that conversion can be understood in its all richness and complexity when anthropology, sociology, psychology and religious disciplines must be taken into account. Rambo believes that these four components are most crucial for understanding conversion, although politics, economics, biology, and so forth should also be considered. These factors, for Rambo, should be given equal weight for they are interdependent on each other. The whole issue of a holistic model suggests that since conversion occurs in a complex, multifaceted environment that can be better understood only by taking into account the perspective of several disciplines (Paloutzian et al 1999:1071), it must be perceived within the framework of other components such as cultural, social, personal, and religious.

In exploring missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania among the Haya people I find the holistic model relevant as it relates to the integrative model proposed in this dissertation. Conversion dynamics among the Haya can be profoundly addressed integratively by taking into account their African worldview, religion, culture and society. I argue that conversion that is simply perceived and applied in the form of western cultural imperialism will always yield Christians who are spiritually dwarfs and therefore substantially impede the mission success in African cultural soil. Conversion among the Haya requires an understanding that takes into account the consciousness of the physical aspect, culture, socio-psychology and cosmology of the people reached out to with the Gospel.

## 2.9.2 Stage Model

Discussing this model, Rambo presents seven patterns of conversion which he developed from the work of anthropologists Berkhofer, Lofland and Stark and Tippett (Paloutzian 1999:1072). Rambo (1993:17) puts these patterns of conversion under what he calls the stage or sequential model. The reason for proposing a sequential model is because he believes that conversion is, as he puts it, “a series of elements that are interactive and cumulative over time.” He also suggests that conversion can be well understood if it takes seriously the question of a stage model or sequential stage model. In this model he points out seven stages which one must go through for conversion, these are: contextual, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequence (Rambo 1993:17; cf. Paloutzian et al 1999:1972; Hanciles 2004:159-160). These conversion patterns point clearly to stages which one goes through in the whole process of attaining conversion (Kraft 2002:328-333). The implication for the stage or sequential model by Rambo suggests that conversion is not just an immediate action or just an event, but a process within and among other socio-cultural factors that are also considered.

Nevertheless, whether conversion is an event or a process is a most debated question among the conversion scholars<sup>24</sup>. When some other scholars see religious conversion as “a discontinuous transformational experience that profoundly changes one’s life”, and cite examples of people like St Paul, St Augustine of Hippo among others, as the prototype of “Quantum change”<sup>25</sup>, Rambo (1993:1), Kraft (2002:328-332) and Hanciles (2004:159) for example, hardly see the possibility for the overnight, instant, wholesale transformation that is a now and forever type of conversion. For these scholars, conversion is gradual and a process and takes place in sequences.

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Richard Longenecker (1977: xi). In his book (edited) *The road from Damascus: The impact of Paul’s conversion on his life, thought and ministry*, he points out that the understanding of conversion has been difficult because it has been approached and analyzed from different perspectives.

<sup>25</sup> See Raymond F. Paloutzian et al in “Religious conversion and personality change” in the *Journal of Personality*, (1047- 1079) 1999. The argument is based on the fact that the popular stereotypes of conversion like St Paul, St Augustine, and testimonials of converts like Malcolm X who converted to Muslim teachings and, the testimonies of *Jesus movement converts*, 1960s and some biblical verses such as, “therefore, if anyone be in Christ, he/she is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Cor. 5:17 (KJV)). All these facts prove that dramatic changes occur in the lives of people who convert. See this in pp, 1049 -1050.

### 2.9.3 Paul's Damascus Road Model

On the other hand, some scholars of conversion look at Paul's Damascus Road experience as another model. Proponents of this model regard Paul's experience as the prototype of the true conversion (Gaventa 1986:3, Paloutzian et al 1999:1049). In this case conversion is understood in the context of dramatic change in the convert's behaviour. People like Bruce Corley (1977:1-7) go further to regard Paul's conversion as "hero of introspective conscience as exhibited also in the conversion of Augustine and Luther". This model is considered to be supported by some scripture such as 2 Corinthians 5:17, "...if one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (NIV) (Paloutzian et al 1999:1050, cf. Kraft 2002:329). Peace (2004:8) calls this model a famous example in the New Testament. He sees this conversion of Paul as central as it is referred to in the book of Acts three times and in the other Paul's texts. For many, he says it "has become the paradigm of the true conversion."

Although the Paul's Damascus Road model of conversion has been treating Paul's conversion as prototype (Longenecker 1977)<sup>26</sup> for Christian conversion, it goes without saying that it has also been challenged by some other New Testament scholars. A debate exists among scholars concerning Paul's conversion. While some think that Paul was converted instantly, others think Paul was not even converted but called into apostolic ministry, for conversion suggests a change of religion while Paul became a Christian, which was in his time a Judaism cult (Bosch 1991:125-126, cf. Gaventa 1986:18). These maintain that Paul himself does not refer to what happened on the road to Damascus as a conversion, but a call and commission to God's apostolic ministry.

In practice we can say that whatever happened to Paul, either a conversion or a call into a ministry, fundamental changes occurred in him with regard to his new relationship with

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<sup>26</sup>Longenecker sees that a better understanding of Paul's experience can function as a paradigm for Christian conversion, life thought and ministry today. These views, however, do seem to be general and overlook the fact that careful study of Christian conversion does not limit conversion with St Paul but admits that conversion pre-existed before Paul's conversion. What about the 12 disciples? What about 3 000 converts during Pentecost after Peter's sermon as recorded in the Book of Acts 2:41? Were they converted in the same way as St Paul?

Jesus Christ. Peace (1999:28) in his book, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve*, however, argues that in conversion in the New Testament, even though there are examples of Gentile converts such as the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-39, the emphasis has not necessarily been on changing their religion, but meant the discovery of who Jesus was to their life. From Peace we ascertain that conversion from a Christian theological perspective has more to do with changes from former ways of life into a new life based on faith in Jesus Christ and discovering who He is for our lives without necessarily completely changing our religious contexts.

#### **2.9.4 Gradual Conversion Model**

Other models include the gradual conversion model. Proponents of this model challenge the Paul's Damascus Road model by giving an alternative. Furthermore, others categorize conversion based on the model from which conversion occurs. The gradual conversion model refers to the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. For the proponents of this model, the twelve disciples were not converted instantly but gradually. Richard Peace (1999:27-28) further points out that conversion like love is often gradual and needs to slowly be nurtured. In line with these views, Gaventa (1992:51) sees conversion not as an end in itself but instead, conversion is the story about beginnings, it is not something static and once-for-all.

Nonetheless, gradual conversion is not without critique. It seems to me that what is known as gradual conversion may also be comprehended as spiritual growth in another context. One may argue that what is taken to be a gradual conversion may be termed as spiritual growth and not conversion, for conversion has to be understood from the very time when each disciple accepted the call to be followers and disciples of Jesus Christ. Acceptance of the call of Jesus by His disciples was not a process, but an instant decision for in some instances disciples were even to leave their nets immediately and follow Jesus. I find that what Wolfgang Gabbert (2001:305) observes is more relevant when he points out that "... conversion to Christianity does not necessarily mean a radical break with previous

concepts, as many scholars have assumed”<sup>27</sup>. In this point, Gabbert does not negate the possibility of radical break conversion, but he also sees the possibility of gradual conversion, unlike other scholars who have previously limited conversion to radical and as an immediate event. Perhaps maintaining the balance in a matrix of conversion that suggests the integrative approach which allows the possibility of both gradual and other models is more desirable than limiting conversion to gradual alone.

## **2.10. Some Social Theories in Conversion Studies**

Having explored some of the conversion models as they appear in the scholarly debate, we turn to some theories of conversion which have been developed by scholars in order to articulate meaningfully the term conversion, its relevance and application to peoples’ lives. Theory from the context of social scientific research is defined “as a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena” (De Vos 2002:40). Two theories that have been applied by some scholars in conversion studies are identified. These are intellectualist and structuration. I shall later adopt structuration theory to guide the analysis of findings based on its relevance to the nature of my research, for it provides a good account for analyzing conversion from a social dimension and provides a good base of integrative approach that recognizes both continuity and discontinuity aspects in conversion.

### **2.10.1 Intellectualist Theory**

Intellectualist theory is one of the conversion theories which some scholars have used in explicating and analyzing the phenomenon of conversion, especially in Africa. This theory was popularized by Robin Horton especially when speaking on an African model of conversion to the world religions such as Christianity and Islam (Rambo 1993:92). Morio T. Angular (1995), for example, writing on “*African conversion from a world religion:*

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<sup>27</sup> cf. Ipenburg A. N. (2001:517). Ipenburg in his article on *Melanesian conversion in historical and comparative perspective* argues that conversion doesn’t mean a complete break with the past. He sees that there is always both discontinuity and continuity. To him, new religion is interpreted by means of the concepts of the old religion.



*Religious diversification by the Waso Booran in Kenya*”, widely explores conversion from an African perspective. In part of his work he draws from Horton models of conversion known as intellectualist position<sup>28</sup>.

Intellectualist theory has been in the debate since the nineteenth century and was later revitalized by Horton. To intellectualist theory, explanation, prediction and control are the main “processes of thought associated with traditional African cosmologies” (Angular 1995:530). This theory demands that those religious events and the particular systems surrounding those events help Africans to interpret how things happened in their societies. The intellectualistic theory states that according to African cosmologies, there is a Supreme Being who by his mere presence explains how people came into existence. This Supreme Being is represented by lesser beings who are the agents of the supernatural events in the society. These relate with people in their daily social life, therefore “people act, live and exercise their explanation, prediction and control in a microcosm” (Horton 1971:94-95; Angular 1995:530; Rambo 1993:92).

Intellectualist theory has cognitive importance as it helps see that African people have the ability to make sense of their reality. As a result, upon the arrival of the colonial powers in Africa, people had again to exercise their explanation, prediction and control. Africans were no longer in control of their own local realities. Their microcosm collapsed and was absorbed by a larger cosmos brought in by the colonial powers (Horton 1971:95, Ipenburg 2001:511-12). For that reason, Africans were to look for new explanations in order to reconstruct their cosmology.

Morton, states that world religions (eg. Islam and Christianity) were a catalyst for African changes from microcosm to macrocosm, therefore the arrival of the colonial powers was the factor needed to accelerate these changes. In this new order of things the Supreme Being tends to be identified with a religion of moral concern and communion (Rambo

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<sup>28</sup> In recent years Brenden Carmody (2007) has also engaged a theory of intellectualist by Robin Horton to discuss the “*Nature and the role of Christian conversion in Zambia.*” Carmody sees that Horton’s theory is very helpful in understanding an interpretation of African conversion from Traditional Religion to the world religions such as Christianity in sociological perspective.

1993:93, Hanciles 2004:160-161). The new order becomes the acceptable norm of religious cosmology and acceptable structure for the African people. Wolfgang Gabbert (2001:293) describes Horton's theory as follows:

[It] sees conversion as a cognitive process by which individuals tend to convert as a result of social developments that promote comparison between the relative coherence of their own and another set of beliefs. The one with greater explanations will be preferred.

Although Morton's theory of intellectualist has been critiqued as being very static, artificial and lacking any concern for history as an intellectualistic model, Angular (1995) still maintains that it is in some aspects useful if we are to grasp the initial impact of the arrival of other religions in Africa, such as Christianity and Islam.

Hanciles (2004:161-162) also points out other critiques of Morton's intellectualist theory, such as Humphrey Fisher and Robert Hefner, who regard it to be too generalized where it does not consider some specific African communities during both pre-modern and modern African variations where his theory doesn't seem to apply<sup>29</sup>.

I would rather add that even if the theory may seem to make sense in some instances, it says nothing or rather little on the question of African world religious adherents who still at the same time maintain microcosm by turning to their former beliefs and worldview, especially when confronted with an existential life crisis for which the so-called world religions do not seem to provide answers. Another weakness of Morton's theory lies in the fact that it looks at conversion from a cognitive aspect and fails to link it with other aspects like theological, socio-cultural and psychological aspects. It has to be born in mind that to limit conversion to cognitive domain and ignore the fact that conversion is not only cognitive but also religious and spiritual, is to overlook the most important aspect of it, for, as we have previously noted, a true conversion involves faith – *pistis* – that ultimately

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<sup>29</sup> For more details read Hanciles (2004: 160-161). Rambo also presents detailed information concerning Humphrey. J. Fisher's critiques on Morton's intellectualist theory. For those interested read details in Rambo (1993:93-94).

leads to the transformation of an individual spiritually, psychologically, culturally and socially.

### **2.10.2 Structuration Theory**

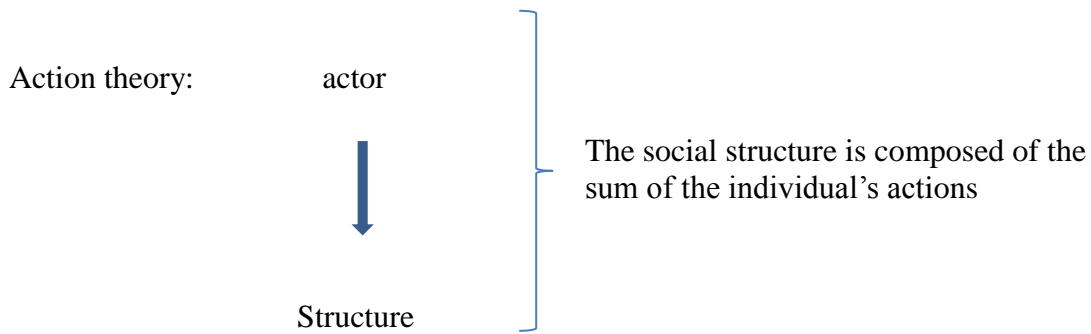
Another theory which has been applied in research on conversion studies is structuration theory. Structuration theory is one of the social science theories in sociology that was developed by one of the famous sociologists known as Anthony Giddens. Some theologians, especially New Testament scholars such as Stephen Chester (2003) and David Horrell (1996) have applied structuration theory as their analytical framework in their studies. As will be mentioned later, Chester especially has used the theory to provide a critical study on Paul's understanding of conversion as a missionary at Corinth and the understanding of it by Corinthian converts.

To Giddens (1991:201), structuration theory is the label he attached to his concern to develop an ontological framework for the study of human social activities. By ontology in this context he refers to "a conceptual investigation of the nature of the human action, social institutions and the interactions between action and institutions". Giddens views society as a structuration process. Structure is regarded as a "set of resources and rules that individuals draw on to accomplish their daily work" (Yates 1997:163).

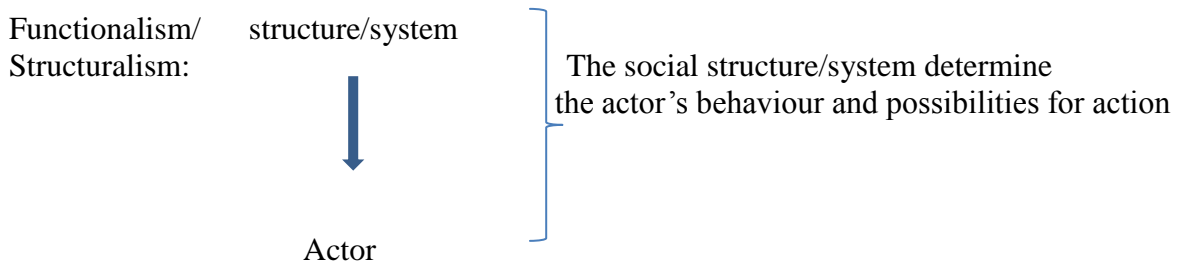
Structuration theory is further known as a social ontology. It is an attempt to conceptualize social reality as consisting of human social practice. Giddens terms it as "human being and human doing, social reproduction and social transformation" (1984:xx). The theory of structuration has further been regarded as a general theory for conceptualizing society and social development. According to Giddens, the theory of structuration is more than just an exploration of the idea of structuration itself. He points out that in the structurationist approach social theory does not "begin" either with the individual or with society. He sees both individual and society as notions that need to be reconstructed through other concepts. He therefore contends that "in structuration theory, the core concern of social sciences is with recurrent social practices and their transformations" (1991:203). It "offers a conceptual scheme that allows one to understand both how actors

are at the same time the creators of social systems yet created by them.” The interdependence between the social systems and actors are, in other words, significantly inevitable.

This implies that while human beings create the social systems, the social systems in turn construct him or her. In other words, as Lars Bo Kaspersen in his book *Anthony Giddens: An introduction to a social theorist* (2000:31) puts it, the social structure is composed of the sum of the individual’s actions, while in turn the social structure/system determines the actor’s behaviour and possibilities for action as indicated in the following illustration.



*Sociology’s primary object of the inquiry: the individual*



*Sociology’s primary object of inquiry: the social structure/system*

**Source:** Kaspersen (2000:31)

According to the theory of structuration, the social structure is not simply the sum of an individual’s actions. “Society is viewed as a structuration process, whereby human actions simultaneously structure and are structured by the society. This is what Giddens refers to

as a duality of structure or as social practice. To understand social practices is for Giddens a key for achieving an insight into the production and reproduction of social life (Kaspersen 2000:33).

The structure, according to Giddens (1984:25), exists only as human agents enact, and thus continually reinforce or reproduce it by acting in accordance with the depicted structure. In this recursive relationship between people and structures, structures shape human action, while in turn, these actions generally constitute the structure, which is what Giddens terms as duality of “structure”. In his own words:

The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, and dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize.

In other words, in structuration, while social or organization structures influence agents’ actions, these structures do not exist independently of the agents. Rather, structures only exist as they are enacted by human agents, or as Giddens (1984:xxi) himself puts it, “[t]he structural properties of social systems exist only in so far as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space.”

Structuration theory is further regarded as “an attempt to provide the conceptual means of analyzing the often delicate and subtle interlacing of reflexively organized action and institutional constraints” (Giddens 1991:204). It suggests that structuration provides a way of thinking about individuals, organizations and changes of our time that can inform our study on conversion against missionary methods and approach and the influences upon the Haya society.

### **2.10.2.1 Reproduction and Transformation of Society**

To Giddens, when social structure plays an important role to the continuities displayed within human social life, they are the same time themselves changed by that life. This in itself implies what is referred to as reproduction and transformation (Giddens 1984:28-

34). As we have pointed out, structures comprise rules and resources on which human agents draw and reproduce as they act. If it is understood that way, therefore, structures both enable and constrain, but do not determine, human action. Human actors always have the ability or “power in the sense of transformative capacity”, to act at odds with such structures whether intentionally or unintentionally, thus to undercut or even to initiate changes in the structure (Giddens 1984:15).

This implies that one person may act differently without initiating a change in the organization, institution or let us say, social structure, if others continue to act in the older pattern. But if a person acts differently (probably due to external influence or exposure) and if this way of acting becomes institutionalized as a broader pattern, then the new pattern has become the operating structure, this means the structure has changed.

Christopher G.. A. Bryant and David Jary in their work, *Giddens' theory of structuration: A critical appreciation* (1991:13), point out that:

According to the theory of structuration, an understanding of social systems as situated in time-space can be effected by regarding structure as a non temporal and non-spatial, as a virtual order of differences produced and reproduced in social interaction as its medium and outcome.

Structuration theory attempts to provide an account of human social life that takes into account both continuity and change. Giddens describes his theory as an extended reflection of Marx who comments that human beings often make history, but not in circumstances of their own choice. This implies that any successful social theory “must overcome the dualisms of agency and social structure, of human freedom and external constraint, of change and continuity, so transforming them into dualities” (Chester 2003:37).

Giddens looks at a social system as a component of repeated social practices stringing across varying times and space and therefore, social structures form the means by which these systems are organized into societal totalities. Social structures are believed to fulfil

this organizing role since they are the rules and resources of social life which are drawn upon by individuals in every social situation. These are regarded as a means by which we normally know how to behave and are the key for social competence. Social structures are produced by social practices and simultaneously laid open to transformation.

Structuration theory, in short, helps in analyzing social dynamics relating to the relationship between individuals and the society. It calls us to view life in the society as a series of ongoing activities and practices that people carry on, but which at the same time reproduce large institutions.

### **2.10.2.2 Benefits for Structuration Theory and Theological Research**

Structuration theory, according to Giddens (1991:213), although it touches on many points in conducting social research, however should not be confused with a research programme. Giddens emphasises very clearly that the theory needs to be regarded merely as sensitizing devices that have to be used in a selective way in thinking about research questions or interpreting findings. The aim of the theory, as it is pointed out, is mainly to explore the empirical relevance of some of the social concepts for research projects of various types. He so believes that the overall framework of structuration theory is “relevant to anyone writing about very broad questions of social organizations and transformations” In this, Giddens himself (1984: xxx) points out that:

The points of connection of structuration theory with empirical research are to do with working out the logical implication of studying a “subject matter” of which the researcher is already a part and with elucidating the substantive connotations of the core notion of action and structure.

The guidelines suggested by Giddens (1984:284-286) to be considered in social research along structuration theory include:

1. All social research has a necessarily cultural, ethnographic or anthropological aspect of it.
2. It is important in social research to be sensitive to the complex skills which actors have in co-coordinating the context of their day- to- day behaviour.

3. The social analyst must also be sensitive to the time-space constitution of social life. In part this is a plea for a disciplinary coming together.

Based on this reality, the theory of structuration, as pointed out previously, has also been applied in theological studies. It is therefore not surprising, as mentioned earlier, that some New Testament theologians such as Chester (2003) and Horrell (1996), believe and stress that structuration theory is the general social theory which might be put to various other uses. For this reason, Chester, in his work on *Conversion at Corinth* (2003) has drawn on structuration theory, to deal with the understanding of conversion at Corinth based on the nature and socio-cultural background of Corinthian Christian converts. His motives are based on his belief that “there are important elements of structuration theory which make it an extremely suitable theoretical resource for the study of conversion” (2003:34).

With regards to the theory of structuration, Chester (2003) explores conversion at Corinth based on Paul’s perspective on conversion in relation to both Gentiles and Jewish converts. He further discusses the Corinthians’ perspectives in the context of Graeco-Roman religious and social life. His thesis is that conversion is rooted in both the individual and the society. He argues that conversion is not the same in every context. Because of this reason, “particular understanding of conversion varies enormously and detailed exploration of them is necessary” (2003:24). He believes structuration theory in the study of conversion can provide a helpful theoretical resource. The suggestion is based on the belief that the theory has the ability to conceptualize conversion based on social change. In contrast to approaches which take the early churches as given phenomena for analysis, in this aspect of structuration theory Chester (2003:320) insists, “[it] helps to highlight their nature as communities of converts and remind us that the most startling about them is their experience”.

He further points out that the understanding of conversion and the life of Corinthian converts was not solely determined by Paul, but their socio-cultural milieu which they lived also played a significant part. Here, Chester (2003:317) concludes:



The Corinthians responded to Paul's advocacy of conversion and adopted a new Christian set of religious symbols. Yet the significance which they granted to these specifically Christian symbols was not solely determined by Paul. The Graeco-Roman society and culture in which they lived also played a part. The Corinthians' understanding of their own conversion and its consequence inevitably indigenizes their new faith to some degree.

In short, according to Chester, the application of structuration theory helps us to see that the social structure of the converts to a great extent shapes the convert's understanding, behaviour and practices, despite the teachings and impact of a missionary. Though structuration theory as it is mainly a social theory which doesn't necessarily provide an adequate multidimensional framework whereby spiritual, cultural, religious and psychological aspects of it are embedded, still, in Chester's view has a role to play when it comes to analyzing conversion from a social perspective. This is because conversion is, as we have previously argued, not only a theological but also a social reality.

As Richard R. Osmer (2008:4,8) emphasizes, for interpretive reasons we need to draw on theories of the arts and social sciences to better understand and explain why some patterns and dynamics in the field of research occur the way they do. Structuration theory offers an adequate account of social change that can be of importance in analyzing conversion from social perspective (Chester 2003:4). In this study therefore in the proceeding chapters, structuration theory, as I pointed out earlier in chapter one under research methodology, is expected to play a key role in analyzing and interpreting how the Haya in Northwest Tanzania perceived, understood and reacted and continue to react to missionary Christianity's conversion methods and approach. Chester's (2003:320) suggestion is worth noting: "[s]tructururation theory can provide a helpful theoretical resource for the study of conversion". His belief is based on the "ability it confers to conceptualize social changes."

## **2.12 Conclusion**

In chapter two I have explored conversion based on its theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion whereby the term religious conversion in general and Christian conversion in particular has been explored from a biblical-missiological, theological and socio-missiological perspectives. Christian conversion's various patterns, models and some

social theories that are applied in studies of conversion have been identified and investigated. It has been made clear from this study that the term religious conversion is a complex phenomenon. Thus scholars define it in various ways and what it precisely means depends on various factors and contexts. This implies that it is not possible to have a universal and common definition of conversion applied to all people and in all cultures, but rather its meaning has to be sought mainly in context.

From a dominant biblical perspective conversion involves, missiologically, crossing the frontier<sup>30</sup> that implies turning from unbelief to belief in the ways of God. We have also found that there are various typologies articulated by various scholars that help to explain the concept of conversion based on the classification. We have again explored various patterns of conversion based on different and various church traditions. The application of any pattern in any given church tradition is mainly influenced by its theology and the understanding of what it takes according to them to be converted.

Based on what has been discussed, it is important to conclude that Christian conversion, whether sudden or gradual, should touch the hearts of the converts and by so doing transform their personality, life, mind and worldview with regard to their new faith. Here I tend to concur with Rambo (1993:10) when he emphasizes that "... [Christian] conversion is essentially theological and spiritual. Other forces are operative, but the meaning, the significance, and the goal are religious and/or spiritual to the convert." I therefore wish to conclude that scholarly debate on conversion, whether sudden or gradual, does not provide any significant viable relevance for us in understanding the nature of conversion. It is definitely irrelevant, in my opinion, to limit Christian conversion within the sudden event like that of Paul on the Damascus Road, it also unfair to reduce Christian conversion into a gradual process like that of the Twelve and other Old Testament characters like Abraham, David, Jeremiah, to mention but a few. The extremes of the two may be misleading. We need to keep the balance in understanding the nature of Christian conversion. I maintain that conversion can be both gradual and a process at the

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<sup>30</sup> cf. Xolile Simon 2009. "Mission as frontier-crossing and identity formation: An integrating contextual missiology" in *Scriptura* 100, Stellenbosch University: 89-103.

same time, or either of the two (cf. Rambo 1993:1760). Walsh and Middleton (2008:197) make a remarkable point which I share when they emphatically remark:

Clearly it is not the type of experience that one has (sudden or gradual) that determines the authenticity of conversion. It is the content of that experience however it takes place ... Christian conversion involves repentance from sin, turning to Jesus, and it results in life transformation.

It is also important to argue that even if conversion may be gradual or sudden, its full realization demands a process. What Ipenburg (2001:518) maintains in his conclusion on what is meant by conversion is worth noting. He concludes: “conversion is a moment in time and at the same time a step in a process of Christianization, of growth in a fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Continuing biblical study and reflection is a precondition for this process to continue”.

Again from what has been discussed, it is ideal to conclude that, although genuine Christian conversion must be viewed in the context of religious and spiritual conversion, however, it does not take place in a vacuum but rather within the socio-cultural context of the convert. The understanding and behavioural change of a convert naturally reflects his/her former and later socio-cultural contextual milieu.

As pointed out previously, conversion doesn't not necessarily require a convert to break from the past, but rather to be transformed in spirit and mind whereby he/she sees the past in new ways. In line with this thought Andrew Walls (1996:28) also sees conversion more as a transformation than a substitution. He submits:

... conversion implies the use of existing structures, the “turning” of those structures to new direction, the application of new material and standards to a system for thoughts and conduct already in place and functioning. It is not about substitution, the replacement of something old by something new, but about transformation, the turning of the already existing to new account.

While conversion to most scholars has been articulated bearing in mind the importance of the social cultural context of potential converts, not much has been done by conversion scholars in addressing the nature of conversion in relation to the way the message from the advocate of the new faith (a missionary in this case) is presented. My concern in the next chapters (especially chapter 4) will therefore focus not only on the nature of conversion, but also how conversion is presented and applied to the potential convert, more particularly among the Haya in which this research is carried out.

I have argued in the beginning of this chapter that any authentic conversion should take into account potential converts' socio-cultural contexts if it is to be true to the Christian faith which when introduced in the first century, took seriously the Jewish cultural tradition, whereby Jewish Christian converts viewed Jewish religion and tradition in a new way. Paul, one of the famous Jewish Christian converts, serves as an example. Tae Hoon Kim (2007:247) concludes his Doctoral research on *The origin of Paul's concern for the Gentiles and Paul's Gentile mission*, by pointing out that Paul remained a Jew even after the Damascus Road conversion. He did not break from Judaism. Kim emphasizes, "even if he was called as an apostle to the Gentiles, he still remained within the frame of Judaism." In other words what happened to Paul was a conversion through transformation.

This leads us to raise some pertinent questions: how did the missionaries during missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania understand conversion? Did they know that a potential convert was part of their social religio-cultural context that had shaped their lives and couldn't have simply ignored it at the expense of conversion to Christianity? If so, why did they tend to separate the converts from their cultural and social background? What does it mean when Christians speak of "new life in Christ"? Does it mean a convert breaking away from his/her former social cultural ways of life, or is it a spiritual and new perspective which a convert acquires with regard to the former ways of life in relation to his/her misbeliefs?<sup>31</sup> In the next chapters I shall try to explore these questions based on how missionaries introduced Christianity in Northwest Tanzania and what the impact of such missionary enterprise has been on the Haya Christian life.

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<sup>31</sup> cf. Research key questions chapter 1.5.

We now move to chapter three where we discuss Haya Religion and Culture in Context. The study of Haya religio-cultural context will illuminate our understanding of the nature of Haya religio-cultural spirituality and conceptual worldview and the influence they have in their reception and interpretation of Christianity using the missionary Christianity conversion methods and approach. The notion that Haya traditional religion was a *praeparatio evangelica* that would have been seen as a social context from which the Haya drew rules and resources to make sense of relevant conversion as per their religious frame of reference will be examined.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HAYA RELIGION AND CULTURE IN CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the Haya religion and culture in context. To do that, first of all, an overview of the Haya people based on their socio-historical background is described. Drawing some insights from anthropology, intercultural approach, and social science along structuration theory, the Haya religio-cultural background of the indigenous community will be explored. The chapter argues and demonstrates that to the Haya, religion and culture are intrinsically interwoven, therefore to them religion is soul and life. Religion to the Haya is lived out and practiced rather than being theologized.

Furthermore, the the nature of Haya Traditional Religion, concept of God, holism and community life on the assumption that understanding these provides insights for their reception and understanding of Christianity on their conversion, which in turn impacts their Christian life shall be discussed.

The chapter also discusses the Haya religious worldview and spirituality. The Haya religion and spirituality were of paramount importance for Christian converts to receive Christianity and construct reality in a Christian version. In this case I concur with Bevans (2003:4) when he asserts that “our cultural and historical contexts play a part in the construction of the reality in which we live, so our context influences the understanding of God and the expression of our faith”

Some key African theologian scholars and some insights from theology of religions shall later be engaged to demonstrate that the Haya religion not only served as a *praeparatio evangelica*, but an important feature for the Haya converts to actualize Christian conversion in their religio-cultural frame of reference.

Drawing on the theory of structuration the chapter argues and demonstrates that Haya religio-cultural tradition was important in providing a social structure whereby conversion to Christianity was to be constructed, since conversion as a social type could not only construct (transform) an individual from his/her religio-cultural structure, but also an individual (convert) is constructed by the society in which he belongs. This is justified by the fact that, according to structuration theory, a society is viewed as a structuration process whereby a human being's actions simultaneously structure and are structured by the society in which he/she belongs.

In other words, in this case the Haya are not only transformed by conversion into Christianity, but their religio-cultural background had an influence on their understanding and practice of Christianity and impacts their life as Christian converts. Their social life was not only transformed (structured) by conversion, but their religio-cultural background played a role for their task of interpreting a new faith – Christianity.

For that matter, missionaries' teaching and application of conversion, as will be discussed in the next chapters, were not the only factors influencing the Haya understanding of their conversion and its consequences, but Haya tradition and religion within which the Haya live were also supposed to be seen as important (cf. Chester 2003: 213). Based on this theory it shall be argued that both continuity and discontinuity among the Haya Christian converts should be the inevitable features in their Christian life for the realization of conversion that makes sense to them.

### **3.2 The Haya People: An Overview**

Since our study focuses on the conversion in missionary Christianity among the Haya people of Northwest Tanzania, it is of paramount importance to have a general overview of the Haya background so as to better understand them. In the introductory part of his book, *Bara Bukoba*, Sundkler (1980:1) describes the Haya people as special, generous, loving, neat and hardworking. With regard to their physical features, masculinity and their early involvement in the church leadership, Sundkler (1980:1) asserts:

Am I alone in finding the Haya rather special? No, all visitors are struck by these people and by their beauty. This applies as much to men as to women. Cardinal Rugambwa [the first African Roman Catholic Cardinal] and the Lutheran Bishop Josiah Kibira [the first African president of the Lutheran World Federation], both born in Bukoba district, offer proof of this. The men and women of Bukoba (Haya area or Buhaya) are often very charming: Slender bodies, fine features, long sensitive hands and fingers.<sup>32</sup>

The Haya are known as one of the Bantu speaking peoples<sup>33</sup> in the Northwestern part of Tanzania. They are identified by most anthropologists as one of the interlacustrine groups known as the western lacustrine Bantu of Lake Victoria (Niwagila 1991:27). Although there are other ethnic groups, such as Nyambo, Zinza, Subi, Angaza found in Northwest Tanzania, Kagera region, the majority of the indigenous people are the Haya (Kahakwa 2003:36).

Niwagila (1991:27) points out that “this interlacustrine region has for many years been known to be a region of great kingdoms which had their settlement around Lake Victoria.” According to Niwagila, the most powerful kingdoms in those days were Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole, and Toro in Uganda; Karagwe, which in later years extended to Buhaya (the country of Haya people) in Tanzania, Wangi in Kenya, Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi. Richard Mutembei (1993:22), a former General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Northwestern Diocese, writes that the majority of Haya people in the Kagera region are the Bantu, with the minority being the Hima. The Bahima paved the way to the Kagera region from Uganda - Ankole, Toro and Bunyoro. These were pastoralists who kept the cattle that were popularly known as Ankole. It was believed that they had very strong gods known as *Abachwezi*. Because the Bahima, or the Bahinda as they were sometimes known, were more advanced it was easier for them to infuse the indigenous and later be part of them. In the words of Carl J. Hellberg (1965:30):

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<sup>32</sup> The words in the brackets are mine. See also Mutembei (1993:21).

<sup>33</sup> The Bantu people are regarded as a huge family comprising minor and huge ethnic groups of the entire continent of Africa. The Bantu are believed to have migrated to Northwest Tanzania either between 2500 BC or between the fifth and tenth century AD (Katoke 1975:11). The assumption lies in the fact that they might have originated in the Niger and Cameroon highlands along the Niger-Congo Rivers. Kahakwa points out that based on these historical origins, Bantu speakers in the interlacustrine region have been roughly divided into two cultural and linguistic groups: the easterners who include the Ganda, the Soga, Gume and the westerners who include the Nyoro, Toro, Nyankore, Kiga, in Uganda and the Haya and Zinza of Tanzania (Kahakwa 2003: 37).



These [pastoralists], the Bahima or the Bahinda, were in possession of more highly developed culture than were the tribes they encountered to the north-west and west of Lake Victoria, the Bairu or the Bahera. The latter were simple agriculturalists, held together by ties of clan or family. It seems that the advancing Bahinda were able to subdue the Bairu and their lands without much trouble.

Maruo (2002:149), further points out that the Hinda, an offshoot of the Hima dynasty from the present Uganda, came into the area from the north by the fifteenth century. Upon their arrival they soon controlled the majority of the cultivators, and consequently, the society became hierarchically three tiered, whereby three royal Hinda clans dominated about twenty of the other Hinda clans. The cultivators by then consisted of about 100 clans. The latter two groups were not clearly differentiated. They gradually developed a barter system between agricultural and animal products.

The long interactions and intermarriage formed the current Haya. So the Bahinda and the Bairu lived together peacefully, the chief of Bahinda being accepted as the unquestioned ruler (Hellberg 1965:30). For this reason the Hinda/Hima became the ruling class among the Haya until Tanzania became independent in 1961 (Niwagila 1991:27). Religiously, before the advent of world religions, namely Islam and Christianity, the Haya generally shared the same primal religion, culture, life philosophy and social norms that held them together.

### **3.3 Religio-Cultural Background of the Haya Indigenous Community**

In this section, drawing some insights from sociological and anthropological approaches, I explore the religio-cultural background of the Haya indigenous community. I shall argue that to the Haya religion and culture are intrinsically interwoven, therefore to attempt to separate a convert from his traditional religio-context is unintelligible. I shall demonstrate that the fact that the term religion did not exist among the Haya attests that to them religion is a way of life.

Before proceeding further, I assume that for the sake of a better understanding of the religio-cultural background of the Haya indigenous community, it is necessary to define

what culture is and how it relates to Haya Traditional Religion. To social scientists, culture and religion are constructed within a social context of a given society. According to Thompson (1990:12), in his book *Ideology and modern culture*, the concept of culture refers to a range of phenomena and a set of concerns which are shared in a variety of disciplines. Thompson (1990:132) further defines culture based on the hermeneutical perspective of what he calls “symbolic conception” as:

The pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances, and meaning objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions, and beliefs.

Moreover, Robert Montgomery (1999:108) in his book *Introduction to sociology of missions* defines culture as “the symbolic-expressive aspect of social behavior”. Culture is therefore viewed as a social product. It embraces various kinds of social symbols of which people involved in it share. These include religious beliefs.

Furthermore, most social scientists look at culture as consisting of the ideas, objects, and doing things created by the group. It includes arts, beliefs, customs, inventions, languages, technology and traditions and it consists also of learned ways of acting, feeling and thinking (Lugazia 2010:33). On the other hand, John Scott (2007:83) in *Giddens and cultural analysis: Absent word and central concept*, points out that what Giddens, a renowned sociologist well known for his theory of structuration, terms as “structure” is actually what other structuralists and other writers have seen as the cultural codes of social life. Therefore according to Giddens, culture is what he views as a social structure. This is because, as Scott puts it, “culture consists of the underlying rules employed in social interactions and through which social systems are produced” (2007:83).

Furthermore, Charles Kraft, an anthropologist and a missionary, defines culture as the integrated system of learned behaviour patterns which are the characteristics of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance (2002:46). He makes it clear that culture provides a model of reality that governs our perception,

although we may be unaware of what influence culture has upon us (2002:48). This implies that we as human being are a cultural being and the product of the culture to which we belong.

Consequently, Carmel Camilleri in Vicente Carlos Kiaziku, *Culture and inculturation. A Bantu viewpoint*, (2009:38), defines culture as follows:

Culture is the totality of the most persistent and widely shared acquired meanings, more or less strongly inter-connected, which the members of a group, because of their affiliation to that group, are generally led to assign to the stimuli arising from their environment and from themselves, by inducing in response to these stimuli attitude, representations and common valued behavior, whose reproduction tends to be ensured in non-genetic ways.

The discussions above from various writers on the understanding of culture suggest that in any society, religion is an integral component of culture and can by no means be divorced from it. Although some western missionaries in Africa tended to separate individual Christian converts from their socio-cultural context, the understanding of culture suggests that it is not possible to separate religion from culture in African tradition life.

It is also important, however, to point out that culture is dynamic and not static. Culture changes, especially when it is exposed to external influences and contacts. From this we deduce that missionaries in Africa in general, and in Haya in particular, were regarded as changes agents for they were expected to change the African culture through conversion of Haya Africans (Montgomery 1999: 16). Although Montgomery sees missionaries as “changes agents”, yet he points out that Christianity also is changed by culture where it is being hosted. In other words, according to Montgomery, Christianity not only changes or transforms culture, but Christianity itself is also socially constructed by the host culture and society.

While Montgomery (1999:16) observes the changes (transformations) that are always brought about by the missionaries, he also admits the continuity between the religio-cultural aspects of pre Christianity and Christian societies. Montgomery therefore

contends: “The combinations of change and continuity, revolution and conservatism that are associated with religious change, whether stimulated by internal or external factors such as missions, are very complex.”

Haya people, like other societies in the world, have their culture that structures and constructs their life and governs their perceptions of realities and their daily conducts as they strive to face their day-to-day challenges. Their religio-cultural context, as shall be widely discussed later, played a key role towards the application of their conversion to Christianity as point of contact and for the realization of both continuity and discontinuity between Haya Traditional Religion and Christianity. This is because, as Chester (2003: 40) drawing from structuration theory put it:

Conversion means not just that there are many new things to be learnt at the level of discursive consciousness, but also a new set of implicit rules and resources (structure) to be acquired shaping appropriate and competence conduct in host of both contexts. In conversion, perhaps to a greater degree than in many other forms of social activity, these social structures are laid open to transformation. Yet, it must be remembered, this does not eliminate their reproduction for, without an element of reproduction, social activity could not be interpreted. The recursive nature of social life is essential to human ability to make sense of it.

Based on these views I shall argue that the conversion of the Haya to Christianity had to be realized within the Haya religio-cultural context whereby Haya Christians would not only be transformed (discontinuity), but their social context and structure would impact their understanding of Christianity (continuity) based on their religio-cultural frame of reference.

Drawing on socio-anthropological and theological contextual models I explore the Haya cultural life in relation to their Traditional Religion to make my case. To the Haya people their culture is characterized in the beliefs of God and the sense of communal life. In this case an individual is part of the community and a community is a vital component of several individuals. The value of an individual is realized within his or her participation within the entire community. Lutahoire (1974:16), a Haya theologian and a scholar in Northwest Tanzania, who was also a church minister among the Haya and Nyambo,

observes that the Haya philosophy, at all levels of interaction from family to a clan level, lies in his or her love, solidarity, fellowship and spirit of service.

In the same vein Mbiti (1975:110) contends:

According to the African, man's individuality is fulfilled through his participation. In other words, the individual is not a person until the community has accepted him. In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist except cooperatively. He owes his existence to other people, including those of the past generations and his contemporaries.

Mbiti sees the inseparability of African humanity from the community life. Since culture touches fundamental aspects of life, to be a human therefore is to be part of a community's culture.

On the other hand, as pointed out earlier, in Haya traditional society, religion and culture are intrinsically interwoven. Montgomery, writing from a sociological-missiological perspective, points out that "in many traditional societies, religion and culture are so intertwined they are almost identical" (1999:108-109). Culture and Haya primal religion were inseparable as religion was a part of and one of the vital components of the Haya culture. Due to this existing intimacy between Haya Traditional Religion and culture as observed above, I argue that religion is a manifestation of culture of a people and treating religion isolated from culture is unintelligible and, in some sense impossible. This approach suggests that any religion, including Christianity, should be propagated and realized within the people's socio-religious cultural frame of reference.

It goes without saying therefore that Haya religion was part and parcel of their life. Religion to the Haya is the divine force that governs their life. It embraces other spheres of life. Thus the political, cultural, economic, social, temporal and spiritual, secular and religious were intrinsically interwoven in such a way that one could not make a clear demarcation of them. For the Haya, religion and spirituality are life and soul. Religion for them can be described in the words of Mbiti (1970:1):

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it ... philosophy of one kind or another is behind the thinking and acting of every people.

Studies among the Haya show clearly that the social life, culture and politics did not demarcate religion from the rest of life. Sundkler (1980:15) points out that the Haya belonged to various clans and each clan's elder was invested with not only social but also religious responsibilities. Describing some of the clan leader's roles, Sundkler (1980:15) writes:

He is the leader of that home and family religion which is the traditional cult. He offers prayers, thanksgiving and sacrifices to family [ancestors] and greater [ancestors]. He also acts as a marriage counsellor and often as an umpire when it is a question of assessing *makula*, bride wealth (sometimes wrongly referred to as "bride price"), a fundamental institution in the social life of Hayaland as well as in Africa as a whole.

Consequently, among the Haya traditional society, a king was not only a political figure but was responsible for performing religious rituals. The authority of a king was believed to have been institutionalized by God. In other words a King was regarded as a representative of God in the world. His word became a law as long as it served and sustained life and was received unquestionably, for it was believed to be a word of not only a mere king but also a word from God (Rweyemamu 1998:6-7). The term used to refer to a king's word was known as *Kuhanga*, hence a common saying among the Haya - *omukama ahanga* - implies that his word has a divine creative power. This resonates with the Old Testament creation account where God created the world and everything in it except the human being by His word.

In Haya tradition God is the king of kings who appoints human kings as his representatives to maintain the ontological balance between the physical and spiritual world. It was therefore, the responsibility of the socio-political leader to guarantee harmony and order in the Haya community, and that included relationships with the living dead (Rweyemamu 1998:7 also Hellberg 1965: 69). This attests to the close connection

between the spiritual and temporal as they were not separated,<sup>34</sup> a fact that shows that for the Haya, life is embedded in the sphere of their religio-cultural life. Furthermore, during a crisis in the kingdom, a king was responsible for offering sacrifices to ancestors and for the anticipated victory and protection of soldiers and the entire kingdom. This implies that politics and religion were interconnected.

When dealing with Haya religio-cultural life we are faced with the question of what religion means to the Haya. Is it just a cultural phenomenon or a way of life which is just taken for granted? How does one acquire religion? How could that influence their understanding of conversion to Christianity? What could be the conversion pattern and models that could fit into their religio-cultural and contextual frame of reference which could be applied by missionaries during Christianization? To deal with these questions we need to investigate the nature of Haya religion and how it influences their life.

### **3.4 The Nature of Haya Traditional Religion**

The nature of Haya Traditional Religion is based on how the Haya understand their religion. They understand religion as a way of life. To them religion is part and parcel of their day-to-day life. Almost everything is related to religion in the sense of being related to the Deity or spiritual world. There is no moment when one is converted into a religion. To be a member of the community is to be religious. The Haya religious life, just like any other African society, is rightly reflected in the words of Tinkaligaile, a pastor and a theologian in the Lutheran church, Northwest Tanzania, among the Haya and Nyambo people both of Northwest Tanzania as quoted in Sundkler (1980:46).

In our country, tradition, philosophy, custom and all kinds of sciences were marked by religion. Every child is born into the religion of its forefathers. It is difficult to define the time when a person first came to participate in the fellowship of our religion, for it happened early, even before birth. Everything was related to religion.

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<sup>34</sup>Niwagila clarifies that in time of crisis such as wars, famine, epidemic diseases or natural calamities in his kingdom, a king was responsible to call priests, mediums or diviners to perform religious rituals (1991:43, see also Rweyemamu 1998:7).

What Tinkaligaile points out suggests the following which can be deduced from his views. First, religion among the Haya embraces all kinds of life spheres. Religion is part and parcel of the Haya people as a community. No one could do without a religion. Religion to the Haya therefore is part of their cultural life, hence Haya are by nature religious. Secondly, conversion into the Haya Traditional Religion is inborn since everyone is born in the religion of their parents and ancestors. Third, the time when Haya became religious is as old as the Haya themselves. This is supported by what Professor Byaruhanga-Akiiki observes, when he argues that religion in Africa has been historically conceived as being as old as humankind, thus the label “traditional religion” (2007:122). Fourth, the understanding of conversion among the Haya may be different from the way the term conversion is perceived in the Christian way of understanding, since it is acquired within the culture and not preached about or propagated by missionaries. To the Haya, conversion is not the isolation of an individual from his/her relationship with the community of the living and the living dead.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to point out that for the Haya, as for other Africans, religion is not expressed through fixed creedal formulations or theological documents or doctrines as is the case in Christianity and probably in other world religions, but simply in daily utterances and through encountering daily challenges of life. In the absence of scripture, oral “literature” in the form of “myths, stories, riddles, proverbs, invocations, affirmations and symbols has been used as an instrument for preserving and passing on Haya religious beliefs from one generation to another”(Rwehumbiza 1983:124).

It is important to note that in this context for the Haya, and indeed for Africans in general, religion is practiced and perceived by all people in the society just as they participate in any other cultural practice. Religion to them is not limited to a certain sphere of life; rather it involves all aspects of life. Some scholars believe that to the Haya people all phases of life from birth to death are regarded as a single entity or a way of life which absorbs one’s whole being (Kahakwa 2007:184). According to Byaruhanga-Akiiki, religion in the whole of Africa means “life”. He adds, “this is a reality that is lived in a



cobweb of relationships in the three life environments, i.e. the womb, the earthly world and the spirit world” (2007:121).

So what Byaruhanga-Akiiki observes leads us to conclude that, for the Haya, their Traditional Religion is acquired right from the womb, practiced in the earthly life and is destined for the spirit world. To the Haya therefore, conversion is more than a change of religion and adoption of new ways, but rather a clear attitude towards the realization of completion of an individual in total integration with others in the community that include both spiritual and physical realms involving unborn, living and the living dead. In Haya traditional society conversion (*akuinduka/okwechuzza*), is an attitude and spiritual far more than physical and a change of a religion.

### 3.5 Concept of God, Holism and Community Life

As pointed out earlier, the Haya people, just as any other African society prior to the inroads of world religions such as Christianity and Islam, since time immemorial have been strictly religious. Josiah Kibira (1964:107), the first African bishop among the Haya Lutheran Christians who also later became a first African president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), writes: “Christianity didn’t just fall into a vacuum in Buhaya ... it was introduced into a complicated indigenous religion, culture, cult and philosophy” (cf. Rweyemamu 1998:1).

Thus Christianity in Northwest Tanzania found the Haya with their Traditional Religion whereby they adored, venerated and worshipped God the Almighty, whom they called *Katonda* or *Ruhanga*<sup>35</sup>. Kahakwa (2010), a pastor and a theologian among the Haya in Northwest Tanzania who has explored the Haya interpretation of the Christian concept of God – *Ruhanga*, came out with the findings that the Haya had thought forms and patterns that illuminate the concept of the Trinitarian God when they evoked the Deity in threefold

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<sup>35</sup> *Ruhanga* comes out of the word *Kuhanga* in Haya language. *Kuhanga* denotes two things: 1. To create or to make something very carefully. 2. To speak – this is only used for a king. For a commoner it is *kugamba* – to speak. Therefore Haya people believe that *Luhanga* creates (*hanga*) through speaking (*hanga*). This means, according to Haya, the creator creates through or by his Word. (See Kibira 1974:111).

form (*Kazoba aka Ishe Ruhanga aka Tata Ntangaire*”), a concept which facilitates a better Haya understanding of a Trinitarian God in the Christian version.

In line with Kahakwa, it is further fascinating to find out that probably it is not only the Haya people who had the notion and thought patterns that appear similar to the concept of the Trinity in their understanding of God, but other ethnic groups in neighbouring western Tanzanian also did. Earlier Byaruhanga-Akiki (1992:202-203), an outstanding theologian in the interlucustrine area in Uganda, a neighbouring country of Northwest Tanzania, wrote:

I became aware for the first time that in the traditional [understanding of God] (*Ruhanga*) there existed a Trinitarian understanding of God that is almost the same as the Christian one ... this was the first time that I had ever come across this claim, namely that the Banyankole and the Bakiga, Nyoro and Toro had a Trinitarian concept of God prior to the arrival of Christianity and that it had been so well and clearly stated compared to the Christian Trinitarian doctrine.

Kahakwa (2010:336-337), believes that God had prepared the Haya indigenous people to understand the Trinitarian God in Christian version when he writes:

... the reality of the Trinity which could be accessed in most if not all religions does not depend on human formulation or doctrines but essentially on God’s initiatives, as it was revealed to humanity at different times and contexts. On this basis, Haya-Africans and Christians both claim to have experienced the same Trinitarian notion being experienced differently according to each given time and context. It entails Christianization of the later Trinitarian experience of God and indigenization of former’s Trinitarian experience of God, for a better identification and perception of the Christian Trinitarian concept of God.

Captivated by such an understanding, he therefore suggested that Haya African Trinitarian invocation of the Deity could be applied to “interpret, indigenize and understand the Christian Trinitarian model with emphasis on highlighting the links and relations between and among aspects or persons according to each Trinitarian model ...” (2010: 332-333).

The concept of God, and indeed the understanding of God in general in the Haya religion, preceded the Christian missionary work. The Christian missionaries used the same

concept of God that existed since time immemorial to articulate the understanding of God of the Bible. Sundkler (1980:46) put it, “it was taken for granted that the idea of the existence of God – *Ruhanga* or *Katonda*, as the name later became in Christian vocabulary – was beyond discussion”. Christianity among the Haya did not bring a new concept but it applied the same concept from the Haya religion to refer to the God of Christianity. This fact justifies the argument that the same God whom the Haya, and indeed all Africans worshipped, was the same God – the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was later preached by missionary Christianity in Buhaya. What Mbiti, an outstanding scholar of African Traditional Religion, notes therefore applies to the Haya Traditional Religion. Mbiti (1980:818) contends:

The God described in the Bible is none other than the God who is already known in the framework of our traditional African religiosity. The missionary who introduced the Gospel to Africa in the 2000 years did not bring God to our continent. Instead God brought *them*. They proclaimed the name of Jesus. But they used the name of God who was already known by African people such as *Mungu*, *Mulung*, *Katonda*, *Ngai*, *Olodumare*, *Asis*, *Ruwa*, *Ruhanga*, *Jock*, *Modimo*, *Unkulunkulu* and thousands more. These were not empty names. They were names of one and the same God, the creator of the world, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Naturally the Haya people perceived God from their own worldview. The result of this is the anthropomorphic attributes ascribed to God related to his different functions as Father, Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Chief, Judge, Lord and so forth. The nature of God therefore is shown by numerous attributes ascribed to him. These appear in their prayers, myths, proverbs, songs, to mention but a few. The Haya perceive *Ruhanga* (God) as omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendental and immanent (cf. Mbiti 1980:33). Exemplifying this notion, Kabigumila (2005:49), a pastor and a theologian in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania, in his Doctoral research writes:

The concept of God [among the Haya] can be .... defined into the etymological study of the name *Owamaisho nk' Olugega* (the one who sees everywhere). The use of the term omniscient arises from the notion that God knows everything. We can discern the concept of an omniscient God if we study other conceptual attributes of God such as *Katonda amanya Byona* (God who knows all). To the

Haya people that means God's knowledge is unlimited. God has full knowledge of everything, everywhere, always and in all creation.

To the Haya, God knows each behaviour and movement of every creature. He is the one who is in full control of every situation. He controls human thought and he is the one "who governs all things that were known in the past, those that are known now and those that will be known in the future" (Kabigumila 2005: 49). This knowledge of God attests to the fact that the God whom the Haya worshipped prior to Christianity is the same God known to Christianity, who transcends human knowledge and who intervenes in every situation.

It is therefore clear that Christian Religion and other religions such as Islam, found them to be religious people. For them religion was a way of life. According to the Haya, life is in totality, there is no formal demarcation between the secular and religious, sacred and profane, no temporal and spiritual (Keshomshahara 2008:27). The term religion as some scholars like Kahakwa (2010) and Lynch (2006) have suggested is the imported concept among the Africans, in this case among the Haya as well. Lynch (2006:24) in *Finding and losing faith* is right when he points out that the term religion is a concept developed within western culture and doesn't seem to apply in some other parts of the world like Africa.

To understand better the religious philosophy of the Haya in particular and Africans in general, what Mbiti (1980: 818) observes may be helpful:

Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a political he takes it to the parliament.

To Mbiti an African is strictly religious and for him dichotomization of life from religion is impossible. Religion and life in general are integrated. One cannot be without religion, for religion is life in the African way of life and thinking. Religion according to the society encompasses almost the whole sphere of life. What Mbiti observes above works in

parallel with what Sundkler reports concerning the Haya Traditional Religion (1980:46-47):

For the Haya, existence consisted not of religion and other activities, for the one separated from the other, but religion was the totality of life – with one dimension, ritual, dominating all else. Hunting in the Savanna, sowing and harvesting in the fields, preparing beer in the *Shamba*, fishing on the lake, rain and sun, the fertility of women and the transition through death to another form of life – all these activities and stages were encompassed by ritual and received their characteristic rhythms from it. Here God was not a problem but the sum and total of life.

What Sundkler, and other scholars of African Religion like Mbiti observe with regards to African Religion being a totality of life, clearly suggests the reason why among the Haya and Africans in general the term religion did not exist. It was only later when the Haya had contact with the outside world that religion started to be referred to as *edini*, which is a Swahili term that was introduced later after the Arabic interaction with Tanzanian Africans. The word *dini* stems from Arabic background that has been used in our contemporary times to distinguish what is religious and secular (cf. Keshomshahara 2008:26).

In most cases when the term *dini* is used today in the Haya community it refers to two major religions, namely Christianity and Islam. The term *dini* being imported ideas from the foreign countries, as Sundkler (1980:46) points out, was precipitated by the foreigners' belief that Africans had no religion. So to them religion was Christianity and Islam, the common and foreign major religions in the Haya community. Missionary Christianity perpetuated this understanding among the Haya community. This indicates the absence of clear knowledge of missionary Christianity about the nature of Haya Traditional Religion.

However, some missionaries and theologians who worked in the Haya community assert that to the Haya religion is “neither speculative and abstract nor exclusive but is concretely and inclusively practiced” (Kahakwa 2003:44). The point made here is that religion among the Haya and indeed among the Africans is much more lived out than being intellectually theologized. To use the words of Sundkler, religion among the Haya “is not so much thought out as danced out” (1980:47). It is experienced and participated

and involves the entire community and so it is communal. Haya Traditional Religion was inclusive as it did not only include the living, but also the unborn and the departed.

### **3.6 Haya Religious Worldview and Spirituality**

Worldview has been defined as “people’s systematization of the conception of reality, and their response to it; and from which stems their moral virtues” (Gitonga 2008:190. It comprises both local and universal components. Local components comprise people’s environment with its geographical features, and historical experience, while universal components have to do with people’s conception of the universe that comprises invisible and visible things as well as living and nonliving things (Gitonga 2008:19). It is therefore of vital importance to understand the Haya religious worldview in as much as their relation to the Supreme Being is concerned.

African worldview has been considered to express life into two worlds – the visible world and the invisible (spiritual) world. Thus human beings, animals and plants among others live in the visible world whereas God, ancestors and gods inhabit the invisible world (Samwini 2011:41). To Africans the physical and spiritual world are connected. Actually Africans believe that the spiritual world controls the physical world. Samwini (2011: 41) maintains that:

All Africans believe in the providence of God which supplies to his people through ancestors and the gods who give rains in good time to mature the crop, which protects his people from dangerous animals when they go out to the bush and multiplies his people through safe childbearing and good health. God has made everything good available for the wellbeing of his people.

For this reason the solution to any life problems should be traced in the spiritual world where God, ancestors and other good or bad spirits operate from, as it is strongly believed that the spiritual world influences what takes place in the physical world.

On the other hand, African spirituality has been defined in connection to “the way Africans experienced their God and expressed their faith through songs, rituals, and symbols” (Lugazia 2010:34). The Haya people and Africans in general have always been

strictly spiritual. Their religious worldview and spirituality played a key role in their reception of Christianity. Lugazia's arguments are worth noting:

I ... argue that African spirituality and worldviews should be seen as a fertile ground for the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By tending to ignore its contribution to African Christianity, mainline Christianity in Africa remains, for many Africans –including those who attend their churches – alien to their experience of God.

In line with these views Mbiti (1970:430-43) sees African culture, spirituality and worldview as fertile ground where Christianity should be nurtured and grown when he writes:

We can do nothing to the Gospel, for this is the eternal gift of God; but Christianity is always a beggar seeking food and drink, cover and shelter from the cultures encountered in its never-ending journeys and wonderings.

This metaphor of Mbiti's has been regarded as an essential concept in inculturation and contextualization of African Christianity. It affirms that the African religio-cultural social life prepared Africans to receive the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel needs to find a home in the African religio-cultural life if it is to be relevant to the indigenous people.

Many African scholars agree that the African religious worldview is based on strict and serious spirituality which is an important aspect of African culture. The African conceptualization of spirituality may be at variance with the Christian understanding of spirituality. As has been argued elsewhere in this research, the religion of Africans just like other religions has been realized within their cultural frame of reference.

Lugazia (2010) discussing African spirituality and its relevance today emphasizes that "[t]he praxis of African spirituality was fully-fledged in the pre-modern world and will likely endure the post-modern world, even if it means re-emerging in a transformed or modified form". This suggests that the future of Christianity in Africa, and in our case among the Haya, will not help but draw on spirituality and other religious resources from the African traditional religious social-cultural context. Adding to this on African

spirituality and worldview, Cornel du Toit (1998:43) maintains that in Africa, spirituality is realized in various ways. He writes, “we celebrate our spirituality in songs, rituals and symbols which show the energizing Spirit animating the community to move together in response to God.”

Other features of Haya African primal religion have been regarded as communalism, holism, reciprocity, generosity, mutuality and interdependence. Balcomb (2011:5) sees the missiological implications in these African primal religious spiritual features, and therefore suggests that the African church must take these characteristics seriously for the Gospel to be incarnated into African life because they constitute the soil into which the seed of the Gospel must be sown. Otherwise, he says, “the church grows in number and often several miles, but only a few inches deep.”

With regards to Haya spirituality and worldview Mutembei (1993:254), in his socio-historiographical work on *Kristo au Wamara* observes that spirituality among the Haya religion prior to Christianity was not insignificant. Mutembei sees that this spirituality in the Haya Traditional Religion, as shall be discussed below, prepared the Haya people to receive and make sense of Christianity on their conversion during early Christianization in the region.

People in the Traditional Religion lived a sanctified life and what was considered sin in their socio-community life was dealt with very seriously through what was known as *omuteego* (noun) or *okuteega* (verb), which meant an action of reporting evil things done by someone to God or gods. This shaped the behaviour and social life of the community. Justice was highly maintained in Haya society because many people feared *omuteego*. Even if sin is more than immoral deeds, as it cannot be theologically reduced to social justice it should be born in mind that, as we pointed out earlier, to the Haya spirituality and social life were not really separated.

Another feature that characterized the spirituality in the Haya religion was the spirit of worship and sacrifices. The Haya spirit and commitment to worship, according to



Mutembei, (1993:254-255), was highly observed and maintained among them. People worshipped in various sacred places set apart for that purpose which included sacred big trees, *ebigabiro*, in the houses, and in shrines normally built outside the house known as *omushonge* (round shaped houses).

Mutembei further points out that this spirituality influenced early Christianity in Buhaya. Prayers, offerings, worship and veneration of God were characterized by traditional religious practices prior to Christianity. This was the reason why early Christianity among the Haya was full of spirituality and charismatic features which previously dominated Haya Traditional Religion. This observation is exemplified by early Haya Christian converts like Pastor Jonathan Karoma, Sylvester Machumu and others. Sundkler (1980:75) reports on Pastor Jonathan Karoma as one of the famous charismatic pastors in the early church of Haya. His pastoral ministry was dominated by signs, wonders and miracles just as was the case of the apostles of the early church (Sundkler 1980:77-79, see also Mutembei 1993:255). Mutembei (1993:255-256) asserted that this kind of spirituality and charismatic personality were based on their primal region before their conversion to Christianity.

Sundkler emphasises that the spiritual quality of the Haya early Christians was highly influenced by their traditional religiosity and roles they played in their Traditional Religion. In this case he cites an example of Pastor Karoma, whose charismatic character originated from being a son of an *embandwa* (priest-diviner) and he had originally been an *embandwa*'s apprentice (1980:75).

From traditional spirituality and experience which actually embraced all kinds of human activities and life in general, Sundkler reports on one example of where Pastor Jonathan Karoma, who was among the early Christian converts and a pastor among the Haya, in his congregation used to pray for women bearing seeds in the fields before they were planted, a common ritual in the Haya Traditional Religion. Sundkler (1980:75) writes:

Thus a ritual for the blessing of the seed emerged naturally. The women brought the seed with them to the church in baskets, which were placed at the altar. The pastor read the Bible text and prayed that the work in the fields would be blest. Then followed them into the fields where he also prayed before they began to work.

From the above Sundkler story one can infer the following key analysis.

One, the Haya Traditional Religion played a key role in reception and understanding of Christianity. Second, the Haya Traditional Religion shaped Christianity among the Haya's first generation Christians. Third, Christianity among the Hayas was challenged to embrace all kinds of life, including preparation of the ground and planting crops. The idea was if Christianity was to be relevant to the Haya new converts, it was challenged to address all the questions of life including planting of seeds and all other spheres of life, just as was the case in Haya primal religion. From the structuration point of view, we can argue that Christianity transformed the Haya. However, Haya Christians drew rules and resources from their traditional religious spirituality to make sense of their new faith in Christ. That was therefore, in the language of structuration theory, a transformation and reproduction.

This resonates with what the Lutheran World Federation discussed on *worship in African contexts of holism*. It was pointed out that, when one speaks of worship with regard to Lutheran churches in Africa, it is essential to consider the holistic shape of religion in many African societies – an important feature of African primal religion. For to Africans religion is commonly understood in its purer sense – way of life, for as Bishop Ambrose Moyo (1996:2) put it:

In the holistic worldview characteristic of all Africa, there can be no separation between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the material. Religion interweaves everything. Hence, asking an African, What is your religion? Is like asking, what is your way of life?

This understanding has a considerable implication in their comprehension of Christianity as a way of life. Within African context, religion as a way of life is far from

individualistic. It is rooted in and lived through human community and all of creation. Religion in Africa isn't just metaphysical but physical. It has to address both spiritual and physical existential issues. The validity of a religion that remains silent in these issues is questioned.

So far it has been in general discussed and pointed out that the Haya like other Africans were actively religious even before the advent of western Christian missionaries. For them, religion was part and parcel of their life and it was strongly embedded in their cultural life. We have seen how the Haya are strictly spiritual and how their spirituality was based on their rituals, songs, symbols and caring for nature. Their religion was communal and inclusive. Spirituality to the Haya, as we have seen, went beyond the living as it embodied the unborn and the living dead. The question we ask is: what does this mean in relation to their reception of Christianity. Could Haya Traditional Religion have created an arena for a viable and authentic Christianization of Haya or in other words can Haya Traditional Religion be regarded as *praeparatio evangelica*?

In the following sub-section it shall be indicated that the Haya religio-cultural practice and spirituality prior to Christianity was a *praeparatio evangelica* which could have served as fertile soil for Christianity to grow and flourish if missionary Christianity would have taken seriously the religious knowledge that the Haya had acquired since time immemorial. To this end, I shall engage scholars who see African Traditional religious discourse as preparation for the Gospel in Africa. Being aware that there are some other scholars who do not agree with this notion, I shall later engage their critical voices before I draw a conclusion.

### 3.7 Haya African Traditional Religion: A *praeparatio evangelica*<sup>36</sup>?

When discussing Haya African Traditional Religion as a *praeparatio evangelica*, I argue that Haya Traditional Religion was and still is a potential for reception and actualization of an authentic Christian conversion in Northwest Tanzania, since the Haya need to draw rules and resources from their religio-cultural traditional context as they realize authentic conversion as a consequence of reproduction and transformation brought by the Gospel, hence a need for an integrative approach as an inevitable option.

A study of African Traditional Religion shows that people in African societies and cultures knew God even before Christianity was introduced to Africa by missionaries from the west. It is clear that God has been at work among the Africans ever since they came to receive Christianity, a fact that suggests that African Religion had been a preparation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some scholars who have done careful research into African Traditional Religion such as Mbiti, Walls, Bediako, Shoter, just to mention a few, have viewed African Religion as preparation for the Christian Gospel. They argue that just as Jewish religion was a preparation for Israelites to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ so is African Religion.

Mbiti (1980:819), while acknowledging the work of the Holy Spirit in the rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa, points out that the fundamental factor for such a remarkable phenomenon is the contribution of African Traditional Religion. He notes that without African Religion the phenomenon of expansion of Christianity would not be a reality. What Mbiti points out suggests that African Traditional Religion has laid a good foundation for the establishment and rapid growth of Christianity in Africa.

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<sup>36</sup> In discussing African Traditional Religion as a *praeparatio evangelica*, I limit myself from entering into a deep debate from the theology of religions' scholarship debates regarding the typology of various approaches of Christianity to other religions like: *exclusivistic* approach – salvation/truth found only in Christianity, *inclusivistic* approach – salvation/truth found only in Christianity but may be mediated through other religions and philosophies, and *pluralistic* approach – Christianity simply one of the means of salvation/truth among many others. For those interested in details read Paul F. Knitter (1985), *No other name? A critical survey of Christian attitudes towards the world religions*, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (1988), *The myth of Christian uniqueness, toward a pluralistic theology of religions*, see also Andrew Kirk (1999), and Alan Race (1993).

Consequently, Andrew Walls (1996:4-5), a renowned theologian in African Christianity and once a missionary in West Africa, in line with Mbiti argues that the exponential growth of Christianity in Africa is an indication that African Traditional Religion has played a significant role in this. He sees the on going life of traditional African Religion lying within African Christianity. He contends: “What happens in African Christianity is only intelligible in the light of what has gone before in the African religious story”. To him, “African Christianity is shaped by African past” (1996:4). By “African past” he means the African religio-cultural context from which modern African Christianity has grown. By so doing he affirms the continuity of African Religion and Christianity as an indication of African Religion being a base for Christianity in Africa.

In the same line of thought, Bishop Mdegella (2005:30-31) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania in his Doctoral dissertation argues that:

[Africans] believed prior to Christianization and how the encounter of that kind of belief with Christian faith brought forth an effect of cross-fertilization that became instrumental in opening the door for Christianization. The aspect of cross-fertilization is considered as the way in which adherents of [African Traditional Religion] interpreted the proclaimed Gospel in relation to their pre-Christian or pre-missionary experience.

Mdegella considers the African pre-missionary experiences that consist of the belief in God, the centrality of ancestors, the belief in the reality of the spiritual realm, and the significance of diviners against malevolent and supernatural forces that characterize African Religion, should be seen as *praeparatio evangelica* that prepared Africans for Christianization (2005:31). Furthermore, other scholars like Bediako (1996:85ff) and recently Lugazia (2010:28-32) have doubtless considered African Religion not only as preparation for the Christian Gospel, but as a basic clue to the very reason why Christianity has grown in Africa.

Bediako (1996) in his work, *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-western religion*, also argues that African Christianity practiced in Africa today has taken a model of

assimilation from the African worldview. African worldview and spirituality have provided the skills and habits necessary for African Christians to act and participate within their society, and Christianity has incorporated new concepts into existing schemes. Bediako opposes, in his case, missionaries acting as enlightened spiritual masters who pass on the Gospel to disciples or Africans who have responded to Christianity.

Bediako sees Christianity and the African Traditional Religion as one entity operating equally in the living faith, real-life situations and in the field experiences of Africans. How Africans respond to Christianity, in his view, is determined by what they believed in the past. Bediako sets out to show the potential and capability of the faith for the realities of African life through what he called “indigenization and rooting of Christianity in African life by claiming for it a past in the spiritual harvests of the African pre-Christian religious heritage” (1996:76).

Bediako (1996:76) contends that African Christians weave new patterns following some lines of similarity, but also making their religious experience an organic, unified one. He therefore asks the attention of those learning African Christianity to turn “from the mode of transmission towards the mode of assimilation”. Bediako further points out the role of the primal religions and cultures from his own experiences. He believes there must be a continuation because the model used by missionaries for transplanting Christianity to Africans left some marks which differentiated African Christians from their brothers and sisters in Africa. These marks are not of faith, which we learn from Paul in Galatians 6:1ff, but marks of Euro-American culture, which promote individualism and privacy of Christian faith.

Bediako therefore suggests a model of assimilation which supports this continuity of African Traditional Religion. Christianity, as a part of Africans, must integrate the spirituality and worldview of the people in Africa under the work of the creating, saving, and sustaining God.

Turner (1977:27) equally, viewing the African primal religion as preparation for Christianity in African conversion, points out affinities of African primal religion and Christianity as an indication of such an important assertion. He argues:

There seem to be affinities between the Christian and primal traditions, an affinity that perhaps appears in common reaction when Christian missions first arrived (“this is what we have been waiting for”) and that is further evident in the vast range of new religious movements born from the interaction between the primal religions and Christianity and in no comparable degree in the reaction of primal religions to their meeting with the other universal religions.

According to Gitonga (2008:100) “this affinity is precipitated by God’s revelation, knowledge and moral values contained in indigenous cultures and which serve as preparatory roots for the Gospel”. Walligo (1986:25-26), also sharing the same sentiments, observes fundamental points with which I concur when looking at African culture and religion as a preparation for the Gospel of Christ when he explains:

Men and women of every age have been able to search for God and often have succeeded in finding this Supreme Being and in worshipping Him. They have formed a morality that has been able to promote their societies and enable them to live good and exemplary lives. They have had their cultures, which reflect their philosophy of life, their worldview and their aspirations. The institutions they have set contain much of value for our entire humanity. All these and many more good elements have been real preparatory roots for the Gospel.

It is clear from Waligo that God dealt with the Africans, including the Haya people in the same way as He dealt with the Israelites in the Old Testament, preparing them for Christ. The conversion of the Haya into Christianity therefore was precipitated by God through their culture, values, norms, traditions and religion. For the missionaries to uproot these essential elements and replace them with western Christianity was like having Jewish Christianity without Old Testament Judaism, or to put it in another way, it was like having a tree without roots. Along these lines Shorter (1974:70) writes:

In the light of scriptures and the church’s understanding of scriptures, the African can understand his non-Christian cultural tradition as a preparation for the Gospel. In this sense alone can one speak of African’s Old Testament.

Having this in mind, Shorter perceives African Religion and culture as good and holy, but incomplete. As Jesus came to fulfil the law (Matt. 5:17), so the Gospel has to fulfil or complement the culture. He therefore calls the church not to condemn the African religio-tradition and culture, but to make it more meaningful. Shorter (1974:313) further contends:

The deepest desire of the church is not to colonize others to impose alien cultural traditions on them or to violate the human rights to an authentic culture ... through the Good News, the church desires to make these cultural traditions more genuine and more true, if that were possible, to their own original insights. Through the power of Christ's love, these cultures can be raised to a new and more glorious life.

Shorter in this point observes the concept of continuity between Christian converts and their Traditional Religion, however, in a transformed way. He sees that Christianity has the power to transform the culture through the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is clear to me that Shorter's points challenge the church and indeed the missionaries today to be careful not to impose alien culture with Christianity thinking that this is what Christianity should be. The church should not colonize others when doing mission to and among them.

Looking at it from our context we need to acknowledge that Christianity in Africa cannot claim to have brought the idea of God or religion, but to fulfil it in Jesus Christ. Hence Warren in Bevans (2003:48-49) challenges missionaries to approach peoples of another faith with a sense of humility, for God has been active among people of all nations and cultures including the Haya. He writes:

When we approach the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.



The whole idea of Warren reminds all the missionaries of all times to know that they cannot bring the knowledge of God to people of other cultures, for God makes himself known to all people in all cultures and in all times. From mission as *Missio Dei* perspective, one needs to acknowledge that it is God who does His mission to His people through human beings as agents. Although human beings are not perceived as agents they need to approach people of other cultures with humility as God has been active preparing them for His kingdom.

From what proponents of African Traditional Religion as *praeparatio evangelica* observe leads us to suggest that Haya Traditional Religion has played a significant role of being a Christianity *praeparatio evangelica* in Northwest Tanzania prior to missionary Christianity activities in this part of Africa. Having this in mind, Kibira in Sundkler (1980:44) understands that the Haya had the religion which could prepare the missionaries' ground through which they could preach the Gospel. He contends:

When the foreign missionaries came to our country (Haya area)<sup>37</sup>, they did not preach to people with heads like empty boxes. No, these people had their religion, their ways of life, their social philosophy, their medicine, their traditions and their history.

Here the implication is that just as God dealt with the Israelites in the Old Testament and prepared them to receive salvation in Jesus Christ, so He did to the Haya. He did not leave them alone but walked with them. He lived with them through forefathers as He did with the Israelites and prepared them to receive Christ through their Traditional Religion. Tinkaligaile quoted by Sundkler (1980:45-46), makes important remarks:

If Moses had worked in Africa and chosen to write his Genesis here, he would have purified our traditions. And thus he would have created chapters 1 to 9 as he did in Genesis. The African has many myths of creation, and their aim is to show that God is creator of men and all things, and that death comes from disobedience. We too have been prepared by God. We were not left to an uncertain destiny. Like the Jews we should also remind ourselves of these great events in our history. Let

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<sup>37</sup> The words in brackets are my addition. The word "our country" in this context does not have the same meaning as we understand it today. "Haya area" was regarded as a Haya country in Ruhaya language – *Eihanga lya Buhaya*, which was translated in English as a Haya country.

us not build in the air, or raise a superstructure, but first of all let us think of the ground floor.

Tinkaligaile sees Haya Traditional Religion as a *praeparatio evangelica* for the Haya people. These views lead us to suggest that missionaries who worked among the Haya should have known that they did not bring God to the Haya people, but God Himself who had been with the Haya and made Himself known to them from their religio-cultural religion, brought them. He is this God who brought the Christian missionaries to the Haya.

As we have noted earlier, God was not a stranger to the Haya people. Spiritual activities like prayer, thanksgiving and offering of sacrifices were well established as facts of life for the existence and continuation of the community. It is important therefore to agree with Steven Bevans when he argues that human culture is good, holy and valuable for it is in human culture that we find God's revelation to His people (2003:49). Although Bevans sees that human culture is good, holy and valuable, it is important, however, to point out that human culture is not perfect for it is human; hence it needs to be challenged and transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that the task of the missionaries was not supposed to bring to the Haya a new religion or a new culture, history, tradition and social philosophy, but to present Jesus Christ in the life of the Haya people, who has been active preparing them to receive Him through their Traditional Religion.

It is important, however, to point out that both continuity and discontinuity among the Haya first generation Christians were clearly noted. On the side of continuity, Mutembei (1993:255) points out that those who were active and probably leaders in the Haya Traditional Religion, became pastors and strong leaders in the church after their conversion to Christianity. Discontinuity was noticed when early converts were transformed into a new society that could no longer accept old ways that compromised them with the nature and status of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 3.8 Some Critiques on the Idea of *praeparatio evangelica*

Although it has been argued that Haya Traditional Religion was the fertile soil in which the seeds of the Gospel could grow and flourish, hence, preparing Haya people to receive Christianity as pointed out earlier, not all theologians agree with this notion. The whole idea of seeing African Traditional Religion as *praeparatio evangelica* is vehemently refuted by some, mainly evangelical theologian scholars such as: Keith Ferdinando<sup>38</sup> (2007), Miroslav Volf (1996), Byang Kato (1975), Hendrik Kraemer (1947) and many others. These view Christianity as a special revelation, and hardly see any continuity in it with other non-Christian religions and philosophy. Here I critically explore the writing of some of these theologians as an example for their critiques regarding the idea of *praeparatio evangelica*.

With regard to conversion to Christianity, Ferdinando, an evangelical theologian, based on the work of Kwame Bediako, *Theology and identity*, rejects the whole idea of seeing African Traditional Religion as a preparation to Christianity. He argues (2007:133) that religions do not prepare their adherents for the revelation of Christ for, according to Paul's attitude to the non-Christian religions and philosophy of his time, this seems to be quite categorically apparent when he points out that, "The world through its wisdom did not know [God]" (1Cor. 1:21). Ferdinando, using his knowledge of Paul's statement, limits himself to see God's revelation in Christianity alone and so he sees other religions and philosophy to be based on human wisdom. He doesn't seem to think that God's love and His engagement with His people of all times and locations might have been extended beyond the limit of Christianity's revelation.

Ferdinando refutes the idea that Africans prior to Christianity worshipped the same God whom Christians worship. He therefore points out that the fact that adherents of African Traditional Religion may have worshipped a single supreme being does not justify that the one they worshipped can be simply identified with the God and Father of Jesus Christ. He further argues that, although the African people may have conceived of a creator god, they

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<sup>38</sup> See "Christian identity in the African context: Reflections on Kwame Bediako's theology and identity" (Unpublished document), 121-143.

took him to be remote and largely uninvolved in their daily affairs, and rarely if ever addressed him worship to him. He sees that Africans had no direct worship of God. Instead they directed their attention to the lesser spirit beings (ancestors) which is an indication that there is no adequate recognition that the greater power of the one God could really “be concerned with this or that side of one’s small life” (2007:127-8).

Ferdinando (2007:134) therefore sees that the central aspect of Christian faith has no real parallels or point of contact in African Traditional Religion. He restricts himself to see such a parallel of New Testament Christianity in the Old Testament only. He alludes to the following:

African Traditional Religion may indeed be a response to some sort of universal revelation of God, but that does not mean that it is salvific or in any way a preparation for the Gospel. It contains no promise and expects no fulfilment.

Ferdinando strongly argues that the Gospel is counter-cultural and challenges the existing culture and replaces it with an alternative society. He writes:

By its nature, the Gospel is counter-cultural, and where it is sincerely embraced local churches become alternative societies with a distinct lifestyle, one that is governed by the values of the kingdom of God (2007:135).

In this case, he regards Christianity as a religion distinct from Traditional Religion that has the power to transform the society of believers. In other words, Ferdinando sees Christianity as a religion that can not only transform the culture in question, but change it completely. Christian religion, according to him, plays an important role in changing the existing culture in which the Gospel is presented. Religious change, he emphasizes, necessarily entails cultural change, for Christianity by its very nature is an agent of cultural change (2007:136).

Miroslav Volf (1996:39) in his work on *Exclusion and embrace: A theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation*, appears to support Ferdinando’s ideas when he writes:

The narrative of Abraham's call underlines that stepping out of enmeshment in the network of inherited cultural relations is a correlate of faith in the one God ... To be a child of Abraham and Sarah and to respond to the call of their God means to make an exodus, start a journey, to become a stranger (Gen. 23:4, 24:19). It is a mistake, I believe, to complain too much about Christianity being "alien" in a given culture.

Volf's views above suggest that to be a Christian is to completely move away from the former beliefs. It is as if conversion would be a dramatic break away from the past as one becomes a Christian. This understanding, to my view, allows very little possibility of seeing conversion as both a continuity and discontinuity.

Although one cannot completely ignore the points Ferdinando and Volf make, still these views seem to overlook the fact that Christianity needs the old knowledge (Traditional Religion) as a socio-cultural context through which a convert constructs and interprets a new knowledge (in this case Christianity). Any understanding of a new reality cannot stand on its own, for any knowledge needs to be conveyed from known to unknown if it is to make sense to the recipients.

Ferdinando's ideas, however, do not seem to be consistent when he argues that in some cases Christian converts may adopt traditional symbols of their culture to interpret their new faith (2007:137). He further says, "no religion (new) can be relevant to a people if it neglects any area of their total experience as perceived by them" (2007:142). In this case, one can raise some questions. Is the adoption of symbols from Traditional religio-culture for the sake of interpretation of the new faith – Christianity – not, in essence, a preparation for Christianity? What can Christianity apply if old traditional symbols are not there?

In line with Ferdinando's ideas, Byang Kato (1975), in his popular book *Theological pitfall in Africa*, states categorically that he doesn't see the relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. He sees African Traditional Religion as just a man-made religion which Christianity cannot incorporate (1975:17). While affirming the uniqueness and the finality of Jesus Christ, he considers all non-Christians as lost. He strongly rejects the whole notion of universalism and considers any theology that

promotes African theology and universalism as a theological pitfall. He writes in the introduction of his work (1975:16): “It is not neo-colonialism to plead the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. It is not arrogance to herald the fact that all who are not ‘in Christ’ are lost. It is merely articulating what the scriptures say.”

Nonetheless in his book in some cases Kato (1975:178) seems to implicitly admit the continuity concept, probably unknowingly, when he points out that the good part of African culture which meets the standard can be preserved and promoted and that cultural heritage compatible with Christianity can be baptized into Christian enrichment. Surprisingly, however, he seems to have difficulty seeing any continuity of African Religion and Christianity. It appears to me that even when Kato suggests that some cultural elements in African tradition can be promoted into Christianity, he does so without being aware that in Africa, religion and culture are inherently compatible. That is why he regards all non-Christians as belonging to one group of unsaved and he doesn’t even see the reason for spending too much time and energy studying non-Christian religions like African Traditional Religion. He strongly asserts:

The New Testament writers and the early church evangelists did not consider it worthwhile to spend too much of their energy in the study of non-Christian religions. All non-Christians belong to one and the same group – unsaved (1975: 183).

Critics of Kato argue that the knowledge he acquired in the West did not liberate him from western philosophical bias and prejudice. They maintain that the rejection of African worldview by an African is an indication of how successful African missionaries were by alienating Africans from their Africanness. Some scholars strongly maintain that “to reject the continuity from African Religion and Christianity in the African landscape is to reject the culture, which is the soil in which Christianity was planted” (Lugazia 2010:58).

Similarly, however, Kraemer, (1947) in his work on *The Christian message in a non-Christian world* seems to some sense to acknowledge the possibility of continuity when

he accepts the notion of adaption<sup>39</sup>, Nonetheless, he does so carefully maintaining his views on the importance of preserving the supremacy of what he calls “biblical realism” (1947:307), a theological orientation that influences his approach to conversion. He is of the opinion, however, that conversion to Christianity is a total discontinuity with one’s former religion. He writes: “[to] surrender to Christ, belief in Him and allegiance to the prophetic religion of biblical realism means in the first place a revolution, a total rupture with one’s religious past because it presupposes conversion in the deepest sense of the world”.

Kraemer’s understanding of conversion is not a view that I share. While I admit that real conversion involves a total spiritual transformation of a convert, I have argued in chapter two (2:11) that it doesn’t necessarily mean a rejection or negation of the past or previously held values, but looking at them in a new way. To my mind, a convert realizes his conversion within his socio-cultural context. To put it otherwise, conversion is conscious spiritual transformative change whereby one views life in a new perception in relation to new faith and life in Jesus Christ within one’s cultural setting (cf. Bosch 1991:126).

Kraemer’s attitude towards other religions such as African Traditional that he calls “primitive, paganism and tribal religions” is certainly a derogatory and negative perspective. He rejects the whole notion of seeing these religions as a context in which God has been preparing His people of other religions and cultures for the Gospel (see 1947:338-343). Even when he talks of “point of contact” (130-141) he does so through seeing “man” (I personally prefer to use human being) and a missionary<sup>40</sup> as a point of contact, but nothing from the non-Christian religion can serve as a point of contact. He

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<sup>39</sup> To Kraemer, however, adaption doesn’t mean “to assimilate the cardinal facts of revelation in Christ as much as possible to fundamental religious ideas and tests of the pre-Christian past, but to express these facts by wrestling with them concretely, and so to present the Christian truth and reveal at the same time the intrinsic inadequacy of man’s religious effort for the solution of his crucial religious and moral problem”. It appears clear to me that Kraemer sees the pre-Christian religions as man’s efforts to reach God. While I partly see his point and admit the uniqueness of God’s revelation through Christ, I still argue that it is uncertain to justify that God’s activities are confined to Christianity and that other religions emanate from man’s efforts. Can it not be that non-Christian religion including Haya religion was God’s activity preparing them for Christ – the full revelation of God to human beings? If the God of Christianity is omnipresent, how come He distanced Himself from the people He created in His own image?

<sup>40</sup> For more information see Kraemer (1947:140) who regards the disposition and the attitude of the missionary as a point of contact.

points out that a human being as God's fallen creature in whose heart God has laid eternity knows God and so he/she attempts to seek God. In attempting to seek God he/she runs away from Him (1947:130). Therefore, to sum up, for Kraemer, human being's sinful condition and the role of the missionary and his disposition play an important role as point of contact. For that matter he doesn't see how African Traditional Religion could be a point of contact, hence the question of African primal Religion as *praeparatio evangelica* appears to him irrelevant.

This makes us raise some pertinent questions. What do all these mean with regard to conversion approach/methods to people of other faiths? Can today's missionaries still hold these views in missions to non-Christian people? What is the implication of such an attitude for the mission of the church in today's context? How does such understanding influence conversion methods?

The evangelical views of discontinuity, however, remain silent with the question of whether Christians can survive or not without a cultural contextual ground, from which it can be planted, grounded and revitalized. Christianity in Africa, I argue, cannot indeed stand on the abstract. The knowledge of God in African tradition and other religious symbols and worldview provide an arena for Christianity to meaningfully be realized in African socio-religious cultural soil. A Gospel preached in a cultural vacuum cannot produce responses. How people understand themselves and how they place God in the centre of their lives are all the elements that help shape Christianity in today's Africa (Lugazia 2010: 29). What Kaufman (1981:180) writes in *Theological imagination: Constructing the concept of God* is very helpful at this point:

... all our conjectures about the future will be rooted in the experience and wisdom gained in the past. Moreover, it is on the basis of what has been going on, and what we believe to be going on now, that we estimate what will go on in the future ... so it would be foolish to attempt to cut ourselves completely loose from that past out of which we have come.

Drawing from Kaufman, we can argue that it is therefore practically impossible to have an authentic Christian conversion among the Haya that is not rooted in the framework of



their understanding of religion in the Traditional Religion, otherwise that kind of conversion will lead to failure.

Accordingly Kahakwa (2010:138) has recently made a remarkable point when he asserts, "... both past and present experience of God are regarded as valuable instruments for understanding the African and Christian experience of God." He further contends, "if the past religious experience is not applied to shed light on the present experience of God the Christian message would not only become irrelevant but also a more disturbing influence in Africa, as the Africans will refuse to part with their cultural identity".

Christianity, I contend, needs to be seen as a universal concrete reality that must be concretized in a given concrete context. Christianity can be authentically relevant to the Haya Christian converts if it is concretized within the Haya African Traditional Religion. Ferdinando, Kato, Volf, Kraemer and others who reject the whole notion of seeing African Traditional Religion as *praeparatio evangelica* fail to realize that Christianity cannot be embedded on an abstraction. It needs other social religio-cultural context to be able to carry meaning to the potential converts. Bevan's (2003:2) contention in a point I am trying to make is invaluable:

Reality is not just "out there"; reality is mediated by meaning, a meaning we give it in the context of our culture or our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms.

Indeed, for that matter, Haya Traditional Religion was very important in preparing Haya potential converts to give meaning and relevance to the missionary Christianity when it was later introduced by European missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as will be seen in the next chapter.

With regard to African Traditional Religion as a preparation for the Gospel in Africa, Maluleke, in his work on *Black African Theologies in the New Order, time to drink our own wells* (1996:5), goes further and sees that the whole idea of regarding African culture and traditions as preparation for the Christian Gospel is "a veiled refusal to confront the

possibility of African Traditional Religion as independent systems that can be alternative to Christianity.” Maluleke (1996:8) in this point warns theologians against the danger of reducing African culture and religion to mere preparations for the Christian Gospel. He is of the opinion that this way of dealing with African culture and religion “is not only dishonest but in the end not really contributing to a new and better African Christian theology”.

In this, Maluleke’s opinion is noteworthy as we are reminded not to reduce African culture and religion to mere preparation for the Christian Gospel. However, the fact is that African Traditional Religion perhaps being more than just a *praeparatio evangelica* as Maluleke suggests, played an important role in Christianization of Africans, whereby Africans did not regard Christianity as a foreign religion but as a religion with which they felt at home. African Religion provided an arena for a point of contact of two religions complementing each other.

The question is, what does this mean with regards to Haya Traditional Religion along with Christianity? In this regard I would argue that during the Christianization of the Haya people, the Haya converted to a new faith not to a new God, for to them God was not new. The God they worshiped as *Ruhanga*<sup>41</sup> in their Traditional Religion remained the same *Ruhanga* they worshipped later in Christianity. The conversion of the Haya from their Traditional Religion to Christianity was a continuity of faith to an in-depth understanding of the same God in whom they believed in their primal religion. This notion resonates with what Mbiti (1978:309) says:

The biblical God is not unknown to African peoples. For thousands of years they have known him as creator and sustainer of all things. For this reason the preaching of the Gospel and the translation of the scriptures use African names for God in each area of the continents. The point of God is a point of continuity.

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<sup>41</sup>*Ruhanga* is the name of God among the Haya. This name *Ruhanga* has been recently translated in the Ruhaya Bible to fit into the Haya Christian frame of reference. *Ruhanga*, is the name of God which, according to Kahakwa (2010: vii) denotes double concepts: the creator in one place and God in the second place as it is incorporated into both versions of an invocation of the Deity in a threefold form (Trinitarian concept).

The point Mbiti makes is not only crucial, but also an unavoidable feature in laying applicable ground for Africans in general and the Haya in particular for their understanding and contextualization of their Christianity preached by foreign western missionaries.

Looking at African Haya Traditional Religion in the lens of structuration theory as we explored in chapter two, one can argue that to the Haya, religio-cultural tradition provided a social structure whereby conversion to Christianity could be structured. One can argue that conversion as a social type could not only transform an individual convert from his religio-cultural structure but an individual, in this case a Christian convert, is also constructed by the society (religio-cultural context) in which he/she belongs, for according to the theory of structuration, society is viewed as a structuration process, whereby human actions simultaneously structure and are structured by the society (Kaspersen 2000:33).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In chapter three I have explored Haya religion and culture in context. Drawing on anthropology, intercultural approach, and sociology theory of structuration, I have explored the Haya religio-cultural background and unpacked how this created a religio-cultural social context for the Haya's reception and adoption of Christianity. The study has unfolded that the Haya religion is inherently embedded in their socio-cultural matrix. Therefore for the Haya, religion is a way of life, hence it is more lived out than theologized. The implication is that, due to this existing intimacy between Haya Traditional Religion and culture, to the Haya tending to treat Christian converts isolated from their religio-cultural context, as some of the missionaries did, is unintelligible and, in some sense impossible. Through this approach I have suggested that any religion, including Christianity, should be propagated and realized within people's socio-religious cultural frame of reference for it to make sense to the converts.

Chapter three has further discussed the nature of Haya religion, concept of God, holism and community life, and their religion and spirituality on the assumption that the understanding of them provides insights for their reception and understanding of

Christianity which in turn impacts on their Christian life. It has been ascertained from the study that Haya religion and spirituality were of paramount importance for Christian converts to receive and construct reality in a Christian version.

Engaging some African theological scholars on theology of religions, and applying the social science theory of structuration, in this chapter I have demonstrated that the Haya religion did not only serve as a *praeparatio evangelica*, but an important feature for the Haya converts to actualize Christianity in their religio-cultural frame of reference. Throughout the chapter it has been argued that Haya religio-cultural tradition was important to provide a social structure whereby conversion in Christianity was to be constructed, for conversion as a social type could not only construct (transform) an individual from his/her religio-cultural structure, but also an individual (convert) is constructed by the society in which he belongs.

In this study it was therefore found that the Haya are not only transformed by conversion into Christianity, but their religio-cultural background had an influence on their understanding and practice of Christianity in their life as Christian converts. In other words, their social life was not only transformed (structured) by Christian conversion but their religio-cultural background played a role in their task of interpreting a new faith – Christianity. Missionaries' teaching and application of conversion were not supposed to be seen as the only factors influencing the Haya understanding of their conversion and its consequences, but Haya Tradition and Religion within which the Haya live has to be seen as important as well. Based on this theory I have argued for an integrated approach that would take into account both continuity and discontinuity among the Haya Christian converts as these are inevitable features in their Christian life.

This conclusion leads us to embark on the next chapter whereby we discuss the advent of missionaries in Northwest Tanzania whereby missionization and Christianization methods will be explored, followed by the evaluative analysis and discussions of missionary Christianity conversion methods among the Haya in a socio-cultural context.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE HAYA PEOPLE AND THE CONVERSION METHODS APPLIED DURING MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY

#### 4.1 Introduction

Having discussed the Haya religion and culture in context in the previous chapter, chapter four explores the Christianization of the Haya people and conversion methods that were applied by missionary Christianity. Wolfgang Gabbert (2001:291) in his article, *Social and cultural conditions of religious conversion in Colonial Southwest Tanzania, 1891-1939*, contends that Christianization in African was extremely complex. It was clear that missionary societies that evangelized Africa differed in their social and cultural background, in their interpretation of Christianity, in strategies and methods, and their attitude toward western civilization, Africans and their customs. Gabbert's contention suggests that Christianization of Africa falls under various categories of missionaries who applied different methods of conversion which were influenced by their home background.

Based on this background, chapter four discusses the Christianization of the Haya people in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania based on the conversion methods that were applied by missionary Christianity. Drawing on African missiological literature and missionary historiographical approach<sup>42</sup>, the chapter explores the Christianization of Haya people based on various western missionaries who worked and introduced Christianity in Northwest Tanzania, mainly in the Lutheran Church.

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<sup>42</sup> See G. A. Duncan in his work on "Historiography and ideology in the (Mission) history of Christianity in Africa", in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, (51-69) June/Junie 2005, Vol XXX1, No/Nr 1. Duncan identifies two categories of historiography namely: the "old" historiography which was more missionaries oriented as he puts it "...was premised on the positive value accorded to missions and missionaries as well as a positive view of colonialism". The second category is what he calls the "new" approach which is more eclectic and focuses on the Africans. See pp. 1. See Also Simon (2009:98) in "Mission as frontier-crossing and identity formation: An integrating contextual missiology", in *Scriptura* 100, 89-103. In my work, I opt to engage the second approach which Duncan and Simon term as a "new" historiographical approach which is more African oriented.

The western missionaries' approach to Haya Traditional Religion and culture and the conversion methods that they applied in the course of missionizing the Haya shall later be examined. The chapter further seeks to attempt to answer the research questions we posed in the first chapter with regards to the efficacy of missionary approach and methods in effecting the relevant conversion among the Haya. These questions are: Are the missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods which were and still are practiced in the mainline churches relevant to Haya Christians? Does conversion imply changing or shaping one's cultural and religious identity; if yes, at what levels? Did missionary Christianity conversion achieve its intended goal?

This will be done in the first place by exploring the missionary Christianity religio-cultural background that is assumed to have influenced their worldview towards African culture and their ways of life, hence determining methods that they applied in converting Africans. In the second place, explore the missionary Christianity conversion methods and their impact on Haya Christians' contemporary life in Northwest Tanzania will be explored. Finally, employing structuration theory, these methods will be evaluated and analysed based on their impact on Haya Christian life.

On this basis, it shall be argued that these missionary Christianity methods were important for they accelerated social change among the Haya whereby the Haya accessed western medicine, new ways of dress and education, which were instrumental in producing potential church and national leaders who later contributed to the socio-political transformation of the Haya and to the wider society of Tanzania.

It shall, however, be argued that the missionary Christianity approach and methods of most missionaries didn't sufficiently draw on some positive norms and values that would have enabled the Haya to realize conversion that is rooted within their religio-cultural worldview and spirituality, as was discussed in chapter three (3.6). This suggests the reason for having Christian converts who did not take Christianity seriously. These, when faced by an existential crisis, revert to their traditional religion for a solution as they remained aligned to both Christianity and their Traditional Religion.

## 4. 2 Introduction of Missionary Christianity among the Haya

This section demonstrates that missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania was carried out by missionaries from various European countries who came at different times. It is important, nevertheless, to state from the beginning that Christianity in Buhaya initially began with indigenous people who had close contact with Uganda because, as pointed out earlier in chapter three, it borders on Uganda. For this reason Uganda served as an important gate for the advent of missionary Christianity among the Haya.

Niwagila, (1991:76), an outstanding Protestant theologian and Church historian in Northwest Tanzania, writes: “Anyone wanting to know the historical background of the [Northwest Tanzania Protestant Church] in Bukoba has to go back to the church of Uganda, which came into contact with the Haya people before Ernest Johansen and Wilhelm Rascher knew them<sup>43</sup>”

By virtue of their geographical location in Northwest Tanzania, the Haya people have had a strong and long-time historical, socio-economic, religious and cultural relationship with the people of Uganda. It is therefore obvious that intermarriage and inter-commercial activities and trade that had existed for a long time between the Haya people and Baganda people readily facilitated the inter-movement between these two societies, which in turn made it possible for the inroad of Christianization of Northwest Tanzania for both Roman Catholic and later Protestant missionary Christianity from Uganda. The Christian religious relationship between Uganda and Buhaya started in the year 1892 when the Roman Catholic White Fathers, together with the Ugandan Christians, fled to Bukoba when escaping the persecution of Christians under the leadership of Kabaka Mwanga (Kabigumila 2005:52).

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<sup>43</sup>As will be seen in the following pages of this chapter, Ernest Johansen and Wilhelm Rascher were the early foreign Protestant missionaries to arrive in Northwest Tanzania.

### **4.3 Missionary Christianity's Missionaries**

Missionaries are among the early Europeans<sup>44</sup> who came to Northwest Tanzania, then known as Tanganyika. They started evangelizing in the neighbouring country, Uganda, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Thus Uganda served as a channel for Christianity in the area. History indicates clearly that Roman Catholic missionaries preceded the Protestant missionaries (Kahakwa 2010:74).

Missionaries who worked in Northwest Tanzania among the Haya include Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries from England, and German, Swedish (Lutheran), Danish (Lutheran) and the United States of America. Others are the Wesleyans in South Africa via Uganda, the Bethel Missions of the Reformed and Lutheran Tradition, the Augustana Missions (Lutheran), Swedish Missionary Society and the Danish Missionary Society (Sundkler 1980:27-34, 40-41 and Kahakwa 2010:74-75).

In the following section we will briefly discuss missionaries who worked in Northwest Tanzania under two categories, namely: Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Since the focus of the study is mainly on Protestant missionaries there will be more discussion on Protestant missionary Christianity in the next sections. We therefore start with Roman Catholic missionaries.

#### **4.3.1 Roman Catholic Missionaries**

Historians, missionaries and social anthropologists who wrote the history of Christianity among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania clearly indicated that missionary Christianity among the Haya began with the Roman Catholic missionaries through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Hirth<sup>45</sup>. The history of Roman Catholic missionaries begins with the White Fathers missionary Society. The White Fathers were named so after the Arabic white dress which was adopted by Archbishop Cardinal Lavigerie, who worked as a missionary

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<sup>44</sup>It has to be remembered that apart from missionaries, other Europeans who came to Northwest Tanzania and Africa in general include merchants, explorers, administrators such as colonialists and the like.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Niwagila (1991), Mutembei, (1993), Larson (1997), Kolowa (1991), Kahakwa (2010), to mention but some.



in Nigeria. He did so according to Nigerian tradition and in 1868 he was permitted to do so by the Pope (Larson 1997:27).

Bishop Joseph, under the White Fathers society, entered Tanzania for the first time on the 2nd February 1892 in Kaagya – Bugabo, through Uganda. Bishop Joseph was forced to move into Tanganyika following the conflict between Catholics and Protestants under Kabaka Mwanga in 1892. Bishop Joseph built the first historical mission station in Kashozi, Kagera region which was completed on the 24th December 1892 after almost a year of struggling to get a place for building a mission station (Mutembei 1993:72).

Mutembei points out that Bishop Joseph Hirth moved from Uganda with other Ugandan Roman Catholic Christian converts and some priests such as Fr. Gire, Fr. Kuyo and Brother Amans (1993:72). It is believed that the new Christian church under the Roman Catholic diocese was inaugurated in 1894 in Ishozi – Bukoba on the condition of the King of Kyamtwala that all the traditional shrines found in the area should be preserved. The Catholic missionaries' work in Buhaya, however, was initially facilitated by many Ugandan Catholic Christians who moved to Bukoba as political refugees. These rendered considerable support to the missionary work in Buhaya that included providing religious teachings to new Haya converts (Mutembei 1993:72).

#### **4.3.2 Protestant missionaries**

In this section Protestant missionaries are categorized into two sections: the Haya indigenous missionaries and expatriate missionaries. The history of the Protestant mission in Northwest Tanzania is unique in the sense that Christianity began with indigenous missionaries and was later supported by foreign missionaries. This section will indicate that although the indigenous missionaries played a very significant role in the initial start of Christianization of Buhaya, yet the influence of foreign missionaries in the present church is too enormous to be ignored. We therefore start with Haya indigenous missionaries, followed by expatriate missionaries.

### 4.3.2.1 Haya Indigenous Missionaries

The early Protestant missionary work in Northwest Tanzania was firstly carried out by Haya indigenous missionaries. As we saw previously, these were the Haya traders in Buganda (Uganda) who got into contact with the early Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries. These later were converted to Christianity through being baptized and confirmed in accordance with their respective denominations. Upon their return to Tanzania from Uganda they became active missionaries to their fellow Haya before the advent of Western Missionaries (Kahakwa 2010:74). This makes the mission history on the side of the Protestant Church in Northwest Tanzania unique compared to other parts of Africa. From the words of a Swedish missionary as quoted in Niwagila (1991:82) reads:

In the beginning was a congregation. This mission theory speaks more truth about the Evangelical Haya church than the majority of African churches ... in the beginning, there was no mission station as it was in many of the Protestant mission fields. In the beginning was the congregation. This beginning influenced and coloured the entire work (cf. Rweyemamu 2005:24).

Sundkler's theory with regards to the early start of the church on the side of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Buhaya emphasises that the missionary work in this earlier stage, began with indigenous Christians who were missionized in Uganda by their fellow Baganda Christians who had acquired Christian faith through the Anglican western missionaries (Rweyemamu 2005:25, Mutembei 1993:82). The western missionaries therefore came to support the Haya indigenous mission work that was still in its infancy stage.

The work of the indigenous missionaries, however, was not organized enough as these Christians were split in various groups according to the entrances from Uganda which served as doors for the inroad of Christianity in Northwest Tanzania. These groups included: Kashenye group, Ruzinga group, the Ihangiro and Kihanja groups, the Bugabo group, the Misenye Group and the Karagwe groups<sup>46</sup>. Kahakwa (2010:74) points out that

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<sup>46</sup>Much more about these groups on how they were formed and their works in the history of the Protestant Church in general and Northwestern Diocese in particular of Northwest Tanzania have been written by various church historians. Since it is not the focus of this research to write their history, those interested

“their involvement in missionary work aroused missionaries of different denominations from Europe and later America to come and join the task.” Without ignoring the role played by these indigenous missionaries earlier on, the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania, however, recognizes officially the beginning of the church to be in 1910 when the foreign mission society from Bethel inaugurated the mission station at Kashura in Bukoba.

Although most Haya indigenous theologians, historians, including some western missionaries like Bishop Sundkler, emphasize that the beginning of the Protestant Church in Northwest Tanzania started with indigenous Haya, I argue that this accreditation of indigenous Haya does not mean that they can be completely divorced from the influence of western missionaries. This is because, even though they received Christianity from fellow Baganda Anglican Christians, as Niwagila (1991:75-77) indicates, these Baganda converts were under Anglican missionary Christianity which was known as Church Mission Society (CMS) and after all, these Haya early converts needed Western Anglican missionaries from Uganda for Baptism and Confirmation<sup>47</sup>.

#### **4.3.2.2 Expatriate Missionaries (Western Missionaries)**

Expatriate missionaries include many missionaries who came at different times and from different western backgrounds. Some of the missionaries came before and after both the First and Second World Wars<sup>48</sup>. As will be discussed in this section, both World Wars had significant roles to play with regard to expatriate missionary activities in Northwest

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can read Mutembei (1993:72-76), Niwagila (1991:83-100), Kabigumila (2005:54-63), and *Karne ya Injili katika Dayosisi Magharibi na Dayosisi ya Karagwe* (2010:5-9) for more detail.

<sup>47</sup>Some years later after their encounter with Christianity in Uganda, the British missionaries baptized some of these Haya converts at Kashenye in 1901, Zakaria Ikate in 1904, Abraham Mpandakyaro and Abraham Kibira in 1917 (see *Karne ya injili* 2010:5). Kajerero, who became a famous indigenous church leader in Buhaya, was baptized in 1906 by Protestant missionaries even though he had a first encounter with Roman Catholic missionaries before which did not greatly impact his life spiritually, although he learned to read and write in a Roman Catholic missionary school (Niwagila 1991:90-91).

<sup>48</sup>The First World War was from 1914-1918 and Second World War was from 1939-1945 (read Rweyemamu 2005:28).

Tanzania during the early start of missionary Christianity among the Haya. This section discusses some of these missionaries and the time they came to Buhaya<sup>49</sup>.

### ***Lutheran Missionaries***

Lutheran missionaries were among the early Protestant expatriate missionaries that were involved in converting the indigenous Haya in Northwest Tanzania. Ernest Johansen is known as the first missionary from Bethel Mission, a mission society that was based in Germany, to arrive in Buhaya. He arrived at Bukoba in the year 1907. The German administrator did not allow him to start a Protestant mission station in Buhaya because Roman Catholics had already started mission work in that area (Kabigumila 2005:53). This refusal, however, as Kahakwa (2010:76) puts it, was related to political matters as the German administration preferred the Roman Catholic mission, hence a popular phrase in those days was “to be a true friend of Germans you have to be a Catholic.” It is further indicated that Germans were against the establishment of a Protestant mission under the Church Mission Society (CMS) which was under the British influence in Buhaya because they feared that this mission would try to contact the CMS in Buganda and through this contact, promote British influence in the District which was under German rule (Kahakwa 2010:75-76).

It was not until 20th June, 1910 when Ernest Johansen was officially allowed by the German administration to start the mission work at Kashura Hill in Bukoba<sup>50</sup>. It should also be pointed out that earlier before his arrival in Buhaya, he made contact with some groups of Christian converts in the area who had already been baptized and confirmed in Uganda by the Church Mission Society (CMS). Johansen found these groups had already started to organize themselves into a believing community. These provided a good ground for the foreign missionaries to start the mission work in the area. Historians, however, agree that religious activities undertaken by the early Haya converts which took place between 14 to 20 years before the arrival of Johansen is regarded as the actual

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<sup>49</sup> Buhaya refers to an area occupied by the Haya. Buhaya in this case is used interchangeably with Hayalanda.

<sup>50</sup> Bukoba is both a town and a name of a district within Kagera government administrative region where the Haya people mostly reside.

establishment of the Protestant Church in the area (Kahakwa 2010:76, Mutembei 1993:77 and Niwagila 1991:75-76).

Niwagila points out that, German missionaries under the Bethel Mission Society understood “their presence as their duty to help the poor Africans know and worship the right God” (1991:108). This indicates their negative attitude towards the Haya Traditional Religion and their worship of *Luhanga* (God) whom they worshipped in their native religion before the arrival of the missionaries.

Based on this understanding, the goals that were set by their home society were (Niwagila 1991:109-110):

1. To preach the Gospel of Christ to the “pagans” in the German East African Colony.
2. To take spiritual care of Germans who lived and worked in this part of the world.
3. To provide medical care to the natives and Germans in the colony areas.
4. To start Christian schools for the natives.

### ***Anglican Missionaries***

Anglican missionaries are among the early Protestant missionaries who worked in Northwest Tanzania. These worked among the Haya in two different periods. As pointed out earlier, it is important to remember that the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania started as Anglican under the influence of the CMS. When Lutheran Bethel missionaries started their mission in Bukoba in 1910 they organized indigenous Haya Christians who were already baptized by Anglican missionaries in Uganda. Before that time, Anglican mission that was based in Uganda was responsible for taking care of Haya Christians spiritually (Mutembei 1993:89).

Nonetheless, during the First World War the Germans lost so the Lutheran missionaries who were present in Bukoba were forced to return back home. This opened the door for the coming of the Anglican missionaries from Uganda for the second time following the

request of the indigenous Haya Christians who were left without foreign missionaries (Niwagila 1991:106). Haya Christians under the leadership of Pastor Andrea Kajerero appealed the CMS missionaries in Uganda to come to Bukoba. Through this appeal, the CMS synod in Uganda sent R.H. Leakey, Athanasio Namuyenga and Shedulaka Kibuka to come to support the Evangelical Church in Buhaya and these really played a big role in making the Church in Buhaya grow (Niwagila 1991:155).

Canon Leakey became an inspector and overseer of the mission work in Buhaya. The missionaries stayed in Buhaya until when the bishop in charge of CMS in Uganda, Bishop Wills, withdrew his missionaries from Bukoba due to the scarcity of missionaries in Uganda following the growth and expansion of the church in the country (Niwagila 1991:165).

### ***Methodist/Wesleyan Missionaries***

Methodists/Wesleyans commenced their mission enterprise in Northwest Tanzania, when Bishop Wills withdrew his missionaries from Buhaya. Bishop Wills asked the Methodists from South Africa, who by then were looking for a mission field in East Africa, to take over the work in Buhaya (Niwagila 1991:165). Niwagila states that their work of evangelizing combined Gospel, education and healing ministry. They believed that the healing of the soul should go hand in hand with the healing of the body (Niwagila 1991:172-173, Mutembei 1993:93-95).

The Methodist missionaries in Buhaya, however, did not stay long as they met opposition from the indigenous Christians due to reasons related to administration, theological controversy, and diverse ecclesiological perceptions between missionaries and the indigenous people. These reasons that are discussed in length by Niwagila (1991:173-177), are summarized below as follows:

1. The decision to invite them was dictated by the Anglican missionaries without involvement of the indigenous leadership.
2. Their theology did not measure up to the existing knowledge of the indigenous Christians.

3. During Baptism the Methodist missionaries required the indigenous people to promise that they would hold fast not only to Christ, but also to the church of John Wesley. The Haya, however, did not like to be identified with the name of any person apart from Christ.
4. The Haya indigenous Christians and leadership were not satisfied with the way the Methodists handled the sacredness of the church building, for example, smoking, and showing movies in the church building and premises are some of the things which were unacceptable to the Haya Christians.
5. Permitting those under church discipline to partake of Holy Communion was not in line with their understanding of the theology of church discipline (cf. *Karne ya Injili* 2010:18-20).

Due to these controversies after the World War, the indigenous church leaders called back the German missionaries to continue the work they started earlier in 1910 (*Karne ya Injili* 2010:22-23, Niwagila 1991:176-183). This invitation was a clear indication that Haya Christians were comfortable with German missionaries and that the fate of their church was in their own hands and not in the hands of the missionaries.

### ***Swedish Missionaries***

The Second World War unfortunately again led to internment of the German missionaries. For this reason almost all missionaries in Bukoba were removed, hence the younger church in Buhaya under the German Mission Society was named “orphaned missions” (Niwagila 1991:263-265)<sup>51</sup>. As a result of this German internment, the Augustan Mission had to take over the German mission work.

The Augustan mission asked the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) to send Swedish missionaries who were already working in some African countries. This led Dr. Bengt

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<sup>51</sup> The term “orphan” was perceived to have a derogatory connotation. It was hence critically opposed by indigenous Haya Christians. See Niwagila (1991:265-266).

Sundkler<sup>52</sup> and Gustav Bernander to volunteer to go to Tanganyika (Tanzania) to take responsibility (Niwagila 1991:275). The presence of these two missionaries from Sweden made it necessary for other Swedish missionaries to come to support the mission work in the areas of medicine and education (*Karne ya Injili*: 2010: 38, Niwagila 1991:277). Dr. Sundkler later became the first Bishop of the “Evangelical Church of Buhaya” which later turned into “Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Northwestern Diocese.”

It is important to conclude that missionary Christianity in Buhaya, as we have indicated, commenced with indigenous missionaries through contact with Uganda but was influenced by western missionaries who, despite their different backgrounds, shared almost the same worldview. Their worldview definitely informed their mission approach and conversion methods to the indigenous Haya.

To be able to understand the reasons that precipitated their conversion methods, one needs to go back to their religio-cultural background. The following section deals with the missionaries’ background as a context for our understanding of the reasons for their conversion methods in the process of Christianizing Northwest Tanzania.

#### **4.4 Missionaries’ Background: A Context for Understanding Factors that Informed their Conversion Methods**

Discussion of missionary Christianity conversion methods requires an understanding of missionary background that might have influenced their religio-cultural worldview over non-western culture and religion, including that of the Haya in Northwest Tanzania. In this section, we seek to understand how western missionaries understood non-western religion and culture in their theological discourse on salvation and how such an understanding influenced their methods of conversion in Africa, including the Haya religio-cultural society.

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<sup>52</sup> As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Professor Dr. B. Sundkler later became a first Bishop in the history of Northwestern Diocese, following his reputation and good relationship he had with indigenous Haya Christians who requested him later to come back to be their bishop even after he had left for Sweden some years previously.



For that reason I intend to examine the western missionaries' background as a context for our understanding of their conversion methods to Africans in general and Haya people in particular. Since the dissertation focuses on missionary Christianity conversion, the understanding of western missionaries' contextual background is not only conducive for the study, but also a necessity for shedding light on a brief understanding of missionaries' conversion strategic approach among the indigenous Haya.

#### **4.4.1 The Influence of Renaissance and Enlightenment**

Bosch (1991: 344) remarks that the entire western missionary movement of the past three centuries emerged from the matrix of enlightenment. While it spawned an attitude of tolerance to all people and promoted relativistic attitude towards belief of any kind, paradoxically, it gave birth to the western superiority feeling and prejudices that characterized most missionaries during the time of Christianization and missionization of Africa.

The renaissance and enlightenment that occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries influenced the development of Christianity and thinking worldview that in turn lead to the negative views of the missionaries on non-western cultures and religion. Gitonga (2008:40) emphasizes that, "the period of the second wave of the missionary activity, Christianity in the northern hemisphere ... was greatly influenced by scientific and cultural development, occasioned by the renaissance and enlightenment" (2008:40).

The enlightenment's influences on non-Christians and Christians produced a paradoxical effect on Christianity globally. While Christianity was marginalized and undermined by enlightenment at the same time, Christians who were motivated in part by its idea of progress, spread the Christian message to every corner of the globe. So the idea of enlightenment progress had a huge impact on the mission thinking and theology in the nineteenth century. Bosch (1991:271) writes:

Sometimes it manifested itself as a belief that the entire world would soon be converted to the Christian faith; at the same time Christianity was regarded as an

irresistible power in the process of reforming the world, eradicating poverty, and restoring justice for all.

The enlightenment era was therefore characterized by mission motives for that have been outlined by Bosch<sup>53</sup>. Nussbaum (2005) divides the enlightenment motives into three categories namely, theological, western imperialist and anthropological motives.

Theological motives made the western missionaries reach out to the world to bring all people under the sovereignty of God whereby He will be glorified by all humanity. Unlike the enlightenment which put human beings into the centre of the worldview where human needs became the measure of everything, mission was to meet the human needs, religious or social (Nussbaum 2005:74-75). Along the glory of God motive there was Jesus' love and the millennium motives, and obedience to the Great Commission. The mission in this case aimed at glorifying God. Jesus' love was to be extended to all nations under the conviction that all people needed to be saved. Again obedience to the Great Commission was another reason for western missionaries to go to all nations to make all people disciples of Jesus Christ, as is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 28:16-20.

These motives under the influence of enlightenment asked great commitment and sacrifice of the western missionaries to reach out to the world. This led them to view non-western people as noble and unspoiled by civilization. Bosch (1991:290) writes:

Indigenous people were viewed as “noble” because they were innocent and innocent because they were naïve, “unspoiled by civilization”. They were therefore regarded favourably but condescendingly. They were helpless, needy, “poor heathen”. Compassion and solidarity had been replaced by pity and condescension.

This kind of enlightenment view of western missionaries was definitively likely to determine the kind of conversion methods they would apply based on their attitude towards African peoples and their religio-culture.

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<sup>53</sup> See Bosch (1991:284-341). These motives include: the glory of God, Constrained by Jesus' love, gospel and culture, mission and manifest destiny, mission and colonialism, mission and millennium, voluntarism, missionary fervor, optimism, and pragmatism, and the Biblical motif.

In line with theological motives, western imperialism was another mission motive. Bosch points out that under the imperialism motive western missionaries understood the Gospel as part of western culture. According to Bosch (1991:291), the enlightenment as the age of reason led into the age of science that put the western culture above the rest of the world cultures. For this reason it was clear that the best religion and culture had to be exported as a package “that every nation was en route to one world culture and that this culture would be essentially western.”

In this way toward the end of the nineteenth century the ugly face of non-western cultures was clearly painted in such a way that it would reinforce the negative attitude of mission agencies. Bosch (1991:294) however, laments that this process overlooked the wisdom and beauty of the non-western cultures such as unity of living and learning, interdependence between individuals, communities, culture and industry. These non-western cultural essential elements were swept aside by enlightenment mentality that “tended to turn people into objects, reshaping the entire world into the image of the west, separating humans from nature and from one another and developing them according to western standards and suppositions” (1991:294).

From this development, missionaries acquired ideas and interpretations from the scientific and cultural development that made them develop a negative attitude towards indigenous beliefs and practices, hence impacting the conversion methods that did not take into account the African religio-cultural worldview and spirituality (Mugambi 1990:40). This would obviously have serious implications for the missionary Christianity conversion methods among the Africans and the Haya in particular in the nineteenth century.

Again under western imperialistic mission motive, there was what Bosch refers to as “manifest destiny” of western nations (Bosch 1991:298). During the time of enlightenment and renaissance, western nations were convinced that because of their unique qualities, “God has chosen them to be the standard bearer of his cause even to the uttermost ends of the world.” Nussbaum (2005:74) emphasizes that it seemed clear to

everyone that the enlightenment was a “God given ship in which the Gospel could sail the seven seas, touching and transforming societies in every port of call.”

This understanding had an implication for colonialism as during the time of renaissance missions originated in the context of modern western colonialism. From this base, one can understand why missionaries and colonialists worked hand in hand. With regards to mission and colonialism as an effect of enlightenment, Bosch (1991:306) emphasizes that during enlightenment mission and colonialism were intertwined, hence “to colonize is to missionize”. Bosch further points out that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries both Roman Catholic and Protestants were still dedicated to the theocratic idea of church state unity (1991:303).

For this reason, missionaries were seen as agents of colonies as they could help in the submission of natives to the colonial government. Missionaries followed the line of their government; German missionaries to German colony government, French missionaries to French colony and so on. Bosch (1991:304) alludes to: “Whether they liked it or not, the missionaries became pioneers of western imperialist expansion.” Actually in most instances, mission work was not only seen as God’s work but was also for the sake of the national patriotism as well (Bosch 1991:304). This suggests the possibility of seeing conversion as western cultural imperialistic expansion.

Bosch’s (1991:306) quotation of the Catholic missiologist, J. Schmidlin in 1913, at this point is worth noting in showing the mind and the attitude of western missionaries towards Africans and their relationship with colonialists:

it is the mission that subdues our colonies spiritually and assimilates them inwardly ... The state may indeed incorporate the protectorates outwardly; it is, however, the mission which must assist in securing the deeper aim of colonial policy, the inner policy, the inner colonization. The state can enforce physical obedience with the aid of punishment and laws; but it is the mission which secures the inward servility and devotion of natives ... [Hence] “to colonize is to missionize and to missionize is to colonize.”

The remarks above suggest that enlightenment not only opened doors for colonization of Africa but also for missionization of it. It goes without saying that, therefore, western cultural imperialism and the subjugation of African religion and culture dominated the minds of not only colonialists, but also the missionaries who in turn would shape and influence their missionary theology that would determine the conversion methods that according to western perspective would suit Africans in general and the Haya in particular.

Following this truth, western missionaries who emanated from this worldview that was to a large extent influenced by enlightenment, explains why most missionaries of the nineteenth century among the Haya Africans had difficulty seeing the continuity between Christianity and African religion when converting Haya. Kraemer (1947:130-140) admitted earlier that missionaries lacked knowledge of social and religious organization of African societies, in our case including the Haya, so they interpreted African religious symbols in their own theological paradigm. Kraemer himself, being a missionary of that time, conceived conversion as a total break away from one's old religion.

As we discussed in chapter three, his attitudes towards other religions like African Traditional Religion represents enlightenment theological discourse which many missionaries shared in his time. Kraemer's attitudes toward other religions like African Traditional, that he calls "primitive, paganism and tribal religions" are certainly derogatory and negative. As I pointed out in chapter three, Kraemer rejects the whole notion of seeing these religions as a context in which God has prepared them for the Gospel (1947:338-343), a fact that would impede effectiveness in mission, especially in the area of effecting relevant conversion that makes sense to the Haya and other Africans and therefore touches their hearts.

#### **4.4.2 Evolution, African Culture and Religion**

Along with renaissance and enlightenment, another scientific advancement that took place in Europe and impacted the worldview of missionaries on Africa before they even came in, was Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Nathan Gitonga (2008:40) in his book,

*Evangelization and inculturation in African context*, points out that the period of the nineteenth century marked the publication of Darwin's theory which impacted European Christendom and the community at large. This led the church and the academic worldview to be filled with the theory of evolution which was subjected to different interpretations and applications. Several Europeans therefore interpreted and applied the theory of evolution to Africans and their religions. Gitonga emphasizes that most writings that existed at that time influenced the mind and worldview over the non-western continent including Africa and their religion before the missionaries even put their feet into Africa.

Evolution theory made some writers, Taylor for example, regard Africans as primitive, by which he meant that Africans were still in the embryonic stage in the process of their evolution to humankind. In Taylor's view African Traditional Religion was at the bottom-level of the supposed line of religious evolution (Mbiti 1969, Imasogie 1993, Idowu 1965). Taylor's view, which was popularized by his followers, made Africa and its religion inferior to other world religions. Taylor and his disciples regarded Africans and their religion as primitive for they worshipped spirits. Religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity, which were considered monotheistic, were regarded as superior to African religion which was regarded as polytheistic, hence viewed as still in the process of evolution (Mbiti 1969:7). In this kind of evolution worldview, it presupposes that western missionaries who came to Africa could be influenced by such thinking that in turn determines their conversion methods that aimed at replacing African Traditional Religion with Christianity without thinking of building Christianity on their traditional religious discourse and culture.

#### **4.4.3 Impact of Quasi-scientific Worldview on African Culture and Religion**

Quasi-scientific worldview was one of the European worldviews of the nineteenth century that also dominated the majority of western people, including Christians, some of whom came to missionize Africa. This is the worldview which "holds science and reason as the ultimate criterion of the truth, while at the same time half-heartedly acknowledging spiritual reality" (Gitonga 2008:41, Imasogie 1993:53).

This view maintained that religion is subjected to scientific and rational analysis. This understanding had an implication on how western missionaries would approach Africans and their primal religion due to the fact that according to these views any belief that does not “measure up to the scientific and rational standard is dismissed as irrational and superstitious” (Gitonga 2008:41).

Imasogie (1993:52) points out that missionary Christianity was introduced to black Africa in the nineteenth century; the worldview of Christian theologians retained only a veneer of the biblical view. That is, western Christian theologians could still talk about God, heaven, angels, Satan, Holy Spirit, evil forces, but these were regarded as no more than “cultural clichés that lacked the existential dynamism they once had prior to and during the medieval period”. It was against such western missionaries’ worldview that Christian theologians came to Africa in the nineteenth century. But by then Africans had a different worldview from that of the western missionaries and theologians.

Given that one’s cultural worldview influences the mind and perceptions, as explained in chapter three, what could be the attitude of the missionaries to the African potential converts? Could their worldview influence their attitudes and conversion methods to Africans who had a worldview of religion and the spiritual world which did not seem to make sense to the quasi-scientific worldview of western Christendom? This is the question that we deal with at this stage.

It is important to note that scientific discovery and theories like that of Darwin and philosophic reasoning of that time not only impacted African culture and religion, but also Africans themselves were looked at as a people in the process of evolution. Gitonga (2008: 43) for example, points out an example of a missionary, Thomas Wakefield, one of the pioneer Methodist missionaries in Kenya, who described Gallas people in Kenya as “a small, inferior, stagnant race.” His wife remarking about her African servant says:

At a glance he looks much like a gorilla, has a sloping forehead, great, broad nose and uncommonly thick lips, which stretch across his face. Surely he would frighten the Sunday School children at home.

These superior and arrogant attitudes to Africans suggests a possibility for a kind of conversion method for non-western religion – including that of Haya Traditional Religion – that neglects the validity and importance of good values in potential converts. It portrays western Christianity as superior to African religion for Africans were seen as barbaric, uncivilized and therefore their religion, to most missionaries, was described as a primitive and pagan religion.

Gitonga (2008:43) cites another example of western missionaries in Africa, Worthington, who made comments in England justifying the agency of mission in Africa and why Africans must be saved. The comments read:

There has come to me also this conviction that these people must be saved. Think of them in their barbarism, and in their paganism is surely more than can be endured by anyone who boasts the touch of Christ. For Christ embued[sic] with the desire to raise and save the down-cast and sin-sick souls of men. And these Negroes, black brethren of ourselves, now appeal not less strongly than do the needy ones at home. They must be saved.

Learning from such an attitude of western missionaries' to Africans and their Traditional Religion, one can see why conversion to missionary Christianity in most cases, as shall be discussed later, amounted to abandonment of almost all traditional beliefs as a cardinal prerequisite for conversion into Christianity. As shall be ascertained later, missionaries among the Haya hailed from almost the same western contextual background, so there were no exceptions in terms of their attitude to the Haya and their religio-cultural background and their conversion methods were immensely influenced by their home contextual worldview. In the following subsection therefore I discuss the missionary Christianity conversion methods among the Haya.

#### **4.5 Conversion Methods in the Early Christianization of the Haya People**

Having seen that missionaries who came to Africa were influenced by the scientific worldview from their home context that was taking place between the eighteenth and



nineteenth centuries, this section seeks to answer the question: how did these influences determine practically the conversion methods among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania?

In this section, I draw on missiological history, and socio-anthropological approach to explore the missionary Christianity conversion that was applied in the course of Christianization of the Haya. As stated at the outset of this dissertation, the mission history of Africa in general, and the Haya of Northwest Tanzania in particular, indicates that missionaries who brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this area applied different and various strategic approaches and patterns of conversion to effect Christianity among the Haya.

Among the conversion methods which we will broadly explore is cultural conversion, which was the manifestation of what seemed to be civilization of Africans and western cultural imperialism. Other methods include mass conversion, education, medical work, liturgical conversion, Bible translation and other catechetical literature approach, material incentives and socio-economic support.

#### **4.5.1 Cultural Conversion: Civilization of Africans or Western Cultural Imperialism?**

In chapter two I pointed out that cultural conversion is one of the conversion patterns that was applied by missionary Christianity during their time of evangelizing Africa in general and Northwest Tanzania in particular. Among the Haya, cultural conversion was one of the popular conversion methods during the early start of Christianization in Northwest Tanzania.

When we discuss cultural conversion as one of the methods applied by western missionaries during early Christianization of the Haya people, we are faced with the questions: What is cultural conversion? How was it applied to the indigenous Haya? Does a real and authentic conversion to Christ entail cultural conversion? These are questions we explore in this section when discussing cultural conversion as one of the conversion methods in Northwest Tanzania during the early start of Christianity.

Kraft (2002:339), defines cultural conversion as a conversion to a culture or a subculture that is not natural to the convert. This is when a Christian message of conversion to Christianity requires one to break from one's former traditional way of life and adopt a missionary's culture and way of life along with new faith.

Western missionaries in Buhaya not only brought the Gospel, but also their culture. This was applied with what they believed to civilize Africans as they considered Haya Africans undeveloped and primitive. So missionaries were not to be agents of the Gospel but agents of socio-cultural changes of Africans and in this case, the Haya. As Professor Balcomb (2004:1) emphasizes "the missionaries did not only bring the Gospel. They also brought their culture." This was mainly because, as Vincent Donovan (2003:138), a missionary among the Masai in Northern Tanzania put it, "Christianity became so well assimilated into western culture that Christianity [that was brought to Africa] and the West became synonymous". For the Europeans to separate their Gospel and their culture would be difficult. This had an impact on how their mission to people of different cultures from theirs would be carried out. This led missionary Christianity of the nineteenth century to start the mission work among the Haya "as if they were to command Haya to start from the bare beginning" (Lutahoire1974:9). But the fact is, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the Haya people were not empty boxes who were ready to receive whatever was brought to them, but they had a strong sense of culture consisting of religion and theological concepts such as that of God and creation of the universe.

Cultural conversion was reinforced by the negative attitude they had toward the Haya indigenous religio-culture. This was in part due to the lack of knowledge of the nature of Haya Africans and their religio-cultural worldviews, and as we have seen earlier, was due to the impact of scientific advancement that had influenced their mind and attitude to other non-Christian religions and cultures.

Due to the influence of the renaissance and enlightenment in Europe and America, where missionaries among the Haya hailed from, and due to lack of proper knowledge of Haya

culture, some if not all, missionaries, in the early start of Christianity among the Haya applied cultural conversion as one of the methods by rejecting most of the important aspects of the Haya's social and regio-cultural life, including their traditional names. With regards to cultural conversion among the Haya, the first Lutheran Haya Bishop, Kibira, regards the introduction of Christian faith among the Haya as "necessarily an attack on the very essence of social life, structure, customs and religion" (1964:69).

Concerning the Haya, Niwagila (1972:121) further elaborates that new converts were instructed in their catechetical classes to abandon their traditional ways of life, including their traditional names. They, therefore, were to be baptized with new western names. In this line, converts were given new names during Baptism which were considered to be "Christian names", resulting in undermining traditional names because people who converted to Christianity identified themselves with new names. Having European or biblical names was a true indication that a person had surrendered him/herself to the Christian faith. It was as if Christian identity is being determined by a nominal identification with foreign names!

These views echo that Christianity, according to Haya missionaries, did not recognize the value of Haya names that carried with them contextual messages and theological meaning according to Haya Traditional Religion. It has to be pointed out that the Haya did not just name a person without a reason. Names were given according to seasons, crisis, joy, blessing, prayers or thanksgiving to *Luhanga* (God)<sup>54</sup>. Had missionaries learned the meaning of Haya names, they would not have rejected these traditional names wholesale.

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<sup>54</sup> For example: names like *Byaruhanga* (belongs to God), *Akanganyira* (He was merciful to me), *Ajuna* (He helps/rescues) to mention but a few, reflected the Haya's faith in their creator. Names like *Ninsima* (I am grateful), *Akandokora* (He saved me), etcetera echo thanksgiving to God. As shall be discussed later in chapter five, these names were used by later Christian converts as they were found to be theologically enriching and contributed towards indigenizing Christianity among the Haya Christians (read more about baptismal names in Sundkler 1980:83-85). It should however, be pointed out that not all names were to be accepted especially when they carried meanings that would compromise Christian ethical values. What was important was for the missionary to do a careful scrutiny and discernment and promote the useful Haya names that match well with the message of the Gospel as a way of contextualizing Christianity in Haya religio-cultural context.

Missionaries thought that their ancient indigenous ways were deficient and therefore were to be set aside in order to be Christian adherents. The Haya converts were to break through the encrustation of culture before arriving at the core of Christian life (Kahakwa 2010:209). Also converts were obliged to embrace European culture, being closely associated with missionary Christianity. In other words, to be a Christian was perceived to be civilized in terms of western culture. Missionaries carried with them a new pattern of worship, church organization and marriage patterns similar to that of home western missionaries (Niwigila 1972:121).

The Haya were told that unless they abandoned their traditional religion and culture – as they were considered to be devilish and evil – they could not enter into God’s kingdom (Niwigila 1972:118). Based on this precondition, a new Christian convert was not allowed to participate in traditional social engagements like dances, and other traditional ceremonies which were perceived by missionaries as Satanic. During Baptism one had to renounce among other things participating in these socio-cultural activities. The baptismal vow was formulated in such a way that participation in the Haya traditional life, Traditional Religious affairs, including ancestral veneration, were altogether termed as Satanic<sup>55</sup>. It is, however, argued that the missionaries needed a clear study of the Haya Traditional Religion for the fair and just discernment of what is irrelevant and what is relevant and compatible to Christianity for the enrichment of Christianity within the Haya traditional context instead of cutting everything off.

So conversion in this kind of situation is likely to be seen as a mere social change and modernity whereby converts are likely to join Christianity not necessarily for spiritual reasons, but rather for modernity reasons. Although Haya new converts were taught to

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<sup>55</sup> During Baptism a Haya convert was and still is asked *Shetani uwolikwanga ni kyokiki?* (Who is that Satan whom you are renouncing?) The baptismal candidate will respond showing that he/she abandons traditional cleansing of the old women (*abakaikuru*), fear of witchcraft, abstaining from participation in traditional festivals, and from bad people like the drunkards, adulterers, fearless people who love worldly joys more than God (*Empoya* 2004:283-284). The fact that even today the Haya baptized Christians, even if they renounce Satan accompanying the rejection of fearing witchcraft, ancestors, etcetera, yet their life continues to be threatened by fear of witchcraft, ancestors, bad dreams, demons, curses etcetera, presupposes that missionary Christianity and now post missionary Christianity has failed to address these crucial issues in the Haya religio-spiritual worldview.

renounce their culture in order to embrace the Christian Gospel, what actually happens is that they remain rooted in their traditional culture but at the same time they are entangled in western culture. This makes us raise a question, what does this mean in terms of mission and conversion? Can this approach result in genuine Christian converts?

Bishop Kibira (1974:13, 53) wrestled with the same question in respect of cultural conversion when he asked: “Did the Bahaya in reality accept the Gospel or did it remain superficial and ‘foreign’, and if it remains foreign, what else do the people believe in?” This Kibira question raises concerns on how the church needs to critically evaluate the validity and the implication of missionary Christianity approach and methods to Haya conversion.

With regards to Haya culture in line with their Traditional Religion, Kibira further asks, “did it really mould, change, overcome, or replace the culture it thus invaded? Or was it perhaps overcome itself? What we regard as Christian church today in this area (Hayaland), is it perhaps only superficial while the people have remained traditional worshippers?” (1974:53).

Thus, cultural conversion has been contentiously criticized by some scholars. Actually it is regarded by most African theology scholars and missionaries as not only unbiblical but also unjustifiable. Cultural conversion in Africa was likely to, and perhaps did, produce superficial believers. In this, Kaufman (1981:180) contends:

... despite the impacts of Christian beliefs in contemporary Africa, the majority of Africans today remain attached to their primal religious beliefs. A major reason for that is that one’s later religious experience of God depends on the religious experience gained in the past.

Kaufman’s view supports what I argued previously in chapter three, and is also supported by the social science theory of structuration, that one needs the old socio-structure to draw on rules and resources in order to make sense or to be able to interpret the new reality. Missionaries, however, could not afford to make people put off their traditional culture

and dress in missionaries' culture in the name of conversion, for upon and after conversion to Christianity, converts do not take off their traditional religious beliefs and cultural values. Rather they use them to shape and illuminate their understanding of their new faith that is Christianity (Kahakwa 2007:188).

As such, Kraft (2002:339) has also argued against cultural conversion and seen it as an inappropriate method of conversion. He puts it:

It is the error of imposing upon one subculture the forms of Christianity appropriate to another subculture (the one in power) but not to that of the group in question. Missionary bodies have frequently erred in this way, requiring the members of other cultures to convert to Christ by first converting to Euro-American culture.

As we noted earlier in chapter two, Kraft's arguments are worth noting when he challenges missionaries not to require non-Christians to convert to a foreign culture first before converting to Christ. His views suggest that one does not need to first leave one's culture in which one has always been immersed in order to be a Christian.

Consequently, Kraft (2002:340) does not hesitate to envisage the danger of cultural conversion. He points out that, "Conversion in response to [cultural conversion] approach may result in a genuine relationship with God on the part of the convert(s). Or they may simply convert to the culture of the witness without developing a saving relationship with God". He further argues, "the tragedy of this later result cannot be overestimated. Many have received Christianity to be simply advocating a new cultural allegiance. The result is widespread nominalism with little real understanding of essential Christianity on the part of young churches."

As will be discussed in chapter five, the above observation challenges the way Christianity was introduced among the Haya people by western missionaries who did not pay enough attention to the Haya religio-cultural social context. Actually cultural conversion that appears to civilize the Haya and Africans has been considered by some African theologians to be more cultural imperialism than conversion in its real meaning of

the term from theological-missiological points of view. Nyamiti (1984:240) points out that Africans were taught that their ancient ways were deficient or even evil and had to be set aside if they hoped to become Christians, but it is clear today that the process of Christianization was too often a process of Europeanization.

#### **4.5.2 Mass Conversion**

Mass conversion involved conversion of the king or any important figure in the society who was thought to have strong influence in the society. These were approached based on their capability to influence their subjects to convert to Christianity. Sometimes the head of the family who had many wives and children like in the Massai community in Northern part of Tanzania, for example, could be a target on the pretext that the head of a family could be baptized with all his wives and children, hence a good number of converts. Mass conversion therefore, was one of the important strategic conversion methods that were applied by missionary Christianity in Buhaya. Sundkler points out that conversion of the king could automatically lead his subjects into Christianity since Bahaya believed that they had to worship according to the king (Kahakwa 2010:79).

As stated in chapter one, in this case his subjects were obliged to believe the way a king believes because, in the words of Sundkler (1980:64), “not to follow the kings’ pious example was a crime similar to incest”. Hence to believe as the king believes (*ekishomo ky’omukama*) was a common expression and technical term among the Haya (Sundkler 1980:65). The kings’ conversion opened the way for a mass conversion as people entered a new faith (Kahakwa 2003:14).

The socio-religious system of the Haya people as previously pointed out in chapter three, whereby the king’s responsibility was both spiritual and temporal and a word of a king was regarded very highly suggests why a conversion of a king was important for the conversion of his subjects. The subjects of a king among the Haya were more loyal to him than to any other worldly powers and authorities. For this reason a conversion of a king opened a door for more Haya to convert to Christianity, even if this may have meant a superficial conversion.

Bishop Wills of Uganda, who did a study on the growth of the church in Buhaya within this period of mission, pointed out that the Haya's ancient social system by which a tribe stays together with the influence of kings affected that acceptance of the Haya and the growth of Christianity in Northwest Tanzania. Based on this reason Niwagila (1991:160) assumes that this was why Cardinal Lavignerie had instructed his White Fathers missionaries to visit King Rumanyika of Karagwe and gain his influence so that through him his subjects would be converted to Christianity.

In Buhaya missionaries managed to reach kings who later not only helped to encourage young people to join baptismal classes, but to open doors for Christianity in their areas. Niwagila (1991:159) points out that "where the kings had accepted the Gospel ... there was more response to Baptism. Four of the eight kings in Buhaya became Protestants during this time – the kings of Ihangiro, Kihanja, Kiziba and Bukara – and the other four "simultaneously joined the Roman Catholic Church." Since the king was an influential figure among the Haya traditional community, to win him for the Gospel would be regarded as the best way to make the Gospel accepted within the entire kingdom (Niwagila 1991:154).

The weakness of this method appears to be having converts who just join Christianity following the religion of a king or head of the household or any other important person in the society. Conversion becomes a religion that does not necessarily touch the heart of the individual convert. Conversion becomes simply joining the religion of the king. As was discussed in chapter two, this method falls under the pattern of conversion as socialization or what Rambo (1993:13) and Gillespie (1991:15) term as affiliation. This pattern, although it is effective in terms of reaching many people in a short time as was the case during the early start of Haya missionization, they were fewer than if they had taken seriously the Haya Traditional Religious spirituality as an important feature in their Christian conversion.



Moreover, as we have seen in chapter two, although conversion has a social dimension, it is theological and spiritual as well. An authentic conversion should comprise a total transformation of a convert, not only in terms of socio-cultural dimension, but spiritual and psychological dimensions are also crucial components of it. Kahakwa (2010:80) helps us to see that this method not only produced artificial believers but also kings themselves entered in a new faith without understanding its context. With regards to mass conversion in such a manner, Kahakwa (2010:80) writes:

... most Christians [who join Christianity under mass conversion] have been said to undergo a nominal and cultural conversion as they did not understand what Christian faith is and its actual implication on them. On the other hand, most kings not only did not understand the meaning and the significance of the Gospel but also the implication of being Christians; as a result did not take the new faith seriously, and therefore did not set a good example before their subjects.

Sundkler (1980:64) sees mass conversion through kings and their response to Christianity as more of modernization and social change than a real conversion. He contends:

Conversion of the king must ... be seen as a process of modernization and adaptation to the new times which, after the First World War, were so obviously penetrating the whole of Africa, and Bukoba as well. After one or two of their number had taken their decisive step in becoming baptized, there emerged a certain completion among them which expressed itself in a struggle to achieve an important change. In one respect Christianization at this time became a symbol of this striving towards newness and modernization.

The above contentions leave us to question the validity, viability and authenticity of this missionary approach and its relevance of mass conversion to the Haya, despite being popularized in missionary Christianity and probably even in our contemporary era by our mainline post-missionary Christianity.

### **4.5.3 Education as an Instrument of Conversion**

Education was another conversion method that was emphasized in missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania. It was regarded as an instrument of conversion. Missionaries established schools in Northwest Tanzania because it was believed that through these,

missionaries could contact many people (Kahakwa 2010:80, Kijanga 1978:59-60). However, the missionaries' education system was mostly meant to create a new African community. Africans were required to abandon their entire cultural heritage and adapt to the new Christian values.

Missionaries maintained that every school established was to teach only European thinking to the natives that aimed at exercising the violent breakup of the primitive instinct that was believed by missionaries to have dominated the spiritual world of the Bantu. "It is due to the fate induced by God that the white has not to adapt to the black, rather the black has to adapt to the white" (Niwagila 1991:58). Conversion through education was also meant to Christianize and civilize the Africans who were considered uncivilized and primitive. This missionary Christianity theoretical approach of conversion through western education created a phenomenon among the Haya whereby education and Christianity became compatible.

A Christian was identified as *omushomi* which means a person who is educated in a modern way according to western missionaries' manner and who knows how to read and write. Until today, to the Haya the word *okushoma* refers to either of the two meanings: on the first hand it refers to going to church for worship, on the other hand, the same word refers to read or to be educated (Mutembei 1993:79). For that matter the Haya failed to make a distinction between a Christian and a literate person. To be a Christian was tantamount to being a literate person and so you became implicitly different from the non-Christians. It, in some ways, elevated Haya Christians to almost a missionary level. This was the beginning of socio-cultural stratification between Christians and those who were termed as "pagans".

Christianity as such, was not a distinctive way of life, but one of the characteristics of the European way of life to be acquired for one to qualify to be *omushomi* (the educated). The advantage of it was that it attracted many people, especially young ones. The result of this approach in the beginning was spectacular, many Haya joined Christianity to fight

illiteracy. It also prepared the future generation of Haya converts to take various responsibilities in the church and the nation at large.

Kijanga (1978:58) indicated that 90 percent of all the Tanzanian converts during the time of missionary Christianity were the result of school evangelization. The mission churches retained the church educated people to work as teachers in church schools, nurses in church dispensaries and hospitals, and some became evangelists and clergymen. However, missionary education only enabled people to do the work mentioned above, as Kijanga indicates. Employment was between the missionaries and converts and whenever financial predicaments arose, converts were assisted by missionaries, a system that fostered dependence between elite converts and the missionary church of that time.

However, Western education was detrimental to the Haya cultural traditional heritage of informal education. The school system was western oriented and caused separation between the literates and illiterates among the Haya community (Niwagila 1972:119). Another weakness of the approach that can be pointed out is the indoctrination of Haya learners against the indigenous cultural heritage in favour of a western lifestyle. Apart from a few missionaries in Tanzania, like Bruno Gutmann (1976-1966) who worked among the Chagga in Northern Tanzania who believed in the use of African cultural aspect of community life in evangelization (Keshomshahara 2008:58), most missionaries thought of using education as a tool for uprooting African converts from their pagan tradition. As Keshomshahara (2008:57) critically puts it, “unlike in Europe, where Christianity respected and transformed the indigenous European culture, in Africa [western missionary education system] crushed and eliminated the African culture, thus making Africans lose their identity, as they became ‘half Europeans and half Africans’”.

More importantly, from the theological and spiritual dimension, many converts joined Christianity for modernity reasons. The transformation was far more social and physical than spiritual. Larson (1991:31-32), one of the Swedish missionaries in Buhaya, observed that the initial attraction of a new Christian community didn't necessarily mean a new faith spiritually apart from things such as writing skills (literate) and new knowledge in

many other things. In this assertion we see the possibility for a new Christian community having responded to Christianity because of a new modern life with access to literature and new knowledge as a result of these missionary methods of doing mission so as to obtain more converts.

Nonetheless, despite the weakness of this outlined conversion approach, it can still be argued that the introduction of education enhanced social change among the Haya. It emancipated the Haya people from ignorance and helped them to fight poverty and disease. This led to the improvement of their standard of living. Brendan Carmody (2007) in *The Nature and Role of Christian Conversion in Zambia* notes similar benefits of conversion through education in the Zambian context. He points out that western education through missionaries gave new converts access to schools and opened the door to modernity. Through it African converts accessed “new skills which opened up previously unimagined horizons and possibilities.”

#### **4.5.4 Conversion through Medical Work**

Medical work was one of the paramount conversion approaches of missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania. Converting Africans was inherently connected to the medical work. Some missionaries, such as Germans, thought themselves superior to the Haya indigenous whom they saw as lost people who did not know the way, that is, Christianity, and they considered medical and other social services as the way to convert the Haya to Christianity. The words of Scholten, a German missionary as quoted in Niwagila (1991:213), clearly reflects their medical conversion philosophy:

wherever we meet a Haya person on the road or a busy person in the village, or the one learning in the school, or the sick person waiting for medicine (*dawa*), let us regard him as such a person who has lost his home and is prepared for God’s guidance and whom we give a new home according to our call. He does not know where the way leads him to, but we know it and we ought to guide him to the source of a new life.

Missionaries used medical services as one of the important means to attract the Haya to Christianity in the belief that spiritual salvation was presented by physical health (Keshomshahara 2009:64). Following in the footsteps of Jesus’ ministry, the

establishment of hospitals, health centres, dispensaries and clinics became one of the vital forces for African conversion into Christianity. Through these, missionaries were able to contact many people, including inpatients, outpatients and relatives.

In order to effect conversion to the “pagans”, hospitals were erected, cared for and organized based on missionary Christian ethos and principles (Kahakwa 2010:80). Until now Lutheran hospitals, health centres and dispensaries still use the missionary Christianity’s system whereby daily medical activities start and end, whenever possible, with devotions. Through these medical engagements, the church has an opportunity to reach many Christians and non-Christians not only with medical services, but also with the word of God, an endeavour that verifies church medical work as an instrument of mission in general and conversion in particular.

Through medical work people accepted Christianity and opted for western medical care which seemed more modern and effective than traditional medicines. Missionaries vehemently discouraged the traditional healing system whereby even traditional healers were labelled as “witchdoctors”, a derogatory term that portrays the superiority of western missionary medical system over the Haya traditional medicine cultural system. The African way of healing was also regarded as irrational, according to the missionaries’ views. As a result of this discouragement, Keshonshahara (2008:64) writes that Africans became dependant on the western medical system.

The dependence of Africans to western medicine raises some questions as whether; western medicine replaced African ways of healing. What was the place of healing in the African traditional society with regards to their both social and religious life? Jansen Gerard (2001:69) in *The labyrinth of medical pluralism in Africa: a missiological appraisal, AD 2000*, argues that since African traditional medicine was an integral part of their societies, and since African medicine was embedded in African traditional religion as it was used as a means of restoring good and evil, it was not replaced by western medicine, instead it forced people to choose between different forms of healing. These forms, according to him, include African ethno-medicine, western scientific medicine and healing ministry of African independent churches. Based on Jansen’s view points, we

can agree that western medicine created more medical pluralism among the Africans than dependence on western medicine. Most of Africans who do not afford western medicine and healing system, traditional medicine still remains their hope.

Gerard Jansen (2001:85) as retired former missionary in South Africa and other parts of Africa, regrettably admits that in the past, western missionaries overlooked the significance of African healer's approach that addressed a sick person holistically by taking into consideration both physical and metaphysical dimension of a sick person. He points out that this was due to lack of profound theological and anthropological insights. He feels that western medicine can learn from the holistic approach to the sick person as it is normally done in African practice. Jansen (2001: 74-75) observes that in most of African tradition societies one finds the dichotomy between the natural and supernatural cause of diseases. Africans see that some diseases are caused by God and others by human beings. This dichotomous interpretation of the nature and the source of disease affects the means of treatment in the African societies.

What Jansen observes above reflects a similar situation among the Haya society. The problem of western healing system and approach during missionaries' time was, as Niwagila observes, the healing was more physical than spiritual as it did not flow in line with the African worldview of healing which embraces both the physical and the spiritual realm (1991:58). The missionaries' healing system lacked the African healing dimension that takes human ontological balance between the spiritual and physical world seriously. It did not take into account the cause-effect dimension of the African way of healing discourse.

The missionary healing philosophy of physical cure did not address the Haya ontological dimension of the spiritual world that comprises fear of curses (*emiteego*), witchcraft, ancestral involvement in their problems, the question of barrenness, demons (*amahembe*) and so on, that was fundamental in the Haya traditional metaphysical world. This presupposes the reason why as we noted in the first chapter, in times of existential crisis some Haya Christians, probably many, revert to the traditional Haya religious practices (c.f. Imasogie 1993:68).

Nonetheless, missionaries' medical work helped Haya Africans to fight hazardous chronic diseases such as malaria and gonorrhoea, and living standards of people improved. Based on this point, it can therefore be arguably maintained that the missionary Christianity healing conversion method did succeed from the outskirts of attracting many converts to medical care centres and hospitals, but as it transplanted the ministry of healing from their home country and planted it wholesale in Africa, did not efficaciously achieve the intended goal, hence leaving the gap that was to be filled later by Haya Africans themselves as they continued to assimilate the Gospel and interpret it in their own traditional philosophical worldview.

According to Sanneh (2003:55), the missionaries conveyed what he calls external transmission, but later Africans through translation interpreted the Gospel in their own cultural context to make sense of their conversion. For Sanneh, Africans did internal appropriation of conversion to Christianity. In the next pages we shall see more on how the Haya through translation and other Revival Christianity endeavoured to appropriate conversion that appears relevant as they address their spirituality and worldview that meet their existential issues. Similarly, as Jansen (2001:83-84) notices, some of the African independent churches have drawn on African traditional religion in their healing methods and approach as they apply pneumatic, psychic and physical aspects in effecting healing. Jansen in this case observes that healing ministry in the African independence churches have tried to complement what western medicine miss in the approach of the person from both physical and spiritual dimension. The African independent churches trace the root of sickness from the spiritual world.

#### **4.5.5 Liturgical Conversion**

Liturgical conversion refers to incorporation of a potential convert into Christianity through a formalized liturgical system like Baptism and Confirmation. As will be seen, missionaries from the mainline churches, of course based on their respective theology, linked conversion with Baptism or Confirmation as an intrinsically inseparable entity<sup>56</sup>. I

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<sup>56</sup> See more discussions on the role of the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation on conversion with regards to Lutheran orthodoxy as unpacked in chapter five (5:2:1).

stated in chapter one that conversion and Baptism, normally with the so-called Christian names (western or biblical), were highly elevated as if the two are compatible. In discussing this we are faced with a critical missiological question: Although missionary Christianity and some mainline churches like Lutheran church in the Northwest Tanzania today link the two sacramental initiations, how can we hermeneutically explain the work of the Haya indigenous missionaries' work before their liturgical conversion, that is, through Baptism and Confirmation? Professor Niwagila (1991:85) who recorded the missionary work of the three<sup>57</sup> younger Haya men who encountered Christianity in Uganda through the Ganda woman Lucia, writes:

These three young men, after being convinced that Christianity was the only hope for the future of Buhaya, organized themselves into a small group and conducted a prayer service. They also went to the neighbours and explained to them about the Saviour Jesus Christ. This small group was growing every day. [They were] able to convince even the son of king Mutatembwa, known by his name Kalutasingwa and ... explained to him about Christian faith.

History reveals that these Haya believed and accepted Christ as their saviour before they were liturgically baptized and confirmed and it is clear that with their new faith they started missionary work among their fellow Haya. The question is, when did they really convert, was it after or before Baptism and Confirmation? Was it when they encountered Christianity in Uganda in the year between 1895 and 1896 or in the year between 1901 and 1917 when they were baptized formally and liturgically by the British missionaries? These questions require a critical missiological investigation which is perhaps not within the scope of this dissertation.

It is argued, however, that while we cannot underrate the method of conversion which links it with some liturgical traditional rituals or sacraments such as Baptism and

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<sup>57</sup>These younger men were Ikate, Mpandakyarao and Kibira. We learn from history that after their encounter with Christianity in Uganda in the year between 1895-1896, the British missionaries baptized some of these Haya converts in Kashenye as follows: in 1901 Zakaria Ikate, in 1904 Abraham Mpandakyaro and Abraham Kibira in 1917 (see *Karne ya injili* 2010: 5). Kajerero, who became a famous indigenous church leader in Buhaya, was baptized in 1906 by Protestant missionaries even though he had a first encounter with Roman Catholic missionaries which did not have a strong spiritual impact on his life, although he learned writing and reading in a Roman Catholic missionary school (Niwagila 1991:90-91). One notes that Baptism came many years after they had encountered Christ and started evangelistic services for Him, even if they had not undergone liturgical conversion.



Confirmation, authentic Christian conversion should be seen beyond formalized church practices and the church should leave a space for the recognition of the possibility of conversion outside the church creedal confessions and liturgy. True conversion should touch the heart of a convert and transform him or her ontologically, reflecting new life in the faith in Jesus Christ as saviour. The challenge should be: how do we maintain the balance between the sacramental and experiential dimension of authentic conversion? Can we have an integrative approach that can take into account both possibilities?

Scholars such as Peace (2004:8) and Kraft (2002:328) regard the liturgical conversion method, which was popularized by western missionary Christianity and is still now perpetuated by post missionary mainline Christianity, as a kind of conversion by socialization. Children are incorporated into the church when they are brought by their parents for Baptism (Peace 2004:8). Protestant churches maintain that children can be initiated into the family of God on the basis of parents promising to raise them in Christian values and life. According to Kraft (2002:328) “this practice is intended to imply that, [at] appropriate point in their lives, those who have already been baptized on the basis of their parents’ confession and commitments will themselves opt for Christianity”. Post Baptism nurture in the mainline churches for both adults and children is mainly done through Sunday School instruction, catechism and Confirmation classes. In most cases it is taken for granted that to be a Christian is to be engaged with other believers and active in a life of concern for others (Peace 2004:8).

What Peace notes is certainly what was being done by missionary Christianity and now by post missionary Christianity in the Lutheran Church and other mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania. During missionary Christianity and even today in the mainline churches such as Lutheran, it is traditionally and dogmatically maintained that conversion is endowed during Baptism, and Confirmation is the actualization of conversion for children who were baptized during infancy. During infant Baptism, parents and Godparents recite a confession prayer renouncing Satan and his works and committing themselves to Christ. During Confirmation baptized young people are expected to recite

the baptismal confession as an indication that now they can stand by themselves in Christian faith<sup>58</sup>.

Peace (2004:10), nonetheless, alerts us to see the danger of this approach. He argues that liturgical conversion can lead to some to see conversion as mechanical and devoid of real content and meaning. Peace believes that liturgical conversion can produce nominal Christians when he says: “when conversion is the outcome of a ritual that is entered into for a variety of reasons – custom, expectation, family, convenience, social status, as well as genuine faith – it can result in nominal faith”. Therefore the challenge remains to maintain the sacramental view of theology while emphasizing the experiential side of conversion.

Peace, for that matter, observes an important feature in the mainline churches which is the actual reality of our context when he talks of church members with regard to their faith analogy. There are those whose faith, according to Peace (2004:8), is what he calls *intrinsic* and those whose faith is *extrinsic*. For the former faith is alive, real, and personal while the latter, is more of form, duty, tradition, and obligation. Therefore, the challenge which faces the mainline churches in this regard, is “to help members move from extrinsic faith (nominalism) to intrinsic faith (inner conviction)”. They also point out that “this kind of change is a kind of conversion itself”. Hence Peace’s challenge to the mainline churches is invaluable (2004:9-10):

Mainline churches need to help their membership commit themselves consciously to what is implicit in church activity and membership. Without such consciousness, church membership becomes like club membership: you hang out with nice people, but when you go home, such membership makes little difference in [their] life and the lives of others. We need to create ways for people to grow in all aspects of faith: belief, commitment, service, relationships, justice, spirituality, and more.

It is worthwhile to acknowledge that although Peace doesn’t seem to explicitly suggest ways in which Christians in the mainline churches should grow in all aspects of faith, it

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<sup>58</sup> See for example the Haya Lutheran liturgical and hymnal book, *Empoya* (2004:208,216).

appears to me that his challenge is relevant since faith in Christ needs to be realized beyond being liturgically and externally transmitted as it was and still is the case in most mainline churches. It has to be internalized in order to be real, viable and authentic conversion.

Liturgical conversion which was apparently seen as effective by missionary Christianity and now post missionary Christianity, being influenced by western creed and dogmatic formulation of western Christianity and theology, is challenged by East African and Charismatic Revival African Christianity as shall be discussed in the next chapter. I therefore argue that the liturgical conversion method needs to be reflected in the light of the Haya contextual and traditional worldview of religiosity and spirituality if it is to be relevant to most Haya Christians.

#### **4.5.6 Separatism Approach of New Converts**

Separatism approach has to do with separating new converts from the rest of the non-Christian community. Missionaries also applied the separatist conversion approach to separate the new converts from the rest of the pagan community. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics applied this method in Africa. Missionaries created what was known as Christian villages which are said to be monastic in character, over-disciplined and restrictive. In some areas like Usambala in Tanzania, Christian villages were established with the aim of separating Christian converts from non-Christians (Niwagila 1972:56).

Separatism approach included mission stations and Christian villages whereby new converts were excluded from the “pagans” for a different kind of lives. Janeth Mwambungu (2003:6) observes similar practices in Konde, Southern Tanzania. According to her, the missionaries built mission stations in which they also opened schools, dispensaries and churches which later developed into a Christian village. The Christian village became very famous, and the chief together with some of his people, in order to benefit from its services and be recognized as members, decided to convert to Christianity. It is said that many of these chiefs accepted Christianity, through Christian villages, only to be recognized by missionaries and to get a large share of such social services and

honour. The introduction of the Christian village therefore became a great challenge to the “pagans”. Those who lived in Christian villages were seen to be better and more civilized than the pagans, since they were the first to live in better houses, were well dressed and educated especially in reading and writing.

It is obvious that although this kind of conversion approach seemed to attract many to Christianity, it was not going to produce real converts, for the motives of those who joined were not based on faith in Christ but rather accessing social services and honour. Bishop Kibira (1974: 48) also points out that although early missionaries tried to build “Christian villages” separating Christians from their old clans in some parts of Tanzania, this method did not work. In Northwest Tanzania, the Christians tried to act together within the old system as they struggled to be recognized as a separate group. In most cases they failed and were pulled out to join the common system taking care to avoid those things which were contrary to their faith. Many new Christian converts abandoned these villages because of their family ties as it was difficult for them to break away from their original societies, clans and families.

Gitonga (2008:49) shares that this method of separation of converts from their cultural milieu was also practiced by English missionaries in Kenya, especially in Meru. He says, “The missionaries gathered and housed the converts at the mission stations, where they worshipped as the new community of faith, and received Christian instruction. In this way, they were cut off from their families, relatives, local communities, and traditional religious heritage.” In other words, the new converts were divorced from their cultural roots. This approach, which removes converts from communities and cultural heritage, negates the indigenization of the Gospel. This is necessarily the case because the authentic conversion realizes the importance of the indigenous worldview and frame of reference of the converts. Conversion, as was argued earlier, does not necessarily entail physical separation of an individual from his/her former community, but it is more of a spiritual transformation that touches an attitude of a convert towards his/her former life in relation to his/her new faith which he/she considers to be better than the old.

#### **4.5.7 Bible Translation and Other Catechetical Documents and the Notion of Translatability**

Bible translation was one of the very fundamental missionaries' conversion strategies in effecting conversion among the Haya. The method has its roots from a famous missiologist, Gustav Warneck, who had earlier advised the missionaries to learn the languages of the natives so that they could use the native language to confront them with the Gospel. Warneck wanted missionaries to differentiate themselves from the colonialists who were forcing the natives to learn the language of their masters. Missionary Christianity had to learn the vernacular language to be able to translate the Gospel so that many Haya people would be reached in their own language. The missionaries like Bethel Missionary Society saw the translation of the biblical literature as not only necessary, but an agent in reaching the Haya people as quickly as possible before the Roman Catholics who had no tradition of translating the Bible had made much impact among the Haya (Niwagila 1991: 139).

Father Bodelschwingh's appeal to his missionaries in East African (in Niwagila 1991:139) reads:

...Do not waste your energy for minor affairs, but keep the most important task in mind; to preach the Gospel to the pagans as soon as possible. While the Catholics do not pay much attention to the Gospel and all these pagans are languishing for it, Roehl will soon have the special gift to preach the Gospel to them in their mother tongue. I have repeatedly asked him; "Brother, Roehl, please make available to us a small Gospel, for instance Luke or at least the most important parts of the scripture to have a first reading for the pagans."

For this reason, missionaries like Doring in cooperation with the indigenous converts like Andrea Kajerero and using the available Haya literature including the Haya dictionary, quickly learned the Haya language so as to have some parts of the Gospel, songs and prayers, psalms and liturgical books translated into the Haya language for the Haya to read (Niwagila 1991:140).

Translation led both new converts and non-converts to access the word of God in their indigenous languages. Haya people were able to access the word of God and other

catechetical literature like Martin Luther's small catechism entitled *Ekilagilila abakristo* (Guideline for Christians) and the baptismal lessons with the title, *omuhanda gw'okulokoka* (the way of salvation) in their own vernacular, a method that became one of the important western missionary conversion approaches (Niwagila 1991:234).

However, Niwagila reports the protest from the Haya Christians when the German missionaries came back for the second time after the Second World War. This time translation went on without the involvement of indigenous people apart from a few of them who were just used as their tool, probably because they were not considered important. This suggests the paternalistic attitude of the missionaries towards the Haya. Because of this approach the indigenous Haya Christians protested as they felt they were being ignored and as if they were there to receive everything from the west. They also did not like to buy pieces of translations, but wanted the whole Bible translated so that instead of buying several separate books they could buy only one book, which would be cheaper and affordable for most Haya Christians (1991:234-237). Sundkler (1980:88), one of the missionaries in the Haya first generation Christianity, writes:

The new Christian religion was a religion of the Book, it is important to realize that one refers, not to the Bible as a whole but to certain select parts of it which were translated into Luhaya in the first generation, and which also happened to be available in the villages.

It is important to note that the protest of the Haya against the translation of the Bible and other important Christian literature was not based on the nature of translation itself, but rather the motive, imposition and paternalistic attitude the missionaries had towards their fellow Haya Christians. The Haya wanted to be recognized as equal partners in the mission of God and that the model and nature of translation should be determined by the two sides.

Nevertheless, translation of the Bible did contribute significantly to the indigenization of Christianity among the Haya and Africans in general. According to Sanneh (1993:86), one of the activities of missionaries that have contributed significantly to the diffusion of

religions has been the translation of scriptures. Sanneh (1990:88) has given considerable attention to the significance of translation of the scripture as one of the important missionary conversion strategies. He describes the history of the translation of the Bible in association with the missions from the beginning of what he calls diffusion of Christianity to the modern day, giving special attention to translation work in Africa. Sanneh (1990:93) compares the Christian strategy of translation to the Islamic strategy of non-translation, relating these strategies to different views in the two religions (Montgomery 1999:58).

Contradictory messages may have been conveyed by the association of missionaries with colonial powers on the one hand, and by the translation of the scriptures into the vernacular on the other hand. The first message conveyed a sense of inferiority to the hearer, but the second message conveyed a sense of dignity and self-worth – God’s word would be carried in local language. This affirmation of local language resulted in the affirmation of cultural and social identities of the receiving groups and, with that, the right to independent political or at least organizational identities of numerous groups (Montgomery 1999:59).

Sanneh (1993:86) believes that translation of the Bible was fundamental in indigenization of Christianity although that might have not been the primary goal of the missionaries. He makes his case: “what is illuminating in the indigenous cultural process then, is how the Christian scriptures, cast as a vernacular oracle, gave the native idiom and the aspirations it enshrined a historic cause, allowing Africans to fashion fresh terms for their own advancement and possibility.”

As Sanneh observes, translation of the Bible and other Christian essential literature into the Haya language, to some extent, indigenized missionary Christianity. It led Christianity to be expressed in the Haya idiomatic expressions, proverbs, riddles, stories, metaphors and symbols for articulating and describing Christianity in their own socio-cultural contextual worldview (Kahakwa 2010:238). Sundkler (1980:89) observes that for the first generation Haya Christians, the Bible in a written form was a treasure to be cared for

reverently, “as a living word which in the temptation and crisis of life showed the way and gave strength and consolation.” It appears that Sundkler sees translation of the Bible as a contribution towards the indigenization of Christianity among the Haya.

Sanneh (1990) links the tremendous growth of Christianity in Africa with the translatability of the Gospel into the African vernacular languages. For him the success of Christianity in Africa did not depend on the western missionary Christianity, but rather on the translation of the Gospel into African idioms. Bediako (1995) also shares the same sentiments as Sanneh regarding the translation of the Bible into African languages. Bediako (1995) maintains that since the Gospel is essentially translatable into African languages, it is illogical to speak of African Christianity as a foreign religion; hence he calls African Christianity a non-western religion.

Whilst we cannot ignore completely the point that Sanneh and Bediako make with regard to the Bible and other Christian writings contributing to the Africanization of missionary Christianity in African soil, a lot is left to be desired. Probably, as it seems to me, their view is exaggerated. If the Bible translatability has indigenized African Christianity as they put it, how can we then try to address, for example, the question of the dualistic tendency among Africans who maintain both Christianity and African religion at the same time, especially during existential crisis? Is it not the case that missionary Christianity has not yet been adequately presented in such a way that it addresses fundamental African ontological and existential life crises despite these translations?

Maluleke (1997:20), however, does not seem to buy wholesale the idea of linking Bible and Gospel translatability with the indigenization of Christianity in Africa. He puts it that “the translatability of the Gospel does not eliminate the significance of the role of the missionary enterprise or colonialism.” Maluleke observes that even if the Gospel can be “eminently translatable, human intervention can affect the pace and the quality of such translation to the extent of arresting it into all sorts of orthodoxies.” In addition, I argue in this dissertation, that African Christianity will not be truly African only by translatability of the Gospel into African languages, but also when the forms, structure, theology,



missionary strategies including inherited conversion from western missionary Christianity, will be revisited and indeed be indigenized to suit the African cultural and contextual worldview.

#### 4.5.8 Material Incentives and Socio-economic Support

Missionaries have used material support as an incentive to attract more converts as part of their conversion methods and approach. Because of these material incentives and socio-economic support many converts responded positively to Christianity in order to access, among other things, the benefits accompanying Christian religion. Spear (1999:6) puts it “for many [converts] the initial attractions were more socio-political and materialistic”. Professor Katoke (1976:103) makes a similar case that most of missionary’s initial attraction to Christianity was not based on spiritual gain, but on the gifts and other benefits attached to it. Katoke therefore, sees the importance of the missionaries’ method of material provision as having many converts in a short time but who, according to him, are “spiritual dwarfs”. What Katoke points out in this regard is the possibility of having artificial believers for whom faith is extrinsic but not intrinsic. Material conversion provides conversion to Christianity as a western religion, but not conversion to Christ. It is, at times, a conversion whereby faith doesn’t necessarily percolate into the hearts of converts, but is merely adoption of a western socio-cultural way of life.

This method, consequently, created a sense of paternalistic attitude and dependence among the converts whereby a missionary was seen as omnipresent with a solution to every problem (Rweyemamu 2005:43). Among the Haya, some missionaries attracted people by giving them some soap, second-hand clothes, cakes, just to mention a few. This according to Pastor Alice Kabigumila (in Rweyemamu 2005:46) created not only dependence on the missionaries but undermined the Haya culture of hospitality of providing *akamwani*<sup>59</sup> to the guests instead of being a mere recipient from visitors. Through these incentive methods, the Haya people believed that in the mission station they could access all kinds of support from missionaries. Some Haya indigenous joined

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<sup>59</sup> *Akamwani* are coffee beans that are traditionally presented to visitors as a token. It portrays the Haya culture of hospitality. Among the Haya a visitor would not receive anything before receiving a small plate of *akamwani* to chew.

Christianity on the basis of accessing material gain and not necessarily for religious reasons or spiritual conversion.

Material support and incentives are likely to yield artificial converts and hypocritical Christian converts. This in turn created the dual believers who at times of crisis resort to their former beliefs because for them Christianity became a religion of modernity and social and material gain, but not a spiritual religion. This suggests the reason why Haya Christians since the early start of missionary Christianity and even now resort to either Traditional Religion or Charismatic and Revival Christianity during the time crisis for solutions to their problems.

Some Haya and African religious scholars have regarded African Traditional Religion and African Charismatic Christianity as the problem-solving religion for Africans. The missionary Christianity conversion approach needed a reaction of Haya indigenous Christians that would make Christians suit their context after some missionaries' left (cf. Asomoah-Gyadu, 2003:76-77). In line with this contention, Sanneh (2003:55) describes that missionaries from the west converted people, often with "political incentives and material inducements". Sanneh views missionary Christianity as one that stressed external transmission and African converts' interpretation of the Gospel in their own cultural and religious context as an internal appropriation.

#### **4.6 A Critical Assessment of Missionaries' Approach, Methods of Conversion and their Impact on Haya Christian Life**

Assessment of the missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods in the Lutheran church Northwest Tanzania requires the theological-missiological and social theory adopted in this dissertation. I shall indicate that Christianization of Northwest Tanzania by missionary Christianity entails both negative and positive results of missionaries' approach and methods of conversion. Engaging with Sanehe and Bediako on their theory of translatability and assimilation and social theory of structuration, the section shall finally argue that although missionary Christian approach and methods of conversion did not adequately take cognisance of the Haya religio-cultural worldview, the

success of conversion in the Haya area did not only depend on these methods. The assessment of missionary Christianity conversion methods, hence, necessitates an investigation and discussions that are based on both positive and negative aspects and impacts on the Haya Christian life. We begin with positive impacts, then we will also critically examine the negative impacts of these western conversion methods and approach to the Haya Christians life.

#### **4.6.1 Positive Impacts**

Although missionary Christianity was brought to the Haya from a western religio-cultural viewpoint that was influenced by the renaissance and enlightenment, scientific discovery, Darwin's theory of evolution and quasi-scientific worldview, they are remembered as having brought significant social change that later became instrumental for the Haya's socio-economic development.

Whilst acknowledging the shortcomings of western missionary Christianity in terms of not taking seriously the African culture, religion, conceptual worldview and spirituality of the Haya people during missionization of African, Lugazia's (2010:63-64) comments on the contribution of missionaries in Africa are worth quoting:

Any African historian can accept without doubt that the western missionaries who came to Africa made Christ known among Africans through evangelization and social services. Because of missionaries, Africans learned to read and write. Such formal education led to much development in Africa, be it secular or religious.

In a similar vein, Kibira (1964:72) points out that "whatever mistakes the missionaries have made, they brought the Bible to Africa and have shown us Christ." Kibira sees that although the Haya knew God (*Luhanga*) whom they worshipped and venerated in their own pre-missionary Christian religion, they did not know Jesus until the missionaries came. For Kibira, it remains the task of the African church and theologians to indigenize Christianity by interpreting the Bible in an African philosophical setting. By so doing "each place (congregations) can live happily as Christians in their place, without being

required to adopt the civilization of the missionaries which in some cases is destructive and unnecessary”.

For what it is worth, missionary Christianity conversion methods, though presented with shortcomings, for some missionaries – probably many – were applied in good faith. It is certainly obvious that the work of missionaries among the Haya and indeed in Africa cannot be underestimated. Although, the missionaries’ preconceptions of the Haya traditional religious life and culture which during their course of missionization made them unnecessarily launch an attack on the essence of Haya social life, structure, customs and religion, yet the significant social development was feasibly realized. Many Haya joined Christianity even if not all of them were motivated by religious and spiritual motives and their life standards were changed in terms of education, health care and poverty alleviation. Some of the Haya converts who went through western missionary education played significant roles in leadership, both in churches and political arenas.

It is also important to recognize a few missionaries who in a unique way contributed to the development of African indigenization of African Christianity, such as Placide Temples, John Taylor and others like Bruno Gutmann (1876-1966) in Northern Tanzania, who studied the African culture and wrote down systematically the African philosophy which they thought could be a bridge towards making Christianity in Africa relevant (Kibira 1964:72).

Fiedler (1996:4), one of the German missionaries in Tanzania, in his book *Christianity and African culture: conservative German Protestant Missionaries in Tanzania , 1900-1940*, while admitting that most missionaries in Tanzania didn’t share a positive attitude towards African culture and religion and that missionaries and colonialists shared the same systems of values as they were both “children of their time”, yet he recognizes the contribution of a few who did have positive view about African religion and culture. Apart from missionaries like Bruno Guttmann among the Chagga of North Tanzania there were others like Traugott Bachmann in Mbozi, Unyiha (1898-1916) and Ernest Johansen who worked in Usambara, Rwanda and later in Bukoba (1891-1929). These, unlike many of

their fellow missionaries, had a positive attitude to African culture of which may have appeared potential for their missionary vision in Africa<sup>60</sup>.

It is important to acknowledge that social interaction of western missionaries and indigenous Haya brought about an effect of cross-fertilization that became instrumental in opening the door for social change among the Haya and Africans at large. In line with this, Montgomery (1999:16) views missionaries as agents of changes. According to him, missionaries should be considered as change agents, as mentioned in chapter three. He points out that in the modern era, because of the contrast in technological development between the west and the rest of the world, missions have contributed to change the potential converts in a variety of social areas.

However, from diffusion theoretical point of view, Montgomery (1999:61), emphasises that, “in spite of missionaries being seen as change agents, the readiness and the perception of the recipient is even more important for successful diffusion”. His argument is based on the fact that we should not only see missionaries as the only change agents, but we also need to consider other aspects that facilitate diffusion of religion, for missionaries had not dictated these changes. He points out that “the changes missionaries have brought about have not always been expected or even desired by the missionaries or their sending bodies, or by the nations from which they came (1999:47).” Certainly, among the Haya as pointed out earlier, the modern fields of education and medicine are two obvious areas where changes in terms of modernization that has been brought about through missionary Christianity are undeniably significant.

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<sup>60</sup>Those interested in reading more on the role of some missionaries who contributed significantly in indigenization of western Christianity into African soil read Steven Kaplan, *The Africanization of missionary Christianity: History and typology* (1986). Kaplan, despite the fact that he admits the failure of the majority of western missionaries to indigenize western Christianity into African cultural context and while arguing that the extreme ethnocentricity and cultural arrogance of many western missionaries cannot be denied, calls us not to ignore the contribution of the western missionaries in Africanization of Christianity. Kaplan has provided a list of several missionaries both in East and Central African who came to terms with African setting where they worked as missionaries. Although his work is beyond the parameters of our research area, his contribution is remarkable, especially the typology he develops to describe their model of adaptation which is: toleration, translation, assimilation, Christianisation, acculturation, and incorporation. His work helps to avoid the fallacy of generalization when discussing the western missionaries' approach to African religion and culture.

Montgomery's contention, therefore, underpins what Sanneh points out when he argues that despite the shortcomings of the missionaries' presentation of the Gospel in Africa, African Christians assimilated Christianity successfully. So the point he makes is that mission in Africa in general and in our case among the Haya in particular, as we shall see in the next chapters, was successful not because of the minority western missionaries and their conversion methods, but rather by God himself using both western and indigenous missionaries as agents of *Missio Dei* among their people.

The concept of *Missio Dei* in missiology demands that one sees that mission is done by God through human agency. Although human agency is important, its weakness cannot be the reason for the failure of the mission of God. Some scholars such as Sanneh (1993:424), Bediako (1995:206) and Maluleke (1996:3) maintain that the success of conversion in Africa did not solely depend on western missionaries, but that the translatability and assimilation of the Gospel into African cultural idioms was the key factor for this success. In structuration theory terms we can put it that the African (Haya) converts with their contact with western missionaries drew on rules and resources from their religio-cultural social structure to make sense of conversion in their own frame of reference.

Suffice to conclude this section by pointing out that missionary Christianity's conversion methods among the Haya, despite their weaknesses in terms of the way they were presented, produced social change that was instrumental for modernity and social economic development among the Haya that cannot be underestimated. The following section, however, will investigate the weakness of these missionary Christianity conversion methods based on their nature and on how they were applied among the Haya in the mainline churches of Northwest Tanzania.

#### **4.6.2 Negative Impacts**

The study has shown that conversion methods that were applied by missionary Christianity were influenced by the socio-cultural context that was taking place in their home countries before and during the time of western Christendom's expansion. The

renaissance and enlightenment, the discovery of Darwin's theory of evolution and the quasi-scientific worldview strongly influenced western thinking that had impacted the western missionary theology of conversion and Christianization of non-western cultures. For this reason almost all the conversion methods applied by missionary Christianity created African Christianity with a western outlook.

Although missionary Christianity conversion methods helped the Haya to adopt the missionaries' way of life such as dressing styles, and access to important social services like western medical care, skills and "formal" education, it did not touch the hearts of Haya African Christians as they were not conveyed in a way that takes seriously the Haya religio-cultural worldview, as we noted in chapter three. This suggests the possibility that most of the Haya became Christians not necessarily for religious reasons, but rather for benefits accompanying missionary Christianity.

It created the possibility of having a Christianity that is artificial among the African converts; one is worn and not experienced. The missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania, just like in other parts of Africa, to a greater extent did not take Haya region-cultural context and spirituality seriously. Sundkler (1980:5-6) admits that missionary Christianity had produced artificial Christians despite their contact with church and school. He points out that missionary Christianity's African generations were left at the borderline between old and new. This feature was not only the case among the lay Christians, but also early generation theologians who still had the same worldview of tradition and Christianity.

This study of missionary Christianity among the Haya and their conversion methods has shown that one of our interpretive hypotheses which we pointed out in chapter one is both true and wrong. The interpretive (working) hypothesis was:

*"Since mission Christianity conversion was introduced and applied among the Haya people being accompanied by western cultural worldviews and values, it*

*was perceived to be more cultural conversion and less religious conversion leading to negative consequences for their Christian life.”*

The study has indicated that it is true that missionary conversion among the Haya of the western Tanzania to a certain extent lacked, and still today to some Haya Christians still lacks, authenticity and relevance for it does not strictly and adequately take into account the cultural and spiritual nature of the Haya people, as was discussed previously. It is nonetheless, important to point out that not all consequences were negative, as we have seen that social change was one of the key positive aspects of missionary approach and conversion methods. The question is, what about the spiritual aspect? Did the missionaries approach and methods sufficiently meet the spiritual needs of the Haya?

To address these questions, we need to go back to Stanley's distinction of conversion (2006:70). Stanley presents a vivid distinction between conversion to Christ and conversion Christianity. To him conversion to Christ is more of a personal relationship with Christ as a result of the influence of the Holy Spirit as a chief agent of this transformation process, while conversion to Christianity may imply a close relationship with Christianity as a religion. The former suggests spiritual transformation – regeneration, while the latter implies alignment with Christianity as a system of beliefs without necessarily a spiritual transformation. To Stanley, this is associated with a human being (missionary) as an agent of conversional process while the former is with the Holy Spirit as agent of conversion.

Taking into account what Stanley observes above, it can be concluded that western missionaries among the Haya endeavored to convert them into western Christianity, but probably not enough was done to convert them to Christ. Nonetheless, by the power of the Holy Spirit through East African Revival in the first place and later through Charismatic-Pentecostal revival, the Haya have come to realize that they needed conversion to Christ. The Revival Movement and now the Charismatic movement, as shall be discussed at length in the next chapters, should be viewed as the work of the Holy Spirit that calls the Hayas to convert to Christ and enjoy the relationship with Christ in their social cultural



contextual milieu based on their traditional spirituality and religiosity. However, there are some questions regarding this point. Does that mean that there is no conversion to Haya Lutheran Christianity? What makes these revivals more effective than the conversion methods in missionary Christianity? What is the theological and cultural contribution of these revivals? These questions will be explored in terms of the *missio Dei* theological dimension of conversion through structuration theory in chapters five and six.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In chapter four we have discussed the Christianization and missionization of Haya by western missionaries in the nineteenth century. We have showed how Northwest Tanzania was Christianized and various categories of missionaries who Christianized Haya were discussed. The context that informed the missionary's theology of conversion and their approach towards religions other than Christianity was investigated. We finally at length explored various methods that were applied by western missionaries in their process of missionizing the Haya and later the strengths and weakness of these methods were also discussed in this chapter.

We pointed out that the conversion approach of western missionaries was good in nature; however the way this was applied did not adequately take into account the nature and scope of the Haya traditional cultural contextual and spiritual worldview. Cultural conversion, mass conversion, education, medical work, material incentives, liturgical and sacramental conversion were applied in such a way that they could attract more artificial converts who joined Christianity for material, modernity and socio-political motives so as to access the benefits attached to these. These methods were likely to produce nominal Christians who remained in the dual religious system.

For this reason, today Haya Christians find themselves in tension between the Traditional Religion and Christianity because the way Christianity was and continues to be portrayed to them does not seem to adequately meet their spiritual needs and hence cannot address their inner religio-cultural challenges. Many Haya beliefs such as the question of ancestral

spirits, witchcraft, curses, barrenness, misfortunes, have to be dealt with within the Haya traditional religion because missionary Christianity and the mainline churches that still follow the old system have failed to address them. This is precipitated by the fact that these missionaries failed to distinguish between the Gospel and their western culture. There has been a common understanding of missionaries attempting to guide the process of cultural changes among the African Christian community members. Therefore as Nyongeza (2001:30) put it “their often severe denunciation of African culture can be viewed as evidence of their insistence of wholesale westernization”.

As we saw in chapter three based on the social theory of structuration which complements the social dimension of conversion to Christianity, the realization of authentic conversion is not only determined by missionaries with their conversion methods and approach, but the social religio-cultural context of a convert would influence the Haya understanding and realization of Christian conversion. In chapter three I argued that the Haya indigenous and their social structure was not only transformed by missionary Christian conversional methods, but their religio-cultural background also at least to some degree played a role in their task of interpreting a new faith – Christianity. I concluded that, “Missionaries’ teaching and application of conversion cannot only be factors influencing the Haya understanding of their conversion and its consequences, but Haya Tradition and Religion within which the Haya live is also important”, hence the affirmation of continuity and discontinuity among the Haya Christian converts was an inevitable reality.

These arguments resonate with what Sanneh (1990) and other scholars like Bediako (1996) call internal assimilation. They maintain that missionaries conveyed external transmission and the people to whom the Gospel was brought, conveyed internal assimilation. This implies that the assimilation of Christianity among the Haya, though it was conveyed with weakness, was not necessarily going to be based solely on the agents of western Christianity, but the internal socio-cultural dynamics also had a role to play in shaping Christianity among the Haya that would address both their spiritual as well as their temporal needs. Based on the above arguments, chapter five looks at the impacts of the missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods from the responses and

perspective of the Haya Christians. The theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion allows us to look at issues on different levels of practices and movements with regards to conversion in Northwest Tanzania.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HAYA CHRISTIANS' RESPONSES TO MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY'S CONVERSION APPROACH AND METHODS

#### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter four we explored the conversion methods that were applied by missionary Christianity in the course of missionization of the Haya. The study ascertained that the influence of enlightenment, renaissance, Darwin's theory of evolution and western quasi-scientific worldview on the western missionaries who came to evangelize the Haya people informed their approach and conversion methods. Based on these reasons, the study has argued that although the missionary Christianity conversion methods were good in nature, with good motives, and produced social changes that were instrumental in the modern development of the Haya in terms of formal education, medical care and other skills that later produced Haya Africans who became leaders in church and socio-political arena, the kind of Christianity received among the Haya did not sufficiently address the religio-cultural contextual spirituality and worldview and thus produced a conversion that, to some Haya, appeared artificial.

Drawing on missiological, theological-anthropological and sociological approaches, chapter five explores the response and praxis of the Haya Christian converts with regard to their understanding of conversion in relation to the missionaries' conversion approach. The chapter examines the indigenous Haya's attempt to indigenise post missionary Christianity's conversion within the East African Revival and in the Pentecostal-Charismatic revival movements. For this reason, the chapter attempts to answer some questions like: If missionary Christianity achieved its intended goal when converting the Haya indigenous people why then do the baptized and confirmed Haya Christians within the framework of mainline churches need and still go to Haya Traditional Religion with problems related to their ontological existential crisis? Why today Haya Christians within the Protestant mainline churches go for another conversion (re-conversion) in either East

African, or Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival movements, a critical question which this thesis addresses<sup>61</sup>.

The chapter argues that due to the inadequacy of missionary Christianity methods and approach in indigenization of Christianity among the Haya, some Haya Christians tend to actualize their “re-conversion” outside their church’s theological orthodoxy of conversion. That implies that the Haya have been and continue to undergo what appears to them as a “real” conversion within the East African Revival and Charismatic spiritual movements and at the same time, some other Haya Christians who do not undergo such a “re-conversion” maintain dual allegiance to both Christianity and the African Traditional religious discourse, especially during existential crises.

The chapter also argues in line with our second interpretive (working) hypothesis proposed in chapter one: *“The Haya’s perception of indigenous religion as a totality of life that incorporates one’s whole existence has moulded their perception of strict religious adherence, and is continuing to impact and shape their inception and perception of Christian conversion in general and Christian life in particular.”*

It does so by first investigating the missionary and post missionary classical doctrinal understanding of conversion and the Haya contemporary Christians’ understanding of conversion. The chapter shall also investigate critically the levels of Haya responses to the western missionary presentation of conversion in the light of conversion to Christianity and conversion to Christ, a distinction proposed by Stanley<sup>62</sup>. Haya primal religion influences their contemporary understanding of conversion shall further be explored. It shall finally be concluded by pointing out the findings based on the abovementioned investigation and analysis.

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<sup>61</sup> For a decade or so some church leaders and theologians have been accusing Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and movements of “stealing” their church members or what has been termed as *fishing from others’ boats* due to this tendency of Christians moving from mainline churches so as, among other things, to attain a “real” conversion that makes sense to them. The accusation has been responded from the accused side as *not stealing* sheep but *planting grass*. Planting grass in this case implies the ability of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches to meet peoples’ spiritual needs that are certainly not met in their respective mainline churches, see for example, Anderson (2011:68).

<sup>62</sup> See chapter two (2.4 ) and chapter four (4.6 )

## 5.2 Christianity in Missionary and Post Missionary Discourse

This section explores the missionary and post missionary Christianity orthodoxy articulation of conversion. It is argued that both missionary and post missionary Christianity have to a large extent limited conversion within the sacramental framework, which at times doesn't line up with Haya pre-Christian contextual Traditional religious discourse. Sacramental conversion as we previously briefly noted, has produced nominal Christians which has necessitated the need for Haya Christians to undergo "re-conversion" within revivalistic Christianity which has proved to meet the spiritual needs of individuals within the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania.

The question which we sought to deal with at this stage is: is conversion in the Lutheran Church as it was inherited from missionary Christianity orthodoxy, a sacramental or experiential, liturgical or socialization kind of conversion? The section below therefore starts by examining the Lutheran<sup>63</sup> doctrinal teachings and praxis of conversion based on the role of Baptism and Confirmation to both young baptized and adult potential Christians.

### 5.2.1 Lutheran Doctrinal Teachings on Sacramental Conversion

The Lutheran doctrinal teaching and orthodox understanding of salvation and conversion has the root in the traditional teaching of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The section below briefly discusses and highlights how this understanding influenced the missionary and post missionary Christianity's application of conversion.

#### 5.2.1.1 The Role of Baptism in Conversion

For missionary Christianity especially in the Lutheran Church, a potential convert is brought to Christ during Baptism. So conversion and Baptism are almost inseparable. It is

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<sup>63</sup> As was pointed out in the previous chapters, Peace observes that within mainline Protestantism churches such as Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed among others, one simply becomes a Christian through Baptism. Children are incorporated into the church when they are brought by their parents for Baptism (2004:8). These churches maintain that children can be initiated into the family of God on the basis of their parents' promise to raise them in Christian values and life. In this case conversion can be generally regarded as using the pattern suggested by Peace (2004:8), as conversion through socialization (see chapter 2:8:3).

believed that during Baptism a child or an adult is incorporated into the body of Christ. This implies, according to Oswald Bayer (2008:265), a renowned German Lutheran scholar and professor of systematic theology, that conversion takes place during Baptism as an act of God's grace to humankind. Lutheran catechetical teaching emphasizes that Baptism "... works for forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the word and promises of God declare."

During Baptism the focus is not just on water, but its power to clean and give life. The element (water) is saturated through and comprehended in the biblical words of Jesus who commissioned His disciples to baptize, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who doesn't believe will be condemned" (Matt. 28 and Mk. 16:16). Basically this implies that faith is very important. However, "faith doesn't make the sacrament, but the Holy Spirit creates faith by use of the Sacrament" (Bayer 2008:265).

For Luther, sacrament's efficacy doesn't depend upon the human individual who exercises an office; instead the work of God and the work of the human being who serves the divine word in the sacrament are one and the same. So the function of Baptism lies in the faith. Bayer (2008:266) emphasizes that, "Baptism is a transference of life in God, the Lord; whoever, believes this word has eternal life, without Baptism no faith, without faith no Baptism". To Luther, according to Bernhard Lohse (2011:130), is very important for one to receive what the sacrament offers as promised by God through the elements of sacrament.

Faith means that one firmly believes all this: that the sacrament not only signifies death and the resurrection at the Last Day, by which a person is made to live without sin eternally, but also that it assuredly begins and achieves this; that it establishes a covenant between us and God to the effect that we will fight against sin and slay it, even to our dying breath.

The question that always arises is how can an infant have faith as an essential ingredient for Baptism? According to Lutheran teachings, through the parents and Godparents, the children receive grace of salvation through Baptism by the words of sponsors – in this case Godparents, on the assumption that the child will grow in faith until he or she will

stands for his or her faith during Confirmation (Bayer 2008:266-267). Following this, Godparents were expected to pledge that the child would be raised and instructed in the faith by parents themselves or Godparents and this was a precondition for child baptism (The justification of such a theological discourse is the biblical story of the healing of the lame man who was healed by Jesus through the faith of those who brought him to Jesus (Mk. 2:5). Jesus healed the lame man by the faith of those who stood on his behalf (Bayer 2008:267). Luther believed that when children receive the baptism at the younger age, when the glow and faith comes then their baptism will be complete. Mark Tranvik (2003:35) quotes Luther in this point: “Even if...children are without faith when they are baptized, it would make no difference to me...for faith doesn’t exist for the sake of baptism, but baptism for the sake of faith. When faith comes, baptism is complete”.

Another aspect of Baptism, according to Luther, is that it is not “an isolated act, but that it decidedly includes the Christian life that proceeds from it as well”. That is why to him, Baptism means that “the Old Adam in us should be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, along with all sins and evil desires and that daily a new self should come forth to live before God in righteousness and purity forever” (Bayer 2008:267). For that, conversion through Baptism has to be seen as more than a single act but rather, perhaps, a continuous process. The continuous repentance and confession brings the believer back to his or her Baptism. To Luther Baptism is daily garment which a believer has to wear all the time. So Baptism is a daily act. To Luther, “daily Baptism is nothing other than to be in faith, in suppressing the old creature and growing up in the new” (Wengert 2009:120).

Consequently Baptism, according to Lutheran catechetical teaching, goes hand in hand with the renunciation of the devil and all his works and nature (*abrenuntiatio diaboli*) (Bayer 2008:269). Missionary Christianity and post missionary Christianity in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania emphasize the renunciation of the “Devil and his works” that was elaborated in the Haya liturgical and hymnal book which is taught to baptismal candidates (*Empoya* 2004:283-284).



However, the question that arises is: what are these works of the devil and its nature in the Haya context? Who actually has to determine these works of the devil? Was it supposed to be the missionaries' task, or the Haya new believers' task? Or was it not supposed to be a joint task between missionaries and indigenous Haya new Christians in struggling to discern what were the works of devil and what were not, according to the Haya religio-cultural context? This renunciation of the devil and all his works and nature during missionary Christianity among the Haya was unfortunately interpreted by missionaries to amount to almost every Haya pre-Christian religio-cultural practice, without first having any deliberate engagement with the Haya new Christian converts. This resulted in the works of Haya traditional herbalists, traditional dances and most cultural involvements all being regarded as devilish (*Empoya* 2004: 283-284)<sup>64</sup>.

This understanding, as was noted in chapter four, was the reason why traditional dances, traditional musical instruments like drums, in some cases traditional dress, among others, were not allowed in the church and were considered devilish by most missionaries in the Haya early church. This interpretation was a clear reflection of the missionaries' lack of a deep knowledge of Haya Traditional Religion. Knowledge of Haya traditional culture and religion, I argue, could be a tool that could help them to make an objective discernment on what was really evil and worthy of rejection and what were important Haya traditional religious elements that could be helpful in shaping Christianity in the context of the Haya cultural setting.

Conversion through Baptism for that matter, as I have argued previously in this dissertation, was generally regarded as an essential factor for making a new believer break away from his or her religio-cultural roots. However, this did not permanently work, for this interpretation negated the reality of the Haya ontological conceptual worldview which doesn't necessarily divorce religion from culture and spirituality, hence Haya Christians substantially remained in the dual world of being adherents to both Christianity and Haya Traditional Religion. The challenge for missionary Christianity remains to be how one

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<sup>64</sup>This point has been widely argued in the previous chapter (see 4: 5:1 – cultural conversion: civilization of Africans or western cultural imperialism?) so I will not go deeply into it in this section to avoid unnecessary repetition.

should integrate missionary Christianity's teachings with the Haya's Traditional religious and spiritual worldview without the distortion of basic Christian fundamental teachings.

Lutheran theology on Baptism and conversion as it stands and as it was presented among the Haya, looked at from an African perspective, seems to lack the spiritual and experiential encounter of God during the time of conversion. In Lutheran theology of Baptism, the efficacy of Baptism to a believer is based on the faith of either the believer in the case of an adult, or Godparents in the case of infants. One needs to accept by faith the promise of God through his word that through Baptism we are accepted as children of God in the community of Christian believers. This understanding does not fit well into the religious context of the Haya and Africans in general since, as has been pointed out, for them religion is more experiential than dogmatic. It is not philosophized or theologised, but rather it is experienced and lived out in day-to-day life. It embraces both the physical and spiritual world. Religion to Africans encompasses the living, the living dead and the unborn<sup>65</sup>. For the Haya therefore, religion is manifested within the framework of encountering physical and metaphysical existential life realities.

Haya Christians were simply incorporated into a Christian community through Baptism by renouncing their "old life", but nothing was said about their new life in terms of dealing with their relationship with ancestors, their fear of curses, witchcraft, just to mention some. They were told that Christians ought not to believe in witchcraft or relate with their ancestors. This contradicted their life reality and worldview. Converts therefore remained alien in their community and yet did not fit well in the missionary Christianity expectations, hence most of them remained both Christians and Traditional Religion adherents (Samwini, 2011:43) since their existential cultural and religious issues were not adequately addressed in these catechetical teachings.

It can therefore arguably be stated that Lutheran baptismal conversion, unless it is formulated in such a way that it matches well the Haya religio-cultural understanding and

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<sup>65</sup>See chapter three, 3:2.5: The Nature of Haya Traditional Religion.

takes seriously the nature and spirituality of the Haya conceptual worldview, will continue to remain irrelevant to most Haya Christians and therefore continue to yield little impact on their spiritual life, hence the necessity for a conversion outside their church's orthodoxy that will seem to them to quench both their physical and spiritual thirst. This necessitates a deliberate effort of contextualizing Lutheran theology of conversion within the Haya religio-socio-cultural context.

Professor Emefie Ikenga-Metuah as quoted in Thomas (1995:183) in *Classic text in mission and world Christianity* argues that contextual theology is missiological. He asserts that:

Contextual theology is a theology which in clarifying faith is very sensitive to the situation of people to whom the faith is addressed. It is not content with an abstract and intellectually satisfying systematic presentation of faith. Rather its aims are primarily to bring the Gospel as truly Good News to the people in their concrete situation ... it is faith presented to a particular people, living in a concrete situation, at a particular time. This perhaps makes contextual theology more missiological than conversional theology.

Ikenga-Metuah's contention above is a clear reflection of the need of presenting conversion in a religio-cultural sensitive manner if we need to effect conversion from other people's faith that is different from ours in a more meaningful way.

### **5.2.1.2 The Place of Confirmation**

Confirmation, in both missionary and post missionary Lutheran and other mainline churches' tradition in western Tanzania signifies a complementation of Baptism. A Christian is converted to Christianity through Baptism, but at a certain age that person is expected to undergo Confirmation before being permitted to partake in Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper signifies in the Lutheran sacramental theology, "[the] true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ – under the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink instituted by Christ himself" (Bayer 2008: 271). The efficacy of it is based on the

word of Jesus that constitutes the sacrament. In this sacrament “forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are not only shown and stated but that through such words such things are given” (Bayer 2008: 272).

Bayer (2008:272-273) emphasises that the words that embody the sacrament’s element “given for you” and “shed for you” for the forgiveness of sins and the faith in those words of Jesus are important for Christians to access the benefits of this sacrament. During the Lord’s Supper, according to the Lutherans, the bread and wine are not transformed into body and blood, but the person who receives it is transformed. “The sinner becomes the righteous one, so that he lives no longer for himself but for him who died and has been raised for us”(Bayer 2008:273).

On the other hand, Confirmation is basically the act of authentication of the baptized Christian to re-confess by his/her own words the Baptism confession in order to partake in the Lord’s Supper. In the Lutheran Church in Tanzania in general and Northwest Tanzania in particular, the Lord’s Supper is restricted to people above 12 years old in the assertion that these can understand and stand for their Christian faith based on their baptismal confession made by their parents and Godparents during their infant Baptism. This understanding is also observed by Peace (2004:8) and Kraft (2002:328). For them, this kind of conversion is referred to as conversion by socialization. By socialization they mean that children are brought to faith through liturgical conversion whereby they are expected to confirm their faith later after undergoing intense Sunday School instruction, catechism and Confirmation classes (Peace 2004:8 and Kraft 2002:328). We can say that in this case Confirmation is seen as complementary to Baptism. In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, in particular, the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament that is not offered to the infants, unbaptized, and those under church discipline<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> There are, however, theological debates whether the sacrament of Lord’s Supper should be for the righteous or sinners (see Niwagila 1991:366-370). Since this dissertation does not deal with systematic theological and ecclesiological ethical issues, it limits itself at this point to missiological discussions on conversion based on sacramental praxis in Northwest Tanzania – Lutheran church tradition.

A non-Christian is therefore brought to faith through Baptism and he or she is expected to confirm his or her faith during the act of Confirmation whereby one is welcomed to the fellowship table of all believers. In the Lutheran Church in Tanzania it is taken for granted that a true believer is the one who is baptized and at the same time partakes of Holy Communion – the Lord’s Supper. We can therefore generally say that in the Lutheran tradition, conversion is more sacramental than experiential. It is more a liturgical decision and in some way socialization, rather than a personal decision pattern of conversion<sup>67</sup>. The question we need to explore at this stage is, what is the implication of the sacramental conversion discourse for the Haya Christian converts?

### **5.2.2 Missionary Christianity’s Sacramental Conversion Discourse and its Implication for the Haya**

The question lies in the implications of these theological discourses for the Haya ordinary Christians in relation to their Christian life. How did missionary Christianity’s sacramental conversion discourse make sense to the Haya? How did missionary Christianity endeavour to indigenize these western sacramental philosophical formulations<sup>68</sup> to fit into the ordinary Haya socio-cultural terms of reference for their authentic conversion?

It is argued in this section that conversion through Baptism and Confirmation despite being biblically and dogmatically true Lutheran formulation, however, as was conveyed and articulated by missionary Christianity among the Haya, did not adequately fit with their religiosity and spirituality, for it was seen as more a western cultural formulation than African. It appears that it failed to integrate the Haya religio-cultural spiritual worldview and so remained alien to most Africans in general and to Haya Christians in

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<sup>67</sup> Different patterns of conversion have been elaborated in chapter 2 (2:8).

<sup>68</sup> It should be borne in mind that most of these dogmatic formulations and catechetical teaching were done in Europe and modified during reformation times to counteract what seemed to be heresy in the Roman Catholic Church with regard to issues of sacrament. They were presented further by missionaries in Africa, as we previously noted, under the influence of enlightenment. To the Africans and the Haya in particular they were answering the unasked questions. These teachings, we can say, were the product of a specific time and context; they therefore needed reinterpretations and formulations to make sense to the Haya believers who had a different religio-cultural context and worldview from their counterpart western missionaries, instead of being brought wholesale to Africa.

particular. It reflects a failure to take seriously the Haya religious worldview which is an important aspect of African culture.

This view suggests the reason why, as will be discussed below, to most of the Haya, with the introduction of East African and Pentecostal-Charismatic revivals, missionary Christianity's conversion appeared irrelevant for their conversion and thus they had a need for re-conversion. This is because missionary Christianity was brought wholesale from Europe and planted in Africa without any significant endeavour at indigenization. Worse still, it failed even to learn and make a fair discernment of what was evil and good as an important aspect for both continuity and discontinuity during Baptism.

To most of the Haya therefore, sacramental conversion appeared modern, interesting and adoptive but less religious, hence it did not truly touch the hearts of Haya Christians. Sundkler elaborates on the Haya perception of Baptism and what it meant for them (Sundkler 1980:80-88). According to him (1980:80), Baptism to the Haya was "something indescribably great and solemn". To the unconverted Haya there was a great deal of speculation on what would happen when a person is converted. It was clear that it was a kind of Baptism rite, but it was not clear what effect it would have. Sundkler explicitly points out that the Baptism rites, however, had a clear contrast with the Haya initiation ceremony rites that involved the contact between the living people with the spirits.

Based on Sundkler's observation one can argue that this contrast between Haya initiation rites and the missionary Christianity model of conversion negates the reality of continuity between the old religion and the new religion, in this case Christianity. As Kahakwa (2010:265) argues, and I tend to agree, one needs the old to realize the new in a more authentic way, for old knowledge, in this case Haya Traditional Religion, would be used to shape and illuminate their understanding of Baptism in a new religion – Christianity. The question we raise is: Wouldn't it be much better for the missionaries to see how they could build a new knowledge of Baptism based on the Haya traditional religious ritual of cleansing and initiations in order to make Christian conversion based on Baptism more meaningful to the Haya?

Because of this missionary Christianity model of missionization approach I argue that it was inadequate as it clearly did not take serious cognizance of Haya traditional religious discourse and spirituality to understand the new religion – Christianity – in order to articulate it in a Haya meaningful way that would conform to their religio-cultural context. This makes us ask ourselves: What was, then, their reaction to this missionizational approach? Below in the next section, we investigate Haya converts' responses to the missionary Christianity's conversion approach.

### **5.3 Haya Christian Converts' Response**

Under this section, drawing some insights from a mission historiography, socio-missiological approach, I examine two levels of Haya converts' reaction to the introduction of missionary Christianity with regard to their missionary conversion approach. We shall discuss an earlier response and a later response. Under earlier response we discuss how Haya converts accepted positively missionary Christianity, but with the aim of accessing socio-economic and modernity benefits. We shall also examine how Haya converts accepted Christianity, but within the context of religious dualism.

I shall also later investigate the second response. This section will demonstrate how Haya converts struggled and continue to struggle to indigenize conversion within the influence of Haya cultural and Traditional Religion perspective and later within Revival movements and at times the so-called "spiritual churches" or Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. The section suggests that the earlier reaction was a superficial reception of Christianity by most Haya converts which later yielded superficial converts who remain both Christian and traditional adherents, especially at the time of existential crises. This is reflected by the fact that the Haya early converts at first did not find the Christianity that they received from missionaries useful in meeting both their temporal and spiritual needs.

#### **5.3. 1 Earlier Response: Artificial Conversion?**

In discussing the Haya's reaction to the missionary Christianity conversion we explore how at the initial stage most of the Hayas uncritically accepted Christianity but were

attracted by missionary Christianity for socio-economic and modernity reasons. In this section we argue that as this conversion was more artificial than authentic, many of the converts became Christians, but remained at the same time with their former religion, a tendency that was manifested during both social and spiritual crises. Thus for most Haya Christian converts Christianity was one of the religions that had more of a social and economic implication than the spiritual problem solving religion had. Therefore, many converts remained with a dual identity whereby most of their spiritually related problems were to be solved in the Traditional Religion sphere.

### **5.3.1.1 Conversion but due to Socio-economic and Modernity Reasons**

Haya converts' earlier response was accepting Christianity positively as a new religion which seemed to have brought a new way of life, new medicine, new way of dressing, literacy, new names and new civilization in a modern way. Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, through conversion of kings, many Haya became Christians and due to socio-economic pressure exerted in the community many said yes to Christianity. Mutembei (1993:90-91) reports the Haya social pressure that anyone who was not Christianized seemed to be primitive. Even songs that were sung in the Haya social community clearly demonstrated that to be a Christian convert was the best modern way of life and thus promoted changes from Traditional Religion to Christianity.

For many Haya converts at that time and to some even now, missionary Christianity amounts to modernity and development. In the beginning of missionary Christianity in that complexity of changes, Christianity appeared to have succeeded to attract many Haya to join it. However, the question we wrestle with throughout this research remains to what extent missionary Christianity succeeded in producing authentic and relevant conversion for most of the Haya converts that encompasses all spheres of human life, for, to the Haya, and indeed Africans, as we indicated previously, religion is not just a Sunday event but it is life that touches all spheres of human beings, including the temporal and spiritual realms of life.



To the Haya Christians' Baptism and Confirmation appeared to be a gate through which to access western education, a new pattern of life and new civilization. Since Baptism went hand in hand with new names – mostly western names – it was tantamount to a new identity which had little connection with spiritual transformation but was more a western socio-cultural transformation. According to Sundkler (1980:118) religious needs of the Haya people had never been entirely satisfied by the Baptism and Confirmation catechism.

Sundkler associates the reason for Haya initial conversion with what he calls “shame” (*enshoni*). To avoid shame which was brought about by the new era of modernity during the early contact between missionaries and the Haya, they converted to Christianity. To Sundkler that was not more than a conventional conversional adaptation which could never satisfy the spiritual needs of the Haya, hence a need for a stronger method that could fill such a gap. Sundkler (1980:118) writes:

There was no doubt but that Christianization according to the old method – through Baptism and catechism – came up against a deep problem, that of shame, *enshoni*. It was shameful not to be modern, not to be able to read, not to have a new, Western name and new religion. But the revival revealed a more profound need which this conventional adaptation could never satisfy.

Sundkler's contention suggests that missionary Christianity's sacramental conversion to most of Haya people was nothing more than religious socialization. It was more adaptation to western civilization and modernization than a spiritual transformation. He sees that a stronger conversion method was needed and according to him, these stronger methods were provided in the confessions of the Revival. Sundkler for that matter regards Revival among the Haya as a context through which Haya Christians would actualize a true and viable conversion that suits their frame of reference.

Sundkler realized that a true Haya conversion was not actualized through missionary Christianity Baptism and catechism teachings, but through the Revival Movement which he understood as a true indigenous movement that contributed enormously in indigenizing

Christianity among the Haya. Revival<sup>69</sup> emphasized confession, especially public confession, through confession of sin as a way of cleansing, “a new filling of liberation and joy was reached” (1980:119).

Generally Sundkler argued that the Christian religion among the Haya appeared through intellectual exercise. For through Christianity one became a reader – *omushomi*, through learning and reading in the books of the Bible, as literacy was part of the missionary Christianity catechetical approach of Christianization (1980:180). As pointed out earlier, the missionary Christianity approach produced artificial converts for whom Christianity was really not more than literacy, modernization and westernization. To these, missionary Christianity was more of a new religion than faith. Christianity did not replace Haya Traditional Religion, but both were maintained at the same time. A new missionary religion did not provide answers to their spiritual questions and above all it did not meet their spiritual worldview and frame of reference (cf. Asomoah-Gyadu 2003:97f, Kahakwa 2006:260).

Upon the introduction of missionary Christianity among the Haya, as we pointed out earlier, most of them became Christians for modernity and social change. They wanted to access literacy and western education in general – *omushomi*. Niwagila (1991:162) points out that most of the people who attended baptismal classes were young men and girls who in fact wanted, through the baptismal classes, to access western education which in turn would lead to progress, for those who had received education had an opportunity to be employed in the Colonial Government. Niwagila sees that this was the reason why parents allowed their children to join the baptismal class since for them, “religion could not be taught, but lived out in day-to-day life”, hence most of the Haya parents had little interest in the new religion.

Most of them responded to Baptism as a way to enter the church system. According to Sundkler (1980:96) during catechism class younger Christians learned about the role of

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<sup>69</sup> The discussion on how Revival indigenized and continues to indigenous conversion among the Haya will follow in the later pages of this chapter. See 5.4.2.1

Baptism as “it gives us forgiveness of sins; saves from the power of Death and Satan and it brings eternal joy to whomever believes in the Word and promises of God” – salvation as ‘a way’ in and through Jesus Christ”. Sundkler, however, as one of the outstanding missionaries in the region, was later struck by the conversion motives of this younger generation of Haya Christians. He writes: “When these youngsters had first begun to go to school and had been baptized, they had mostly done so in order to achieve *maendeleo* (progress), to free themselves from the narrow confines of village society, get ahead in life and share the blessing of civilization” (1980:96).

What Sundkler alludes to suggests a number of things. Sacramental conversion was a missionary Christianity conversion approach that succeeds in incorporating the Haya into Christian religion, but it failed to have significant spiritual impact. Some people joined Christianity not because of the discovery of truth in Christianity but rather accessing what appeared to be civilization which was embedded in modernity and education. Catechism teaching, to some, probably many, did not make sense to the Haya in the way intended by the missionaries. However, the Haya received Christianity but largely for socio-economic and material reasons.

To be a Christian, according to the Protestant Church, Baptism was an entrance to the church. This means for anyone interested in becoming a church member, the possible means was to accept Baptism. This would lead some Haya to be baptized in order among other things to be church members and access western education, for “ritual by itself was not enough”. This was so because to be a Christian was associated with the ability to know how to read and write and count. Hence the baptismal class in mainline Christianity represented adult education in Northwest Tanzania (Sundkler 1980:82).

It has, furthermore, to be remembered that the Haya people were made to believe that their religion was inferior and Christianity superior. Their traditional priests and mediums were considered inferior to missionaries. For many early converts Christianity was a social change. Some scholars like Mbiti (1990) have assumed that conversion of African Traditional adherents to missionary Christianity was nothing short of revolution. The

factors for the conversion are summarized as political as well as socio-structural and psychological factors. Mbiti (1990:216) with regards to radical change from Traditional to modern religion including Christianity in Africa, emphatically contends:

Africa [was] caught up in a world revolution which is so dynamic that it has almost got out of human control...The man [sic] of Africa must get up and dance, for better or for worse, on the arena of world drama. His image of himself and the universe is disrupted and must make room for the changing into a “universal” and not simply “tribal” man.

Mbiti therefore sees Christianity to most Africans as phenomena that was more of a social change than a spiritual and religious transformation. Its efficacy and advantage were more of a change from tribalism to be part of the world or in other words, to be part of globalization. To be Christianized was seen by most Africans to be civilized in terms of adopting the master’s religion, that is, the religion of missionaries and colonial masters.

It is of importance, as we indicated previously in chapter four, to remember that missionary Christianity in Africa benefited from among other things, the favourable climate created by European colonialism in Africa, for missionaries followed their countries’ colonies and vice versa. According to Kalu (2008:293-306), the question of urbanization, western culture and civilization, science and technology played significant roles in African conversion to missionary Christianity. Kalu sees that the conversion strategic approach such as medical care played an effective part in persuading many traditional adherents to accept the Christian message.

According to Kalu (2008:293-294) education and other training such as vocational training for both boys and girls all made it easier for missionaries to attract Africans to say yes to Christianity. Furthermore, promotion of formal school education proved to be the most viable and effective instrument of conversion evolved by Christian missionaries among many African Traditional groups. Because of this, many young and women who attended such schools, also received instruction in the faith, accepted Baptism while in school and thereby were encouraged to break ancestral covenants with deities in their Traditional Religion.

What Kalu contends raises some questions: To what extent did this conversional approach help Africans, more particularly in our case the Haya, to experience God in a way that would meet both their physical and spiritual challenges? How did this lead to a conversion that would address both physical and metaphysical existential issues in their daily lives? If we agree that this approach was viable and effective, why did Africans remain in their Traditional Religion and if not, why do they go to another kind of Christianity that takes spirituality seriously?

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, western education for boys, girls and adults was a fundamental conversional approach by missionaries among the Haya community, so what Kalu alludes to above therefore resonated well with a real situation among the Haya. For some Haya, missionary Christianity was nothing more than education and western civilization. The missionary education and other social services like hospitals among others attracted many to join Christianity primarily not for religious reason but they were curious to know how to read and write. This is proved by the Haya Christians who later confessed how missionary Christianity had no impact on their spiritual life. Machumu, a Haya convert, as recorded by Sundkler reports (1980:193):

In 1929 I got the urge to read, I had two friends, one Catholic and the other Protestant. Both impressed upon me the fact that I ought to learn and to read, and each of them tried to drag me in his particular direction. I compared what I saw in Catholicism and Protestantism ... Protestants, on the other hand, were people with the book in their hands, and pen in their hair. They could read and write letters. That was exactly what I wanted to be able to do myself. Thus I started to go to the Protestant School. There I heard stories about the baptismal class, resulting in a new European name. I wanted to go there to get a civilized name. When I got further I began to understand that there was a God and that His only son saves men from their sins. But although I tried to understand, these words did not have any impact on me.

Machumu's narrative story of his initial conversion leads to the question of what conversion actually meant to the first generation Haya Christians. The testimony of Machumu, who later became a famous East African Revivalist, a preacher and a pastor in the Lutheran church in Tanzania, represents many other converts in Buhaya who were

converted in the early start of Christianity, following their desire to access western education, a European name, modern civilization, progress, literacy and other things that appeared to them to be modernity and civilization.

For the first generation Christians, conversion was more western socialization, accessing socio-economic benefits than religious. Conversion was more socio-cultural transformation than spiritual and religious transformation. Thus, as we shall discuss, a later necessity for a conversion that would make sense to them in Revival movements was not only an option but an inevitable solution for indigenizing conversion and its impacts on their spiritual and religious life (Sundkler 1980:96ff).

### **5.3.2 Conversion but within the Context of Religious Dualism**

Missionary Christianity methods and the way they were introduced among the Haya, created Christianity that seemed to be alien to Africans and prevented it from touching the deeper spiritual life of Africans. Missionary Christianity has not been able to answer fundamental ontological questions and meet the Haya and other African needs because it did not address the worldview of Haya people endowed within their Traditional Religion spiritual background. As was pointed out earlier, the gap dealing with critical issues like curses, ancestral spirits, witchcrafts, good and bad dreams, among others was left untouched due to western missionaries' cultural and contextual traditional background which was influenced very much by enlightenment. This led to most African converts maintaining both Christianity and their Traditional Religion. Christianity remained a Sunday religion but for the rest of the week African Traditional Religion was the true religion for most of Africans, including the Haya.

Recently Nathan Iddrisu Samwini (2011:43), a West African theologian, has made an important observation. For him, the reason why African Christians accepted Christianity but remained dualistic believers is related to how German missionaries did not understand African's culture and religious worldview and in many cases they dismissed the African worldviews, which according to him are built up in African life and culture. He put it, "African worldviews are innate. They are part of African psyche." He therefore points out

two things that happened following the missionaries' conversion approach. First, they produced double standard Christians. These were baptized in the church but did not break from the past African worldview that came to the fore every time these African Christians were faced with social or spiritual life challenges. Second, it produced superficial individuals. By superficial individuals he means the Africans who were neither European, as missionaries would have liked them to be, nor wholly African.

On the other hand, Lugazia (2010:51) had earlier observed that Christians in the missionary Christianity mainline churches live a double identity because Africans want to retain their identity while also belong to and participate in their Christian denominations. Thus even though all cultural elements were abolished by missionaries, in the missionaries' churches African Christians continued to consult the traditional spirits for help in major crises in life.

Most Haya converts in this case find themselves in two worlds. They maintained both Christianity and Haya Traditional Religion because Christianity in Haya has failed to address the ontology of spiritual issues like the question of *enchweke* (ancestral spirit possession), *embandwa* (diviners), *amahembe* (evil spirits), demons, witchcraft, fear of bad dreams, curses, ancestral relationship between the living and the dead, among others. Therefore for problems related to this spiritual world which is a living reality for them, the Haya find a gap that needs to be addressed in the African religious system.

Although many African religious scholars maintain that Pentecostal Christianity and Charismatic Revival tried to address these issues, not all Haya Christians identify themselves as Charismatic and Pentecostal so they had to address their problems in connection with these Charismatic revival groups. They therefore resort to Haya Traditional Religion to solve their problems since, as Kahakwa (2006: 260) puts it, African Traditional Religion is the problem solving religion for Africans, unlike missionary Christianity.

A Tanzanian theologian, Lugazia (2010:52), also sees the connection of having Christians who also find solutions in the former traditional beliefs with how European missionaries missionized Africans failing to understand African converts' worldview. Lugazia (2010:52) sees that even today missionary churches do not have answers to questions related to demons and spirits because these were considered by missionary Christianity to be devilish and irrelevant as if they never existed. She summarizes her case:

The missionary perspective put African Christians into a double identity dilemma. On the one hand, they continue consulting traditional powers when mysterious issues, dangers and diseases occur in the family, and on the other hand, they consult mainstream Christian authorities as a second alternative. Africans to date need re-evangelization not because the Gospel has not reached most parts of the continent, but because part of the African worldview has not been clearly defined by authoritative practitioners of the Christian faith. Many missionary churches, for example, do not have answers for congregants who are possessed by demons.

This leads us to conclude that the road to inculturate missionary Christianity conversion in Africa is still too long to work on. It indeed requires a deliberate and concrete revisit of the missionary model of conversion to make sense to African converts so that Christianity will not only meet their spiritual needs, but also address their physical needs through taking cognizance of their ontological worldview.

#### **5.4 Haya Christian Converts' Later Response: Indigenizing Conversion Practice**

The later response was an implicit expression of discontent with missionary Christianity and the way it was presented in the Haya cultural context. According to the Haya, missionary Christianity, as we pointed out previously, seemed to be more artificial and superficial as it didn't meet and answer their basic ontological and existential questions, for that matter, it did not touch their hearts. It left the spiritual gap that was to be met in another kind of Christian expression that takes the Haya traditional spiritual worldview seriously. The question of sin, blood, reconciliation, and forgiveness was to be given enough space in the Christianity they needed that resonates well with their Traditional Religious conceptual worldview.



In this section I explore how the Haya understood conversion and salvation in the Christianity based on their former religio-cultural worldview. Giddens in structuration theory, as we discussed in chapter (2.10.2), helps us to explain the realization of the phenomena of conversion dynamics in relation to the socio-cultural structure of converts. The theory shows that the construction of a new reality and response to it is not necessarily dictated by the agents of a new structure (missionaries), but the existing structural systems to some degree play a significant role in interpreting and constructing a new reality. So based on this theory, I argue that the Haya's later response and interpretation of conversion was not necessarily based on the missionary Christianity transmission and teachings, but rather their religio-cultural beliefs and spirituality have, to a certain degree, constructed and shaped their Christian worldview that had always been realized within their religio-cultural context.

#### **5.4.1 The Understanding of Conversion from the Influence of Haya Cultural and Traditional Religious Perspective**

This section maintains that the understanding and realization of conversion that would make sense to the Haya converts was in part determined by the Haya religio-cultural spirituality and worldview rather than the missionary Christianity transmission approach of Christianity among them. So the Haya cultural and traditional perspective played a significant role in the Haya's actualization of conversion that is more meaningful according to their Traditional Religion perspective and conceptual worldviews of religion and spirituality. This however, does not mean that the impact of missionary Christianity among the Haya converts is insignificant.

Rambo (1993:5) maintains that the assimilation of conversion by the potential converts normally is not dictated by missionaries when he writes, "...the converts themselves assimilate the faith in the categories relevant to them, not to the dictates of the advocates". This section argues that the Haya response to conversion and their understanding of it within the context of their indigenous revivalistic Christianity is an ongoing struggle for the indigenization of Haya conversion within the African Traditional Religion contextual frame of reference.

Walls (1996:3-4), while acknowledging the tremendous growth of Christianity in Africa, still sees that Christianity in Africa, probably to some degree, has been shaped by the African Traditional religious discourse. He puts it, “traditional religion has not died out, nor has it been reduced to atavistic or ‘pre-modern’ enclaves”. He therefore argues:

It is my argument that the principle evidence of the ongoing life of traditional African religion lies within African Christianity. What happened in African Christianity is only intelligible in the light of what has gone before in the African religious story (1996:4).

To Walls therefore, the continuity of African Traditional Religion is realized within African Christianity. He further puts it: “African Christianity is shaped by Africa’s past”. To him, the existence of a vernacular name for the Christian God in almost all African languages, more than in any other languages, in other cultures and in any other religion like Islam, is an indication of such a continuity and a justification for *praeparatio evangelica* (1996:4-5).

Walls (1996:5) further argues that “the continuity in African religion, pre-Christian and Christian, is due in large measure to continuing worldviews, the application of the material of the Christian tradition to already existing African maps of the universe”. He therefore suggests that:

In order to have effect in Africa, the Christian tradition has thus had to be applied to these pre-existing components; it has been replaced on the available maps of the universe, and interpreted within existing categories. Christianity has thus necessarily inherited all the old goals of religion; in particular, the association with protection and with power is undiminished. The operating maps of the universe provide for the frequent interventions of the transcendent world in the phenomenal world; for the operation of spiritual forces, whether acting independently or directed by human malice, or indicating neglected familial or social duty. The effectiveness of the Christian faith, or of any particular manifestation of it, is accordingly open to the test of whether it gives access to power and prosperity or protection against natural or spiritual enemies, purposes to which much traditional practice was directed, and satisfactorily enforces familial and social duty. This has involved a degree of reorientation from the missionary models of Christianity. Missionaries were, generally speaking, children of the European Enlightenment, and their Christianity came adapted to Enlightenment values; indeed they expected its transplantation to Africa, closely allied as it was to education and

modernization, to issue eventually in an Enlightenment universe of discourse in Africa. It has done so, but only partially (1996:5-6).

Although Walls (1996:1) strongly emphasizes how Christianity has made itself at home in Africa independently from how it was conveyed in Africa, to the extent of terming Christianity “African Religion”, he still see what he calls an organic relationship with Christian faith in Africa, at least in its initial stages, with modernization, formal education and economic development of missionaries, as pointed out in the previous chapter.

Walls’ argument suggests that apart from how Africans were converted, the coming of scriptures resulted in the “reaffirmation of some ancient aspects of African religion which were not part of missionaries at all” (1996:12). In other words, for him the availability of scripture among the Africans indigenized Christianity as some of the important elements in their Traditional religious discourse that were once ignored by the missionaries, were now rediscovered and reaffirmed as were clearly found in both the Old and New Testament.

What Walls points out in this case suggests at least two main points: first, although the initial stage attraction of most of African conversion was based on economic advancement and its benefits, that is modernity and formal education, as we pointed out above regarding the Haya context, Christianity in Africa has been indigenized through the presence of scripture in the local languages. Secondly, this indigenization is not an effort of the missionaries, but rather it is the African’s initiatives as they struggle to understand and make sense of their faith based on their pre-Christian religious discourse.

Drawing on Walls and Rambo’s arguments as pointed out above, we argue that, upon the reception of missionary Christianity, despite the way Christianity was presented among them, and despite the initial motive for the Haya conversion to Christianity, the Haya later interpreted and appropriated Christian scriptures, practices and institutions for their own purpose within the contexts of their own Traditional Religion context to make sense of their conversion. For according to Balcomb (2004:1) “the recipients of the [gospel] did

not only hear what the missionaries said, they interpreted and filtered that message through their own culture and perceptions of the missionaries” (cf. Spear 1999:3-4).

Among the Haya converts later endeavours at interpretation and indigenizing Christianity that would make sense to them and meet their spiritual needs based on their Traditional religious discourse were mainly realized within revivalist Christianity frameworks, as shall be discussed below.

#### **5.4.2 Indigenization of Conversion within Revival Movements by the Haya Post Missionary Christianity**

I shall argue in this section that Revival movements created an arena for the Haya Christians to actualize conversion that made sense in their pre-Christian primal religion which took spirituality, blood rituals, and spirits very seriously. It furthermore helped the Haya missionary Christianity’s converts to move from extrinsic to intrinsic faith. Revival challenged missionary Christianity to rethink the question of conversion and salvation in a way that would make sense to the Haya. The subsection below demonstrates that missionary and post missionary classical understanding of conversion did not quench the Haya Christian spiritual thirst. It appeared artificial to most of the Haya Christians. For this reason, some Haya realized conversion that fits their conceptual worldview that takes cognizance of their Traditional religious spirituality within Revival movements. Under this subsection we examine two kinds of revival, both found in Northwest Tanzania, namely East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival movements. We start with the East African Revival Movement.

##### **5.4.2.1 East African Revival Movement**

The East African Revival Movement has been considered as an indigenous Christian movement by most of African theologians. It started the spiritual fire that touched many Haya lives across the boundaries of Christian denominations. It awakened the church and many lay and ordained ministers responded positively to it. In Northwest Tanzania especially among the Haya, its advent is traced from the Tanzanian neighbouring

countries of Uganda and Rwanda in the years between 1930 and 1939 and was popular within East African countries and beyond (Lugazia 2010: 80, Niwagila 1991:245ff).

The African Revival Movement Africanized missionary Christianity among the Haya people. It translated missionary Christianity into African indigenous Christianity. Within The Revival Movement Haya converts interpreted the Bible which reflects the social and ideological location from ground level. It starts with the context, the real situation of the Haya people, their joys, sorrows and temperaments. This reading arises from the people's experiences and how the Bible relates to them. This kind of Bible engagement in the East African Revival was powerfully reflected in their songs, poetry and conversion stories. The Bible became a source of spiritual power and inspiration, learning and hope for the universality of salvation for the Haya. What the East African Revival meant among the Haya is reflected in the words of Spear (1999:5-6):

...as they listened to the Christian message interpreted it and imbued it with meaning within the context of their own values and experience. Conversion was a classic dialectical process, involving the dynamic interaction between potential converts and missionaries with their differing beliefs and practices whatever European missionaries intended, they could not dictate the terms of African acceptance, especially as African converts gained increasing access to vernacular Bibles and could make their own scriptural interpretations independent of those of the missionaries.

Sundkler (1980:115) referring to the East African Revival movement says: "This was an African movement. The involvement, the rhythm, the jubilation, everything about it was genuinely African." East African Revival challenged mainline missionary Christianity to move from "normal Christian traditions and commit themselves to Christ by exemplary lives." Most mainline churches were still solidly ensconced in the traditional missionary doctrines, which did not subscribe to a belief or promotion of spiritual gifts that prevailed in the Haya Traditional religious beliefs. Lugazia (2010:81) further put it, "East African Revival ministry was introduced to enrich the needs of the people and to awaken the sleeping mainline churches." The East African Revival theologically emphasized repentance and reconciliation as important elements in their movements.

For the East African Revivalist, conversion was a new life in Jesus Christ. It was more than church sacramental discourse. East African Revivalists challenged fellow Christians not be contented with the missionary Christianity sacramental conversion, but to repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Niwagila (1991:254) puts it, “for the Revivalists the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist have no meaning unless the participants repent of their sins and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.” Giving an example of the Revivalist statement confession regarding their understanding of conversion and sacrament Niwagila (1991:254) writes:

I personally was baptized in adult Baptism. I had taken part in the Lord’s Table. I even became a church elder or church worker, but I did not know Jesus as my saviour, I continued in sin until one day on a particular hour at a particular place when I heard a certain preacher, then Jesus opened my eyes and saved me.

This model of an East African revivalists’ confession expresses the discontented sentiments of the missionary Christianity conversion model which sees the conversion of Lutherans and other mainline churches that share this doctrine that tends to limit conversion within baptism and the Lord’s Supper framework, as unsatisfying. Therefore the later Haya reaction to the missionary Christianity conversion approach challenges mainline Christianity to see a real conversion in a much deeper way than just an intellectual exercise whereby one becomes a convert by just fulfilling church traditions by undergoing the baptismal ritual and participating in the Lord’s Supper. It challenges both missionary and post missionary Christianity to be careful with nominalism and to see that active participation in various church responsibilities and fulfilment of church rituals is not a true indication of conversion. It calls the church to see conversion as one’s encounter with the living Christ whereby both physical and spiritual transformation is experienced by converts.

East African Revival created a space for this spiritual experience among the Haya and other Africans where it operated. Johansen Lutabingwa, who later became a general secretary of the Lutheran church in Northwest Tanzania, affirms: “The first-generation Christians stuck to their catechism and learned to spell out the fundamentals of

Christianity, while revival deepened the spiritual language and made Christians discover a new and more personal way to make sense of their religion” (Sundkler 1980:128).

Accordingly, for Niwagila (1991:254) the church sacrament made sense to the Revivalists only when one repents of sins and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The implication was not to reject the sacrament but rather, in line with Luther and Bonhoeffer’s theology, the grace of God which is received through church’s sacraments ought not to be received with cheap grace.

The life of a Revivalist was characterized by repentance and glorifying Jesus in their spiritual conventions and meetings. The popular chorus of the East African Revival Movement that was repeatedly sung in each of their spiritual meetings was:

*“Tukutendeleze Yesu, ulimwana g’wendiga omusai gwo gunaziza nebaza Omulokozi (We praise you Jesus, Jesus the Lamb of God purify us with your blood, we praise you the Saviour).<sup>70</sup>*

The chorus was Christ-centric and the concept of the blood of Jesus as purifying agent for their sins was central in their daily confessions. Their conceptual theology of blood can be traced in their Traditional religious discourse whereby blood was an important element in cleansing sins, removing curses and any evil spirits in their socio-community life. Blood of sacrificial animals also played a pivotal role in the reconciliation process among human beings, between human beings and ancestors and between human beings and the Deity.

For the Haya Revivalists, the theology of the cross through the death of Jesus Christ signifies the purification of their sin through the blood of the crucified Christ. Pretorius H.L (1983) who also did research on conversion among the Zithulele of South Africa, in his book entitled *Bitter as the juice of an aloe, a profile of conversion: motives and*

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<sup>70</sup> See Niwagila (1991:251). The song was sung in the Lugandan language for it originates from Uganda but was popular in all East African countries within and outside the Revival Movement among the mainline Christian churches.

*attitudinal changes*, through Zithulele narrative stories on their conversion, found that beliefs on the significance of blood of Jesus among the Zithulele Christian converts in its power to cleanse and prevent them from sin was central just as it is among the Haya christian converts especially within the East African revival movement. This is an indication of what has gone before Christianity within their traditional religious sacrificial rites. It was in this line of thought that one of the respondent in his research responded that “the blood of Christ has flowed for me. So I cannot do things which are against his will. These things must be as bitter as juice of an aloe” (1983:43). Niwagila (1991:252) adds that for the Haya Revivalists, this kind of understanding “promoted brotherhood (*ndugu/dada*)” a common expression among the members of Revival as they regarded each member as one family or clan in Jesus Christ united by the new blood of Jesus Christ - their Lord and Saviour.

The Haya in the Revival Movement understood salvation as a process where both God and a person in the process of being saved are active participants under the guidance of Christ (Lugazia 2010:82). Haya convert Revivalists realized an experiential Christianity that touched their hearts and transformed their entire life. For the Haya, this kind of revival signified a sort of paradigm shift from missionary Christianity to indigenous Christianity whereby a spiritual conversion was realized within their cultural frame of reference, unlike the formalized conversion articulated within missionary Christianity’s sacramental discourse. East African Revival created an arena whereby the Haya experienced conversion that transformed their hearts and gave them a new life that is rooted within their Traditional religious spirituality.

East African Revival refers to their conversion in terms of when they encountered Christ in Revival crusades, through their fellow Revivalists, or when Jesus appeared to them in dreams and visions and not when they were Baptized or Confirmed in their denominational churches. For that matter missionary Christianity was challenged by the East Africa Revival to rethink conversions that will awake the church from dying



immorally<sup>71</sup>. The zeal, enthusiasm and the power to witness and testify that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Saviour was escalated by Revival and not missionary Christianity conversion.

The Haya East African Revivalists regarded conversion that the church was advocating through sacramental teaching as an artificial conversion that could not touch their hearts and make them relate with Christ meaningfully. The testimonies of some these Revivalists vividly demonstrate this point: Sebastian Bishanga,<sup>72</sup> for example, one of the key leaders of East African revivals and an active lay preacher in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania, testifies:

I was baptized on April the 27<sup>th</sup> 1933 and soon went on to study what the catechism taught about Holy Communion. I read with great interest and was very devoted in my religion. But I didn't really know the Lord Jesus. My parents and brothers were all well-known Christians. But in spite of this, we continued to go to the spirits and the idols ... when I finished my medical training ... I was totally defeated by drink, fornication and fear of spirits. Even the urge to steal dominated me. I never had time to go to church.

Bishanga continues with his testimony explaining that his catechism teachings and church sacrament did not have a strong influence on his old life which was immoral until the time when he encountered Christ within the Revival Movement Christianity. He says:

... I had made up my mind to kill a person. I was going to do so with the help of my brother-in-law, who carried a spear for me. Just then, quite suddenly, the Lord Jesus came into my heart and saved me. I felt a cry within me: "Oh thou God of Abraham". I conferred not with flesh and blood but surrendered myself totally to the Lord Jesus. I was now graced with a spirit of strong love towards Jesus and towards my brethren and the church ... The Lord opened my eyes so that I saw it was my duty to pay many other debts of different kinds. If I had stolen anything from the government I gave it back and received forgiveness ... My father, who for many years had tried to prevent me from being saved, was himself saved in 1958. We burned all our idols and let Jesus be our Lord. The Lord gave us the

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<sup>71</sup> Some missionaries and Haya theologians see that East African revival sprang from the context of a dying church in Buhaya that was seriously hit by immoralities like prostitution that was a major source of venereal diseases (see Sundker 1980:118, Niwagila 1991:255). Niwagila writes that "when the Revival Movement came, the spirit of God was felt both in the church and in the country. The Ekibi, guilty, which led people to 'prostitution' and caused them to become a dying nation, was exposed publicly through confessions which made many people disassociate themselves from *Ekibi*."

<sup>72</sup> Sundkler (1980:120-122) reports several other Revivalists' testimonies, which have almost the same pattern of confessional testimonies.

privilege of knowing and receiving the blood of Jesus every day, in faith, and cleansed our hearts and lives through throwing up [i.e. confessing] all that could divide us from our Lord and Saviour. Our family life and our marriage, which hitherto had been dead, now received new life through Jesus.

Bishanga has been taken as an example of Haya indigenous understanding of conversion within Revival Christianity. This understanding was challenging to the missionary Christianity teaching of conversion within the catechism. Bishanga's conversion narrative suggests that missionary Christianity converted him to Christianity. His first conversion amounted to socialization in a new religion called Christianity<sup>73</sup>. We can also point out that in the Revival he got converted to Christ<sup>74</sup>. The Revival as stated earlier, despite some theological weaknesses such as being too moralistic, having an individualist doctrine of salvation, causing division in the church and family, just to mention some (Kabigumila 2005:132-141)<sup>75</sup>, indigenized conversion. It took Haya religio-spirituality and worldview seriously. The concept of blood and brotherhood among the Revivalists were some of the indications that the East African Revival was working towards the realization of conversion that touches the heart of indigenous converts as it took cognizance of their religio-cultural worldview. From our structural theory analysis we can contend that it drew on some religio-cultural and social resources from the Haya Traditional Religion such as role of blood, cleansing rituals, understanding of what considered sin in the society and whilistic function of religion, to make sense of Haya conversion whereby both transformation and continuity were realized among the Haya Revival converts such as Bishanga.

If you asked Bishanga and others who experienced conversion of this type when they actually converted, they might definitely refer to the time when they were saved in the

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<sup>73</sup> See chapter 2.8.3

<sup>74</sup> See Stanley's (2006:170-171) distinction between conversion to Christianity and conversion to Christ.

<sup>75</sup> While conversion to Christ in the East African Revivalist pattern of conversion is theologically sound, their understanding of sin needs a critical observation. Sin in both the Lutheran Church and Haya indigenous social community cannot be reduced to moralistic acts like drinking, fornication, stealing, etcetera, for sin in the Lutheran Church and in the Haya community is seen in a much wider perspective that includes: original sin, disbelief, disobedience, rebellion against God, lawlessness, unrighteousness and ungodly living, among others (see Kabigumila 2005:155-159). To the Haya sin can also include bad relationships between an individual and his/her social community and his/her ancestors. Nevertheless, the Revivalists help us not to ignore the moral dimension of our conversion which is one of the essential parts of seeing conversion in a transformation perspective (see chapter 2.7).

Revival Movement and not when they were baptized as per church theology of salvation and conversion. What does this mean? Does this mean that the mission Christianity and baptismal teaching didn't have any impact on the conversion of Bishanga? Absolutely not. My opinion is that the missionary conversion method, despite its shortcomings, certainly exposed Bishanga to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but the approach and the Christianity he was exposed to did not touch his heart and therefore he needed another experience of conversion that would make sense to him and therefore transform him spiritually and physically without necessarily negating his African contextual spiritual worldview. This led to a new life and service to Christ and to his church through relating well with his family and other fellow human beings.

The East African Revival as an African indigenous movement that played a decisive role in indigenizing missionary Christianity conversion was envisaged by some missionaries such as Sundkler (1980:137) as one of the African initiatives which in some years to come would give the whole character of the church in Buhaya and beyond and their individual participants a new sense of determination, direction and dignity.

#### **5.4.2.2 Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival**

Along with East Africa Revival, Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival has been another form of Christianity which has been attracting the Haya, most of them Christians baptized in the mainline churches, including the Lutheran Church, to undergo another conversion different from the one officially recognized in their respective churches. This type of Revival in Northwest Tanzania came later after the East African Revival and it seems, to a major degree, to have replaced the East Africa Revival Movement. Most of the Revivalists who left their mainline churches, or at times some who experience this kind of revival within their churches, have claimed that this form of Christianity has helped them to experience a real conversion (be born again) and meet their physical and spiritual needs.

Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival refers to a given spirituality that we observe in Christian trends in both mainline churches and "spiritual" churches, mainly Pentecostal churches.

According to Andriatsimalomanarivo (2001:68) in his Doctoral research on *The missiological dimensions of African ecclesiology*, for Pentecostal-Charismatic revival, spiritual experiences are fundamental to both Christians and church life. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is not able to achieve her mandate, which is “to witness to the ends of the earth”. Witnessing in this case means preaching the whole Gospel, healing the sick, praying for Spirit Baptism and for spiritual gifts with which Christians must be equipped. Performing miracles, delivering prophesies and promising blessing from God and victory over enemies are the central agenda for this form of Christianity.

Many African theologians understand African Pentecost-Charismatic Christianity as a form of Christianity that takes African spirituality and African region-cultural worldviews seriously, hence playing a significant role in endeavouring to indigenize African Christianity. It makes missionary Christianity conversion meaningful to most African converts. This may suggest the reason why most African mainline churches, including Haya Lutheran adherents, are attracted to this kind of Christianity.

Dealing with the physical problems including healing and deliverance from what is believed to be demonic and possessions of spirits is one of the fundamental reasons for Haya Christians to be attracted by Charismatic- Pentecostal Revival movements. Thomas Jacob testimony as was interviewed by Kabigumila (2003:83) at Biirabo one of the Lutheran parishes in Northwest Tanzania (2/5/202) serves as an example.

I have been sick for a long time. My sickness started when I was living in Dar es Salaam. My disease was not able to be cured in hospitals. For this reason, I decided to go to traditional healers, but once again I received no relief...I moved from Dar es Salaam because my condition was deteriorating. When I arrived in my home area, Bukoba, I went to one of the big hospitals in the area to get treatment. I was admitted. One day I heard that the revival meeting was going to meet at the hospital chapel. I decided to attend the meeting. They were praying for anybody with a problem. After reading the word of God, they started to pray. They asked those with problems to come in front for prayer. Courageously, I went there. Some group leaders prayed for me by laying their hands on my head. I started to shake all over. I was unconscious. After twenty minutes, I regained consciousness. But one of my relatives told me I was filled with devils that started talking with one

leader, and as he prayed over me, devils began to leave me one after another. Since then I started to continue attending fellowship meetings. Now my condition has been improved. I have regained my health. My weight has increased and I am eating very well. People who saw me when I came from Dar es Salaam are surprised to see how healthy I am. Now I am a fellowship member. Praise the Lord, I am saved. I can do any works to support my family.

Charismatic-pentecostal Christianity doesn't only address the spiritual conversion but it also addressed healing as integral part of its missional goal. People don't just join Charismatic-pentecostal Revival movement for a conversion that will read them to go to heaven but a conversion that will address their existential needs. Since for Haya people and for other Africans as we pointed out previously, religion is seen as meaningful as long as it addresses both physical and mental physical world a fact that was not so much observed in a missionary Christianity. Charismatic-pentecostal Christianity appears to have succeeded in this area hence attracting Haya people like Thomas Jacob as per his testimony above. The implication is that through the prayers in the Charismatic-pentecostal Revival God could do what various hospitals couldn't do. The rules and resources from the Haya traditional religion that see religion and spirituality in a holistic component in terms of its functionality to human life, in part, informs the Haya perception of what conversion in Christianity should mean with regards to healing of both the body and the soul.

Consequently, some African Pentecostal scholars such as Asamoah-Gyadu (2011:25), understands Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival to be:

Christian groups which emphasize salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which pneumatic phenomena including "speaking in tongues", prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general, perceived as standing in historic continuity with the experiences of the early church as found especially in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God, and experiences of his Spirit.

The point worth noting is the fact that the Pentecostal-Charismatics take the question of spirituality, the Holy Spirit and his gifts and experience as fundamental features. These

features resonate well with African pre-Christianity religion among the Haya and indeed among many Africans. Kalu (2007:135) arguing on why Africans are attracted to this form of Christianity's conversion, points out that the elements of the Gospel that this movement emphasizes resonate with goals and practices of African Religion. He writes:

[Pentecost-Charismatic revival] becomes a *balm in Gilead*, a "fit" into indigenous spirituality because people want the new Christianity to do for them what the old religion did. This spirituality responded to their indigenous explanations for misfortunes that have survived in the modern urban space or emergent culture. Thus, there is concern for the health and healing, demonic oppression, witchcraft activities, and the scourge of poverty. People want release from the outward conditions through prophecy and word of knowledge.

According to Lugazia (2010:52) through Pentecost-Charismatic Revival, Christianity in African has tried to address issues which humiliate people and make them suffer. Hence this is not just about a prosperity gospel as all African Pentecostal-Charismatic churches cannot be dumped under the umbrella of prosperity gospel in Africa. But Pentecostal-Charismatics try to answer questions which were neglected in the missionary's Christian religion, issues like healing and demon exorcism through prayer. Pentecostal-Charismatics therefore extend their evangelization to include prayer for wealth and social stability. Hence this form of Christianity has introduced a new way of healing, instead of traditional healing which was shrouded in superstition.

Kalu (2008:viii) sharing these sentiments, sees the Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival as one of the ways that Africans responded to the missionary structure and appropriated the message propagated by missionary Christianity. Kalu (2008:179-180) further contends that, "Pentecostalism has grown because of its cultural fit into indigenous worldviews and it responds to the questions that are raised within the interior of their worldviews." Pentecostalism has succeeded in asserting the indigenous worldviews that still dominate contemporary African experience and shape the character of African Christianity. Therefore, Kalu sees that African Pentecostalism is the setting for work of the Gospel in Africa, as it shows how Africans appropriated the Gospel message, how they responded to the presence of the kingdom in their worldviews. He strongly argues that:

... when Pentecostal discourse is rooted in both the African past – an area that has received an inadequate attention – as well as the experience in contemporary cultural terrains, its full character will be illuminated ... it argues that the contemporary experience in Africa doesn't start from globalizing cultural forces, though the implosion of these forces compels much readjustment. Rather, the force of traditional cultures in determining behaviour and policy in the modern public space compels an in-depth study of its salience and resilience.

Kalu's contentions reaffirm the argument that, like East African Revival, the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity had helped to indigenize conversion among the Haya, as its forms, structure and theology not only conform to their Traditional religious spirituality, but also, at least to a certain degree, meet both their physical and spiritual existential religious needs that are not met adequately in both their missionary and post missionary Christianity.

Again, Stanley's (2006:170-171) distinction between conversion to Christianity and conversion to Christ sheds light on the practices and arguments in this dissertation. Whilst conversion to Christianity may imply what he calls "an exotic implanted religion", he perceives genuine conversion to Christ to be characterized in some measure by inculturation, for he believes, "authentic inculturation is no more nor less than a preparedness to hear, receive and interpret the word of Christ in scripture as it addresses us in our particular context and in the distinctive cadences of our own language."

Drawing on Stanley's distinction of conversion, we can argue that missionaries among the Haya tried hard to convert them into western Christianity, but little was done to convert them to Christ. People were incorporated in the church through baptismal liturgy without necessarily touching their hearts. Nevertheless, the Haya by the power of the Holy Spirit and through internal assimilation of the message in their own conceptual worldviews and frame of reference, realized conversion to Christ within both the East African and Pentecostal-Charismatic Revivals. The East African Revival movement and later the Charismatic movement should therefore be viewed as the work of the Holy Spirit that



calls the Haya to convert to Christ and enjoy the relationship with Christ in their social cultural context based on their traditional spirituality and religiosity.

The case made here, nonetheless, does not intend to absolutize the conversion that is realized within the framework of East African and Pentecostal-Charismatic Revivals. It only seeks to understand and explain why most Africans and the Haya particularly are attracted by spirituality and conversion articulated by the East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic movements. Since conversion models in missionary Christianity and the Revival model of conversion both have theological weaknesses and strengths, the balance whereby both missionary Christianity conversion and Revival conversion discourse needs to be maintained in order to avoid theological pitfalls that might arise in either of the two conversion models. Hence a need for an integrative model of these two conversion approaches among the Haya.

### **5.5 Reason for Some Haya Christians switching to “Spiritual” Churches and Revival Movements**

The reason for some Haya Christians switching to “spiritual” churches and Revival movements, mainly the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christian expression, denotes a reaction to dissatisfaction with missionary Christianity conversion’s methodic approach that failed to meet both spiritual and physical needs.

Barrenness, lack of enough space for prayer groups, prayers for sickness, those believed to have been affected by curses, bewitched, Charismatic features like preaching with emotion and enthusiasm are the main things, according to Lazaro (1990:32), which have been major contributing factors for Haya converts and converts from other mainline churches including the Lutheran Church, leaving their churches and going to spiritual churches and Revival movements because of their spiritual dissatisfaction.

People shift from their churches to meet their needs which by their nature they believe should be solved by religion. The reasons for some Haya mainline Christians switching to spiritual churches and Revival movements has, as we have noticed above, been the need



to realize the viable and authentic conversion that has a spiritual dimension capable of meeting their ontological religious needs. They can be summarized in Balcomb (2010:4-5).

To the African, power is the essence of true religion. The religiousness of any religion consists of its mana content and its viability, its mana effect. Therefore, a lethargic church of perfunctory liturgy is inimical to spiritual growth and therefore unacceptable to the African. The people shift again and again from “powerless” religious system to a “more powerful” one in search of salvation. This is the meaning of religious conversion in Africa. The implication is that Africa or primal peoples do not come to a new religion passively. They come to get something for themselves and for their group or community. The pragmatist approach to religion accounts for the rise of new religious movements and new forms of older religions in Africa.

Balcomb (2010:5) sees that in line with the nature of African spirituality and worldview which shapes African Christianity in our contemporary times, as we argued previously, creedal formulation, religious form, and dogma are of little significance as people in Africa tend to follow God who acts. This has the root in the nature of African religion as we have seen in chapter three of this dissertation. For Africans, religion is not seen from a spiritual perspective, but it embodies the whole life, hence religion should be able to address both their spiritual and physical life needs. For Asamoah-Gyadu (2011:25) Africans want to see the interventionist God – God who is not only thought of, rationalized, but experienced through intervening in their life situation.

The experiential God resonates with the African worldview that is manifested in their emphasis on prayers, exorcism, healing, worship, evangelism and understanding of spiritual reality. Deyi Ayegboyin as quoted in (Balcomb 2010:4) sees that these features are in line with the African worldview which forms the Pentecostal-Charismatic basis of their theology. This observation, suggests, beyond doubt, that to a certain degree the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, just like the East African Revival among the Haya, has indigenized African Christianity in general and conversion in particular, hence the Haya moving to churches and Christian movements that seem relevant to them.

This understanding helps us to explain the phenomenon of the Haya's realization of conversion outside the Lutheran Church traditional structure that retains conservatism and fails to recognize the religious needs of their members. The question probably remains to be, can Lutheran and other mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania create a space within the church liturgical system whereby Haya converts can enjoy conversion that takes African worldview seriously in order not only to minimize losing members but that the rest of the church members will enjoy Christianity in general and conversion in particular within their African frame of reference to make it more relevant?

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Chapter five has focused on a critical investigation of the Haya responses with regards to the impact of missionary Christianity's conversion methods and approach on the Haya Christian life. These responses were categorized in two levels. The first level is the earlier response and the second one is the later response. The earlier response is based on the Haya's uncritical reception of missionary Christianity upon the introduction of Christianity among them and the later response is centred on their reaction as their conceptual creativity in attempting to indigenize conversion that resonates with their religio-cultural worldview.

The chapter has attempted to answer the basic research question as to why Haya Christians (converts) within the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania according to her traditional conversion orthodoxy which is structured within the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation catechetical teachings, find this conversion inadequate and therefore opt for another conversion within the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity. The place of the East African Revival Movement and Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in indigenizing missionary Christianity conversion through its theology, structuring and shaping Haya conversion has also been discussed.

It has been found that both the East Africa Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival have proved to a great extent to indigenize Haya Christianity in general and conversion in particular. According to some African Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars this is a result of

their dissatisfaction with the western missionaries explanation of the mighty works of God documented in the Bible, that include His ability to heal and counter the reality of evil (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2003:75, Anderson 2011:66-67). These forms of Christianity have attempted to address the Haya existential issues that are characterized within their spiritual worldview which, as we previously noticed, inherently embraces both the physical and metaphysical world.

I have therefore argued that the Haya comprehension and praxis of conversion that is socially and culturally relevant to the Haya was and continues to be not only influenced by Lutheran catechetical missionary presentation, but also by their religio-cultural worldviews, which play a significant role in shaping and structuring their conversion and its consequences. East African Revival and Charismatic-Pentecostal forms of Christianity comprise some resources which are drawn on by Haya Christians to make sense of conversion to meet their spiritual needs.

In the next chapter I shall analyze the responses of Haya Christian converts to missionary Christianity conversion methods and approach. The sociological theory of structuration will be employed as a conceptual analytical tool to describe the missionary transmission of conversion and the Haya response to it as a way of indigenizing their conversion – Haya appropriation of conversion. The next chapter will also try to examine how Haya traditional religio-cultural worldviews shaped and continue to shape their conversion that is mostly realized within the revivalistic socio-cultural structure of Christianity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ANALYSING HAYA RESPONSES TO MISSIONARY'S CONVERSION APPROACH AND THE POSSIBLE NEW MODEL OF CONVERSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

In chapter five, the Haya responses to the missionary Christianity's approach and conversion methods have been examined. It has been found that there were two levels of their responses. The first one was their uncritical positive response to missionary Christianity whereby most Haya accepted Christianity as a way of venturing into modernity and accessing both socio-economic transformation and the benefits attached to it. The second level of response was an implicit expression of discontent regarding the missionary Christianity model of conversion that did not adequately take cognizance of their former culture and religious spirituality and worldview.

This necessitated the realization of what appeared real conversion within the East African Revival and later within the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity which many scholars and some former Haya missionaries considered to be indigenous movements. Within the revivalist and Pentecostal-Charismatic structure of Christianity, Haya converts realize conversion that matches well with their religio-cultural contextual worldview as it takes spirituality seriously and attempts to address their existential issues. This has been regarded as a significant attempt to indigenize conversion within the Haya conceptual worldview that has its roots in their primal religious spirituality which they experienced prior to the advent of Christianity.

In chapter six, an integrative approach whereby a structuration theory from a sociological perspective and theological-missiological insights is engaged to analyze the general findings on the missionary Christianity approach and methods of conversion and the Haya responses to the approach and methods. This is done within the framework of the sociological theory of structuration as an analytical tool to describe the phenomenon of

missionary transmission of the Gospel in Buhaya and the Haya assimilation of the Gospel. The objective is to seek a better and viable understanding of the phenomenon of re-conversion of Haya Christians within the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity and their religio-cultural influence on such an understanding that they fail to maintain loyalty to their mother churches' theology of conversion. As we have seen in chapter five, this conversion theology seems to restrict conversion within the Baptism and Confirmation theological discourses.

A possible conversion model that takes into account the integration of Haya traditional religio-cultural worldview and other forms of Christianity namely, East African Revival, Pentecostal-Charismatic and missionary Christianity approach shall finally be suggested. This model is believed to create a possibility for Haya converts to indigenize their conversion within their frame of reference without necessarily deviating from their church's fundamental theological discourse on conversion.

## **6.2 Applying Structuration Theory to Analyzing Missionary Christianity Conversion Approach and Methods and the Haya Responses**

The understanding of conversion dynamics in the Haya community and the tendency of Haya Christians seeking to realize "re-conversion" outside the traditional missionary Christianity's conversion orthodoxy to the revivalistic form of Christianity, namely East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival movement, demands a theoretical analysis. Since the dissertation employs the convergence of both missiological and sociological theory approaches, in this case I use the structuration theory to analyze the study's findings mentioned in the previous chapters so as to understand the key research questions of the study.

### **6.2.1 Haya Conversion and their Responses in the light of Structuration Theory**

To start with, with the advent of missionary Christianity in Northwest Tanzania, which applied the methods that were informed by socio-economic conditions, transformation and scientific discoveries that were taking place in Europe under the influence of

enlightenment, renaissance and many other socio-scientific discoveries as we discussed in chapter four, the Haya converted to Christianity. Their conversion initially was not only motivated by religious factors but rather by modernity, civilization and other socio-economic benefits that were embedded in new forms of education, medicine, clothing and technology.

It is also true that missionary Christianity was conveyed under colonialism and imperialism that aimed at perverting African religion and culture and replacing them with Christianity that was presented in western cultural ways of life of that time, as was discussed in the previous chapters (chapters 4 and 5). We can then, to use the language of Stanley (2006:170-171), say they were converted to Christianity and not to Christ. Other scholars such as Kraft (2002:339) have referred to this type of conversion as cultural conversion whereby the Haya were converted not only to Christianity, but to the western culture – the culture of their missionaries (chapter 2:8:4).

Missionary Christianity's theology that confined conversion within church sacraments and liturgies, to many Haya at the outset appeared admirable for it was presented along with new names – namely western or biblical names which envisaged producing a new community with a new identity (Katoke 1976:104-105; Sundkler 1980; Niwagila 1991). The missionary conversional approach and methods further produced a community that became alien to their people as these new believers were separated culturally, socially and religiously from the so-called "pagans" in Christian communities. This class of new converts appeared superior to their fellow non-converts.

The Haya were exposed to a new way of life that was inherently embedded within missionary Christianity. This pattern of conversion has been categorized by some scholars as conversion through socialization (chapter 2:8:2:3). To use the language of Horton in his theory of intellectualist when describing conversion of Africans, the Haya were exposed to Christianity that became a catalyst for their changes from microcosm to macrocosm. For that matter the Haya tended to convert as a result of social development (chapter 2:10:1).

Nevertheless, it is important to argue, as we ascertained in the previous chapter, that to most of the Haya this kind of conversion approach was superficial. It did not appear to provide answers to their ontological religious questions related to curses, ancestors, fear of witchcraft, barrenness, to mention but a few (chapters 4 and 5). The missionary Christianity conversion to a certain extent appeared religiously and spiritually irrelevant to most if not all Haya converts as it did not adequately, to use the language of Giddens (1984), draw on resources and rules from Haya religious systems and spiritual worldview. This led some Haya new Christian converts to adopt a double identity, that is, they continued to maintain Christianity as a Sunday religion and resort to Haya Traditional Religion for the rest of the week.

This missionary Christianity approach, however, as we previously noted in chapter four, is generally acknowledged to have played a significant role among the Haya as it accelerated a social change that was instrumental in the Haya socio-economic development and exposed the Haya to the Gospel and to the Christian environmental context which was a conducive structural matrix for their later realization of what seemed to them relevant and actual conversion. These dynamics are what Giddens would refer to as reproduction and transformation, which implies that apart from social changes that were brought about by western Christianization, the Haya had to draw rules and resources from their social system (religion and culture) to make sense of their conversion. This, as we pointed out earlier, from the context of this research area, is normally done within the African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic structure of Christianity (chapter 5).

From the outset of mission Christianity in Northwest Tanzania, through the East African Revival Movement, the Haya realized conversion within the framework of the revivalist form of Christianity. This, to a certain degree, provided spirituality that makes sense to the Haya, since as was discussed in chapter three, the Haya are culturally religious, and spirituality to them is taken seriously within their Traditional religious discourse. To use the words of Kahakwa (2010:265) "... African converts define and practice Christianity in terms of their own religious perception and worldview." Kahakwa, as a Haya scholar

and a Lutheran theologian in Northwest Tanzania, argues strongly that upon their conversion Africans don't renounce their former religion, instead they use their former religion to shape and illuminate their understanding of a new religion. He sees that most if not all African converts, after conversion whether knowingly or unknowingly, continue to maintain their former religious and cultural elements (2010:265)<sup>76</sup>. Both the East African Revival and the later Pentecostal-Charismatic Revival therefore affirm both discontinuity and continuity of Haya Traditional Religion and Christianity since some spiritual elements from indigenous religion have been carried along within this form of Christianity in a more explicit way.

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement has also to a great extent indigenised Haya conversion because it addresses the African ontological worldview. The question of demons, fear of witchcraft, curses, among others, which dominated most of Haya cosmology and religious worldviews are addressed through prayers within the revival structure. Also the place of the blood of Jesus that plays an important role in Haya Traditional religious discourse with regard to ancestral sacrifices has been inculturated in revival movements more than in missionary Christianity church structure and theological discourses. To most of the Haya and Africans in general this kind of conversion tends to make more sense than the missionary Christianity conversion that was presented in catechetical teachings through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. This argument is, as found out in this study, attested by the fact that Haya revivalists' conversion narrative stories normally refer to their real conversion at the time when they were converted within revival and not during the time of Baptism as per missionary Christianity's understanding of the theology of conversion (chapter 5.4.2.1).

The converts' narrative stories pattern like that of Haya Christian's reconversion within the East African Revival Movement, indicate how missionary Christianity did not have

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<sup>76</sup>By so doing Kahakwa not only supports the idea of continuity and discontinuity between the two religions (African Traditional Religion and Christianity) but his observation resonates with structuration theory that implies that one's social systems and structures to some degree shape and construct his or her worldview that in turn influences his or her perception and construction of a new reality presented to him or her.



strong impacts on their spiritual and religiously lives. Once again the pattern of their conversion testimonies verifies this thesis:

I personally was baptized in adult baptism. I had taken part in the Lord's Table. I even became a church elder or church worker, but I did not know Jesus as my saviour, I continued in sin until one day at a particular hour at a particular place when I heard a certain preacher, then Jesus opened my eyes and saved me (Niwagila 1991:254).

Looking at this pattern from the social theory of Snow and Machalek (1983:26) who describe a convert as a social type who changes behaviour as he/she interacts with the group or a movement he/she has joined, we can say that the East African Revival socialized the Haya into a spiritual movement in which they felt more at home than the missionary Christianity. The universalism of discourse that, according to Snow and Machalek, involves how a convert talks and reasons allows us see how some Haya who experienced this Revival experienced conversion that made a significant impact on their religious lives.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, one needs to realize that missionaries among the Haya endeavoured to convert the Haya into western Christianity accompanied by their religio-cultural worldview that was to a greater extent informed and shaped by enlightenment and other scientific discoveries, but little was done to convert them to Christ. Nonetheless, it can be argued that through the power of the Holy Spirit within indigenous revival Christianity, the Haya have come to realize that they needed conversion to Christ that touched their hearts and transformed their lives within their religio-cultural frame of reference. The East African Revival Movement and Charismatic Movement can arguably be stated that it has, at least to a certain degree, transformed missionary Christianity from being a western religion to become a Haya religion which is being shaped by Jesus Christ who is incarnated in their religio-cultural context. This has been regarded by some African scholars like Sanneh and Bediako, as previously noted, as internal assimilation or translatability of western Christianity into African Christianity.

The questions that arise are: What does this imply for missionary Christianity? What does this mean for us today? What are the missiological implications? How does structuration theory help to explain these conversion dynamics among the Haya with regards to missionary conversion along indigenous conversion that is realized within revival and other spiritual movements' structure which has been regarded by both some missionaries and African theologians as indigenous movements?

As we argued in previous chapters, structuration theory helps us to understand that the Haya apprehension of authentic conversion was not only determined by missionaries. In other words the teaching of catechism of conversion by missionaries based on their theology that was formulated in the west was not the only factor that could shape and structure conversion within the Haya socio-cultural context, but rather their previous religio-cultural context influenced their inception, comprehension and apprehension of conversion that would be relevant to them (cf. Kahakwa 2010:329)<sup>77</sup>. As was argued in chapter three, Haya Traditional Religion and its nature of spirituality were very important in preparing Haya potential converts to give meaning and relevance to missionary Christianity when it was later introduced by European missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For that matter, Haya Traditional religious spirituality and worldview provided a social structure whereby conversion to Christianity could be structured within a revivalistic form of Christianity.

Consequently, as we argued in this dissertation in chapter two, conversion as a social type could not only construct an individual from his/her religio-cultural structure but an individual, in this case a Haya Christian convert, is also constructed by the society in which he/she belongs for according to the theory of structuration, society is viewed as a structuration process, whereby human actions simultaneously structure and are structured by the society (Kaspersen 2000:33). This means that the Haya traditional social structure

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<sup>77</sup>Kahakwa (2010: 329) argues that the knowledge of the past experience of a convert plays a fundamental role in determining his or her understanding of [his or her conversion]. Kahakwa therefore sees the continuity of the past as a necessity for the realization of converts' new religion in general and God in particular. Usually one's later experience ... depends on the experience gained in the past. Although Kahakwa's argument concerns largely the understanding of God, his observation can also apply to the understanding of conversion and the convert – a key issue of our discussion.

and systems provide rules and resources on which Haya converts would draw to make sense of their conversion that was presented by missionary Christianity.

Ranger and Kimambo (1972:22) make a similar point when they put it, “the initial reception of Christianity in different African societies depended ... upon the [indigenous] religious situation in those societies.” However, I assume this point does not intend to underestimate the role of missionaries in transforming Haya understanding of conversion, but rather it shows that both missionaries’ transmission and the Haya religio-cultural context play an important role in shaping and structuring conversion. Mugambi (1989:44) puts it:

African converts combined their traditional beliefs with the new ones in their own ways according to their religious perceptions and needs and irrespective of the official doctrines of the denominations to which they had been converted.

In the same vein, structuration theory helps us to see that the Haya indigenous social structure was not only transformed (structured) by missionary Christian conversional methods but their religio-cultural background played a role in their task of interpreting a new faith – Christianity. We can therefore analyze that, as stated elsewhere in this dissertation, missionaries’ teaching and application of conversion were not the only factors that influenced the Haya understanding of their conversion and its consequences, but Haya Tradition and Religion within which the Haya live were also important, hence the affirmation of continuity and discontinuity among the Haya Christian converts was an inevitable reality that has been realized by Haya within revivalistic form of Christianity (cf. Chester 2003:317).

These arguments as we pointed out in chapter three (3.7) support with what scholars like Sanneh (1990) has referred to as external transmission and internal assimilation. Sanneh maintains that missionaries conveyed external transmission and the people to whom the Gospel was brought conveyed internal assimilation through translatability. This implies that the assimilation of Christianity among the Haya, though conveyed with weakness that was mainly determined by their western background and the enlightenment mind-set, was

not necessarily going to be based solely on the agents of western missionary Christianity, but the internal socio-cultural dynamics also had a role to play in shaping Christianity among the Haya that would address both their spiritual and temporal needs.

We can therefore make a case that the reason why some Haya Christians within the mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania tend to reconvert outside the official recognized model of conversion, that is, through Baptism, to the indigenous spiritual and Revival Movement, is because, as many an African theologian has argued, it is rooted in the fact that these movements to a great extent have succeed in indigenizing African Christianity. The Haya realize conversion that makes sense within the revivalistic model of conversion because this model takes seriously the spiritual worldview of Africans. In these revival movements Haya Christians solve their problems related to religious challenges through prayers, exorcism, application of the blood of Jesus in dealing with fear of witchcraft, counteracting curses, reconciliation among individuals and among the ancestors, to mention but a few, which have been relevant to the Haya conceptual worldview since these were the issues that were dealt with in their primal religious framework prior to Christianity<sup>78</sup>. In other words these revival movements recognize the continuity and discontinuity of some religious elements experienced in their former religion and the important aspect for them is to make sense of their conversion.

Kabigumira (2005:216) who researched revival in Northwest Tanzania, in his Doctoral research concludes with the following point which I consider relevant to our discussion. He contends: “Revival movement is a response to the church between the Christian message and African way of life in which both the traditional and modern way of life play a leading role.” For Kabigubila, therefore, Revival Christianity represents the African church in its endeavours to indigenize missionary Christianity conversion into a kind of Christian conversion that takes seriously spirituality in a Christian sense that which is

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<sup>78</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that this dissertation does not intend to limit authentic conversion to the revivalistic Christianity discourse, rather it seeks to explain why most Haya find conversion within Revival discourse relevant, unlike the one advocated by their respective mainline churches to the extent of moving out from the missionary Christianity churches in seeking conversion outside their original churches.

rooted in an African Haya Traditional religious frame of reference at the same time without ignoring modern ways of life.

### **6.3. Understanding the Impact of Missionaries' Conversion Methods to the Haya Christian Life within the Framework of Structuration Theory**

#### **6.3.1 Haya Culture, Religion and Spirituality**

Previously we noted that Haya culture, religion and spirituality are the contextual matrix for the Haya's reception and comprehension of conversion that makes sense to them as per their conceptual worldview. The question has been how post missionary Christianity can draw on some positive rules and resources for the Haya converts to realize conversion that does not simply throw away everything in their former religion but, as we observed previously, builds on what they have to make sense of their Christian conversion.

Speaking of African spirituality in conjunction with their spiritual worldview, Daniel Louw (2008:165) looks at the world of the traditional African to be filled with different kinds of spirits that are both good and bad. So for him, discussion on African spirituality should not ignore the spiritual world. According to the African traditional worldview, ancestors are important and they play a critical role in the daily life of people.

Although, as many African scholars have observed, ancestors are not worshipped but venerated by Africans, they play a very significant role in the African social and religious life in terms of family protection and moral regulation. Laurent Magesa (1997:51), a Tanzanian theologian who is one of the African theologians who have worked on the issues of African ancestology<sup>79</sup>, rightly observes that "more than any other force, the ancestors are the protectors of the society as well as its most feared direct critic and source

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<sup>79</sup> Much work on the role of ancestors in African traditional society has also been extensively done by another Tanzanian Catholic theologian, Charles Nyamiti, See for example, *Christ as our Ancestor* (1984), "Some moral implications of African Ancestral Christology" (1992), *Journal of African Christian Studies*. 8(3): 36-51, "African ancestral veneration and its relevance to the African churches" (1993), *The Journal of African Christian Studies*. 9(3):14-37. "African Christologies today" in Schreiter, R.J. (ed). *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (1995), "The Trinity from an African Ancestral Perspective" (1996), *Journal of African Christian Studies*. 12(4): 38-72.

of punishment. Above all, they are the direct watchdogs of the moral behaviour of the individual, the family, the clan and the entire society with which they are associated.”

To Magesa and some other African scholars, ancestors are an integral part of the traditional African social structure. In a culture where tribe, clan and family are of utmost importance, ancestors are the most respected members of the family. Therefore to be cut off from relationships with one’s ancestors is to cease to be a whole person. Magesa (1997:51) sees that the ancestors sanction society’s customs, norms and ethics. Without them, Africans are left without moral guidelines or motivation, and society is powerless to enforce ethics.

This critical aspect of the ancestral role in missionary Christianity was one of the aspects that was ignored, thus the gap remained unfilled by missionary Christian conversion approach. The western missionaries’ approach socialized the Haya into western Christianity through liturgical conversional rituals such as Baptism and Confirmation and through other methods, as discussed in chapters four and five, but they failed to efficiently integrate Christianity with this essential social and religious dimension of the Haya indigenous people.

This approach creates a situation whereby Christianity is seen as one of the religions to be maintained along with their former religion. As pointed out earlier, in this case to many African Christians, Christianity as a religion is linked to modernity and socio-economic development but is not a problem solving religion. Hence for problems that face people in the community which are linked with ancestors, Christian converts are likely to go back to their former religion since it is within their Traditional religious structure that solutions to both their religious and social existential problems are addressed. This is because people’s social structure reproduces itself as people draw on cultural rules and resources from their socio-structural systems, apart from changes that are the result of an exposure to the new reality, in this case to the Gospel.

This observation calls African churches to find ways of making Christianity relevant to most African converts. This dissertation calls for a conversion approach that will consider

the Traditional religio-cultural context of people and their cosmic worldview, for culture as a social structure reproduces with regard to transformation. Africans cannot convert to a foreign religion without carrying with them the religiosity and spirituality that has always been embedded in their society. While acknowledging the necessity for transformation, at the same time the continuity needs to be seen as inevitable.

### **6.3.2 Missionary Methods and the Impacts on Haya Christian Life**

In chapter four we investigated some missionary Christianity methods that were employed by missionaries in missionization of the Haya and indeed Africans at large. It was further noted that Protestant missionaries who missionized Northwest Tanzania among the Haya hailed from the west, mainly European countries, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The socio-scientific discoveries and technological development that was attained at that time was the context that informed their conversional strategic approach in Africa.

We, however, ascertained that methods like evangelization through social services such as education, western medicine, new ways of dress and new forms of worship among others, led to both modern religious and secular development of the Africans, including the Haya. Some converts who went through mission schools became both religious leaders and politicians who played significant roles in socio-economic and political transformation of their respective countries. So it is apparent that the missionary Christianity approach and methods of missionizing Haya had both positive and negative effects. From the positive side, it fostered socio-economic transformation, but on the negative side it denied the Haya cultural dignity that was important for them in order to embrace a new faith in Christ within their Traditional religious conceptual worldview.

Thus, apart from some missionaries, who really took African cultural heritage and spirituality as a basis for missionizing African societies, most of them applied an approach and methods that certainly intended to pervert African culture and religion and replace it with Christianity that was entrenched in western socio-cultural context. This approach has resulted in what has been termed as more cultural conversion and less religious conversion

of Africans. It produced what was seen as artificial conversion that really lacked authenticity as it failed to address people's spirituality in their religio-cultural heritage and failed to take into cognisance the Haya conceptual religious and spirituality worldview. Mbiti (1969:234) observes an important feature of missionary Christianity versus African religio-cultural spirituality and worldview:

mission Christianity ... is locked up six days a week, meeting only for two hours on Sundays and perhaps once during the week. It is a Christianity which is active in church building. The rest of the week is empty. Africans, who traditionally do not know religious vacuum, feel that they don't get enough religion from this type of Christianity, since it does not fill up their whole life and their understanding of the universe.

Since we discovered that Haya religion is inherently embedded within their culture and practiced within their daily life any conversion that does not take seriously this important aspect of Haya spirituality and religiosity is likely to yield Christians with dual identity between African religion and Christianity. This suggests the reasons for some Haya Christians taking part in Traditional Religion when faced with existential crises that are believed to have religious or spiritual influence.

It is therefore argued that it should be of paramount importance to maintain the balance whereby socio-economic development and exposure to the modern world needs to match well with conversion that allows Haya Christians and indeed other Africans to enjoy the salvific love of Christ within their social religio-cultural context. The Haya need to draw on their former socio-religious spiritual resources and rules as they experience transformation brought by the Gospel in order for them to enjoy conversion that affirms their religio-cultural dignity within the context of their worldview. In other words, as we pointed out in the third chapter, it should consider both discontinuity and continuity dominant meaningful aspects of Haya culture and religion.

### **6.3.3 Indigenization of Conversion in the Light of Structuration Theory**

Both Rambo (1993) and Chester (2003) argue that even those advocates of conversion who appear successful in the missionary fields discover that their ability to control the



process is limited, for the new converts bring in their existing cultural elements to the task of interpreting a new faith. Most scholars agree that past experience, culture and religion of new converts makes the task of indigenization of a new faith of a convert inevitable. The missionaries' interpretation of faith may at times vary from that of the convert (cf. Carmody 2007:112)<sup>80</sup>. The exposure of a new missionary message to the potential converts, although it may lead to the social change of a given social community, yet the acceptability, adaptability, interpretation and comprehension of the new message will depend on both the message and the social structure that has constructed potential converts' worldview.

### **6.3.3.1 Implications: Influence upon Haya Understanding of Conversion**

In dealing with the implications or the influences of Haya understanding of conversion, it is important to start with some questions:

1. What were the main contours of the Haya understanding of conversion in the light of structuration theory?
2. What are the religio-cultural elements that influenced this understanding?

As we have seen previously and as we discussed in chapters two and three, structuration theory is helpful in providing resources for explaining this influence. This implies that the missionaries exposed the Gospel to the Haya potential converts. Despite the inadequacy of the missionaries' methods of missionization of the Haya, the Haya were exposed to the new reality of the Gospel. This missionary interaction to the Haya people produced an effect of socio-economic, religious and cultural transformation. However, the reception, interpretation and apprehension of the Gospel were determined by both the missionaries' message and the Haya social systems that construct their worldview.

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<sup>80</sup> Writing from the context of Zambia, Brendan Carmody (2007:112), engaging sociological theories of Robin Morton and Fisher's theories on African conversion, argues that African converts did not necessarily adopt what western missionaries considered to be true doctrine, but early African converts "understood new religious ideas from the Bible and elsewhere in indigenous terms." These views are in line with what Andrew Walls (1996:183-203) contends when he argues that African Christianity which initially emerged as African Religion developed and was shaped by African concerns and agenda.

Contrary to the missionaries' expectation and their theology of conversion, the East African revivalistic conversion in the early years of Haya Christianization appeared relevant to most Haya Christians. That is why as Niwagila (1991), Mushemba (1979), Kibira (1974) and Sundkler (1980) report, East African Revival featured Protestant Christianity in Northwest Tanzania. Its advent was warmly welcomed in the Haya religious-cultural context as it swept the whole Protestant church in Buhaya and later it impacted the whole church in Tanzania. It should also be pointed out that this revival swept the East African countries at large, especially within the Protestant mission churches, hence popularly known as "East African Revival". Its impact has been enormous in various ways, but more importantly it produced indigenous church leaders of strong integrity and character who played significant roles in Tanzania and in the world at large<sup>81</sup>. Sundkler (1980) emphasises that almost every pastor in the Protestant church was a product of this revival. The church growth economically and numerically was largely influenced by this Revival. The social structure of the Haya influenced and attempted to indigenize conversion among the Haya in this African Revival movement.

Again the later form of Christianity that came in the form of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement model of conversion which continues to attract many Christians is regarded by many African scholars, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, as an ongoing attempt of indigenization of missionary Christianity conversion. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement takes the dimension of spirituality and holistic healing seriously. Within these movements, the African ontological world of spirits characterized by witchcraft, curses, bareness and protection against evils through the blood and the Name of Jesus Christ have been practically applied to address questions and fears of Haya Africans. Conversion in this case makes sense to the Haya Christians for unlike missionary conversion, it addresses their real world.

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<sup>81</sup> It should be remembered, that Bishop Josiah Kibira, a first African Lutheran bishop in Northwest Tanzania and later first African president of the Lutheran World Federation, and Bishop Samsom Mushemba who became bishop after Kibira in the same Diocese, and later a presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, among others, were the products of this indigenous spiritual movement called East African Revival.

It is important, however, to point out that Haya conversion has been influenced by both religio-cultural context and worldview and at the same time by western missionaries. It should be remembered, however, that the interpretation of missionary presentation of Christianity lies in the hands of Haya people to make sense of their conversion. Stanley (2006:169-170) agrees that, “the process of conversion to Christianity was less tightly regulated by the missionary than many critics suppose and indeed many missionaries desired. Evangelization conducted by indigenous agents in vernacular medium defies control by those who initiated the mission process in any particular region.” Although he sees that converts have the potential to indigenize conversion advocated by missionaries, he also warns that converts also have the potential to distort the orthodox teachings of the church.

All these imply a degree of open-endedness and unpredictability in Christian missionary encounters that is both creative and dangerous. Converts have the potential to enrich or correct Christian doctrine by redressing the imbalances intrinsic to the missionaries’ culturally conditioned understanding of the faith. Equally, however, they have the potential to distort orthodoxy by filtering out emphases that have less resonance with their own cultural environment. Converts have responded to what they have seen in the gospel and not necessarily to what missionaries thought they ought to see in it.

Stanley’s contention above, suggests that the ability for the converts to indigenize conversion should not be left unaddressed. While it is worthwhile to affirm the level of indigenization of conversion by converts, careful attention is needed to be paid by missionaries or let us say theologians, to avoid distortion of the church’s basic orthodoxy.

Stanley (2006:171) further believes that “*genuine* conversion to Christ, as distinct from mere conversion to Christianity as an exotic implanted religion, will be marked in some measure by inculturation, for authentic inculturation is no more or less than a preparedness to hear, receive and interpret the word of Christ in scripture as it addresses us in a particular context and in the distinctive cadences of our own language.”

Consequently, this implies that conversion that makes sense to people is the conversion that is realized within people’s socio-religious cultural context rather than that which is

imposed and advocated. The religio-cultural context of the Haya is seen as a social structure that both produces and reproduces itself but at the same time remains open for change or transformation. This implies that Haya people were transformed by missionary Christianity conversion as we previously noted. But at the same time the Haya Traditional religious spirituality and worldview have contributed not only to make sense of their conversion, but it has also shaped and structured conversion. This shape and structure is clearly observed within the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity framework. This form of Christianity as we unpacked previously, takes cognizance of spirituality and African worldview.

The church needs to understand why Haya Christians seek what appears to be re-conversion outside the church's orthodoxy and theology of conversion. It should therefore engage such understanding to create a model that Haya Christians will accommodate within their respective church's space without distorting essentials of their theological understanding of conversion.

#### **6.4 Towards a Haya New Possible Conversion Model**

After understanding the reason why some Haya Christians, apart from their Lutheran basic teaching of conversion which is based on sacramental conversion, still see the necessity of undergoing another conversion outside the parameters of their church conversion orthodoxy, we are faced with the following three questions: Can the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania find a suitable model that will make the Haya Christians (converts) feel at home with Christianity and feel that Christianity is their real religion? What should be the pertinent conversion model that can make the Haya realize the relevant conversion within their churches without necessarily moving out in search of "real" conversion outside their Lutheran Church? Can a conversion model that integrates various forms of Christianity that seem to draw on the Haya religious worldview in their region be helpful in providing a conversion discourse that is relevant to the Haya Lutheran Christians in Northwest Tanzania? This section highlights a conversion model that will seek to make Christian conversion and Christianity in general relevant to the Haya people's Christian life.

### 6.4.1 Integrative Model of Conversion Approach and Missiological Practice

Conversion models that have been discussed in this dissertation such as Holistic model, Stage model, Paul's Damascus Road model and Gradual Conversional model (chapter 2:9) are useful in understanding and explaining some of the dynamics of conversion in various studies. However, none of them helps us in dealing with an approach in conversion. Since our main concern in this study has not been only seeking to understand conversion, but far more, to deal with a suitable approach and methods of conversion, thus, a suitable model that helps in approach is needed.

In this case, I suggest an integrative model of conversion as a most relevant conversion model in our current engagement of Christian mission among the Haya and probably among other Africans who share similar challenges and experiences. An integrative model of conversion is the model that takes into account integrating Haya Traditional spirituality and worldview, the missionary Christianity theology of conversion and the East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic models of conversion<sup>82</sup>. It strongly suggests religio-cultural sensitivity of Haya Traditional religio-cultural spirituality and worldview bearing in mind that people's culture, social systems, rules and structure play a role in realization of authentic conversion within the community in question. It recognizes the role of both continuity and discontinuity of the people's former religio-cultural practices that are strongly immersed within their cultural life and yet accept the power of the Gospel in transforming the community into a life of faith in Jesus Christ.

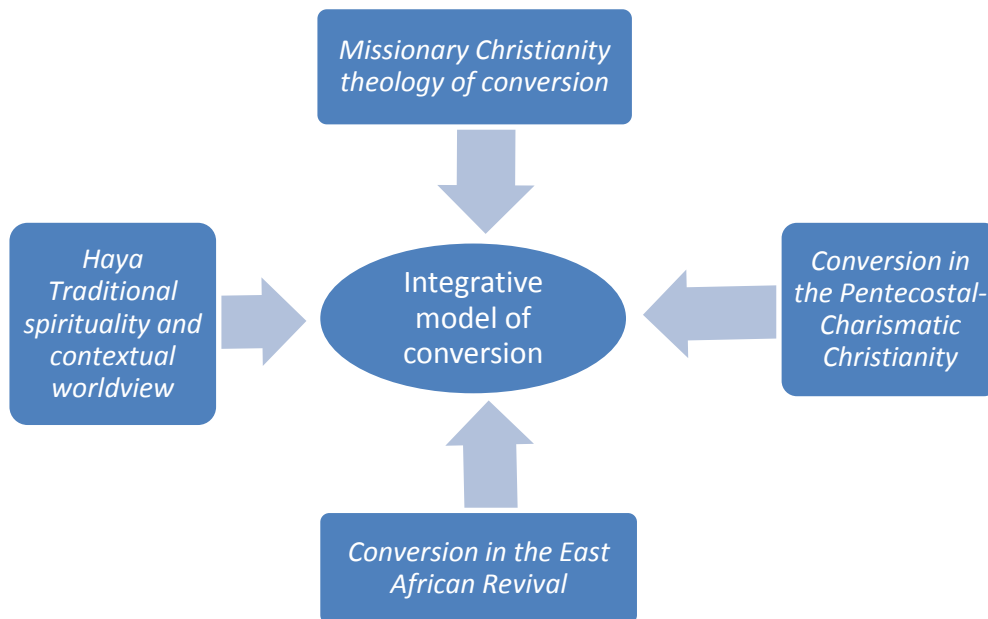
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<sup>82</sup> cf. Henry Mbaya, *The church in Africa dialoging with African cultures: Learning from the African Initiated Churches (AICs)* (2012). Throughout his Paper, Mbaya deals with the question of how the mainline churches in South Africa that have the western expression can be integrated in African context so that it can be fully indigenized. In response to this question, he argues that "the mainline churches in South Africa can enter into dialogue with key elements of African culture and spirituality by learning from the experience of the African Initiated Churches (AIC)" and he suggests a hermeneutical discernment approach bearing in mind strengths and weaknesses from both sides concerned.

The integrative conversional model for that reason, based on structuration theory, suggests the praxis of conversion that draws on Haya Traditional Religion, East African Revival, Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity and missionary model of conversion for the spiritual resources that resonate with their Traditional religiosity and reproduces them in their current Christian life in order to realize a conversion that makes sense to their lives.

The model further suggests that for the meaningful and relevant post missionary conversion methods and approach, the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania should embark on dialogue with Haya Traditional Religion, East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity, to missionary Christianity theology of conversion and without ignoring the contemporary emerging challenges and burning issues in the wider context of Christianity (see the figure below).

***“Integrative model of conversion” for conversion approach and missiological practice***



#### 6.4.1.1 Dialogue: A Contemporary Approach to Conversion in Mission

The question we face in this model is, why dialogue with Haya African Traditional Religion and other Revival movements such as East African Revival Movement and the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement? The reason lies in the fact that dialogue is considered to be a contemporary relevant approach in mission. It is no longer acceptable to impose your religion and doctrines on others with a different faith to yours (Bosch 1991:483-489). We live in a time when we have to be open to learn from others as we interact with other faiths for mutual growth and enrichment<sup>83</sup>. The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) on its recent scholarship conference held from 8-12 March 2010 at Makumira University in Tanzania, discussing the theme “*Mission challenges in the 21st century: empowerment of personnel of the churches*”, concluded by pointing out that dialogue in mission is the best relevant way to approach non-Christian people in our contemporary missionary engagements:

... Dialogue and encounter is a more appropriate way of doing mission in our contemporary times than confrontational approach. This implies sharing and not imposing doctrines. The terms and conditions of encounter and dialogue however need to be redefined from time to time. There is a need to act on mission challenges: active participation of church members is required. Mission must be something that is there as an invitation to take actions and innovations (2010:2-3).

An integrative model of conversion suggests the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania should dialogue with Haya Traditional religious discourse and other forms of Christianity in the region for the mutual sharing, enrichment and growth in striving to pursue, to understand and to live out a Christian conversion that suits people’s religio-cultural context. In this vein, Bosch (1991:417) suggests the conversion that is contextual so as not

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<sup>83</sup> Dialogue in this dissertation does not intend to compromise Christian faith with other faiths in the course of doing mission and replace conversion with dialogue but rather, to be open and humble with readiness to learn from other faiths like African Religion and other forms of Christianity and movements and see what is of relevance that can be integrated in our faith. My position can be partly reflected in the views of Bevans and Schroeder (2011) in *Prophetic dialogue: Reflections on Christian mission today*. These talk of prophetic dialogue which suggests boldness and humility in mission approach. Bosch (1991:489) also sees dialogue in mission as an aspect of not only “humility” but as “bold –humility or a humble boldness.” He writes: “We know only in part, but we do know. And we believe that the faith we profess is both true and just, and should be proclaimed. We do this, however, not as judges, or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers, but envoys of peace; not as high-pressure sales-persons, but as ambassadors of the servant Lord.”

only to avoid conversion to the dominant culture but to call people to the Christ of the Gospel. This suggested new model is considered to be a suitable model for mission among the Haya. Church leaders and theologians are urged to apply it in the missionary field and in the church for the effective and relevant conversion approach in African Christianity as one of the ways of recognizing the reality of both continuity and discontinuity aspects in missiological approach. It is an approach that takes the reality of seeing conversion from both theological and socio-cultural dimensions.

The importance of the integrative model of conversion lies in the fact that it suggests the hermeneutics and ecclesial praxis of conversion that is based on harnessing spirituality and religio-cultural social rules and resources of conversion, from within the framework of Haya Traditional religious spirituality and worldview, missionary Christianity theology of conversion, and East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity through a mutual dialogue.

#### **6.4.1.2 Dialogue with Haya Traditional Religion**

This model requires a missionary to see the importance of harnessing wisdom, religiosity and spirituality embedded within the pre-Christian society where the Gospel is communicated. Thus the approach can profitably effect authentic, viable and relevant conversion that makes sense to indigenous people during the missionization process. All the methods for conversion, therefore, should fall within the wider spectrum of this model of approach in missionization. The model that suits conversion in Haya context should indeed seek to integrate fundamental cultural elements and spirituality that appear critical in the Haya understanding and practice of conversion in their new faith of Christianity.

It is believed that this model will make Haya converts feel at home with Christianity as it should be able to address the Haya ontological religious life as they strive to deepen and intensify their faith in Jesus Christ. The model should be able to address pertinent existential issues in their religious life and should take cognisance of the conceptual worldview of the Haya cosmological perception of reality.



An integrative model of conversion doesn't require the Haya to be converted in the mere sense of the word. The Haya do not have to change their religion to be followers of Christ. As we noticed in chapter three, Haya cultural Traditional Religion is an integral part of their life. For the Haya religion is life. Religion means to them an ontological balance of nature in relation to the Supreme Being – God who is known as *Luhanga*, whose attributes suggest him to be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnicompetent and that He controls everything. He is King of kings, Lord of hosts and the Lord of the universe (*Omukama wa abakama, omukama wa amahe, owamaisho nkolugega, etc.*).

The Haya need to know and experience the power of God in their daily life, His love and the redeeming salvation of Jesus Christ, and remain Haya. They should be brought to Christ and remain Haya. Jesus did not convert Jews or Gentiles to a new religion called Christianity. He called them to follow Him. Paul did not change his religion, but he encountered Christ and remained a Jew. Gentiles according to Paul's Gospel were not supposed to be Jews in order to be converted (cf. Ekenga-Metuh 1987:20). Haya conversion therefore, should not just be a change of religion but a holistic transformation whereby the past is not just negated but viewed in the new way in relation to new faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour (see chapter 2).

The Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania needs to recognize the inevitable influence of other forms of Christianity that appear to indigenize Christianity in mainline Christianity. It is of paramount importance, I suggest, to also drawing on spirituality, wisdom and social structure that resonate with the religious nature and spirituality of the Haya in order to make them comfortable with their conversion in their churches. This does not mean to convert the Haya into African Traditional Religion, but calls the Haya to the conversion of Christ who, apart from being God, agreed to be incarnated in a specific cultural context.

#### **6.4.1.4 Dialogue with East African Revival Movement**

Mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania need a fair mutual dialogue with Revival movements, more especially the East African Revival which historically used to be a

dominant form of revival in the region in order to see what can be integrated in the ecclesial conversion praxis so that the East African Revival remains a church movement and not a movement outside the church.

The church needs to see that the East African Revival, just like other African revival forms of Christianity, are the work of God through His Spirit to not only revive the church, but also indigenize conversion that meets the Haya religious spiritual needs within the framework of Christianity as it contains religious features that resonate with Haya Traditional religious spirituality and worldview. Issues like the significance of blood in reconciliation and cleansing of sins and other evils, the question of a social bond among the saved (*abalokole*), among others, are taken seriously in this spiritual movement (chapter 5:4:2:1).

This should be taken as a point of contact in indigenizing conversion that takes cognizance of Haya religion and culture. Despite some theological weaknesses in this Revival, it has played a significant role in making most Haya Lutherans in Northwest Tanzania relevant as in it they have experienced conversion to Christ and not just conversion to Christianity or liturgical conversion which other scholars have referred to as conversion through socialization, or cultural conversion (chapter 2.8). In other words, though this and other revivals, Christianity has tried to be assimilated within Haya social and cultural life.

#### **6.4.1.3 Dialogue with Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements**

The Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania needs to recognize the paradigm shift from missionary Christianity's conversion, East African Revival to a Pentecostal-Charismatic model of understanding of conversion from an indigenous perspective. As was found previously in chapter five, this form of Christianity provides an arena for the Haya to experience conversion that addresses their existential crises within their spiritual ontological worldview. Existential issues such as fear of witchcraft, dreams, ancestors, curses, among many, are dealt with through prayers and applying the blood and Name of

Jesus Christ. These are some of the aspects that missionary Christianity and the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania have not been able to adequately address.

For effective conversion in the mainline churches, therefore, there must be a mutual dialogue whereby the Lutheran Church is open and willing to learn and if need be to integrate some elements of spirituality and practices found in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity so that conversion that makes sense to Haya Christians can be effected. As Brighton Kataro (2011:3) has recently observed, the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania needs to be open for criticism and challenges from what seems to be the strength of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and learn from what is of relevance, and if need be to share with them what appears to be deficient in their theological contents. This will lead to the efficacy of conversion that suits the Haya and probably other Africans who share similar situations.

Once again, as was argued previously, engaging dialogue with the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity with regard to conversion will help the Haya Lutheran church in Northwest Tanzania to understand that these African spiritual movements and churches are the ongoing process of indigenizing the missionary Christianity into African religion hence, finally, to fully actualize what Andrew Walls (1996) refers to when he speaks of Christianity in Africa as an African Religion.

#### **6.4.1.5 Dialogue with Missionary Christianity's Theology of Conversion**

The study has observed in chapter five that the theology of missionary Christianity conversion was both theologically right and biblically grounded, but the problems were based on the approach that made conversion presented by missionary Christianity religious irrelevant to most Haya converts. The mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania should therefore retain their fundamental teachings on conversion and indigenize them within the Haya religio-cultural context to make them relevant to the Haya Christians.

The question of identity is very important. The Haya Lutherans should remain part of their history and maintain their identity as Lutherans and other church members in the mainline

churches should do the same, but for the sake of growth and maturity they should be critical of themselves lest they remain slaves to, and entangled in, their history and tradition. They need to constantly redefine and revisit their tradition and history so that these meet their current needs and serve them accordingly as they experience their joy of conversion and salvation. There is a need for the Haya Christians to integrate missionary theology of conversion with their religio-cultural frame of reference without ignoring modern trends and influences that also give meaning to the present phenomenon based on past experience. The discourse of re-evangelization needs to be a continuous process in order to internalize faith in Jesus Christ among the Haya Christians. As we pointed out in chapter two, believers in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania should constantly be reminded to turn from extrinsic to intrinsic faith, since we noted that conversion cannot be limited to a single event but can also be a continuous process.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In chapter six I attempted to analyze general findings in the previous chapters by applying structuration theory and some theological aspects of conversion. It was found that the Haya continue to adopt conversion that resonates with their religio-cultural spirituality and worldview as they draw on resources and rules from their cultural context to make sense of conversion that fits their worldview. It was argued that missionary Christianity's approach and methods not only exposed them to western civilization and modernity whereby social change in the Haya was experienced, but it also exposed them to the Gospel.

We have also found that the Haya's interpretation and realization of conversion which, according to their conversion narratives, was not determined by missionaries' catechetical teaching on conversion through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, but also their Traditional Religion and culture provides rules and resources to make sense of their conversion. Therefore, East African Revival and Charismatic Revival have attempted to indigenize their conversion since these kinds of Christianity, as many African scholars have observed, succeeded in drawing on African spirituality and worldview whereby African existential issues are also addressed through their theology and praxis.

The next chapter marks the conclusion containing a summary, recommendations and suggestions which post missionary Christianity in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania need to apply in order to accommodate conversion that will make sense to most of the Haya and indeed probably other Africans elsewhere that share a similar socio-cultural contextual milieu.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

#### 7.1. Introduction

This section marks the conclusion of the entire dissertation. It gives the general summary of the research problems, hypothesis, questions, methodology, debate, discussions and findings around the research topic. The chapter finally suggests the pertinent recommendations and suggestions about the conversion that suits the Haya in relation to an African worldview in order to foster effectiveness in our contemporary missionary engagement as we seek to faithfully respond to God's call of making all peoples disciples of Jesus Christ. The future research is also suggested and concluding remarks are finally made.

#### 7.2 Summary of the Dissertation

Throughout the dissertation I have explored the question of conversion in missionary Christianity, Northwest Tanzania: the methods and the impacts on Haya Christian life. The main question has been why Christians (converts) in the Lutheran church in Northwest Tanzania find the conversion model advocated by their churches inadequate and thus tend to seek conversion outside their respective churches, especially within Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. And those who do not do that remain with a dual religious personality. These find solutions for their religious problems in the African Traditional religious system. To these, it is as if missionary Christianity has never made a significant impact on their spiritual lives.

The assumption was that the reason for diversification of understanding of the nature of conversion among the Haya Christians of Northwest Tanzania, the actualization of conversion outside the Lutheran Church's normal theological orthodoxy of conversion, and the switching out of mainline Christianity to the Revival and spiritual movements and

Pentecostal-Charismatic churches is in part related to the approach and methods of conversion that was applied by missionary Christianity in the course of missionising the Haya people. It was also assumed that the problem prevails until today due to the fact that mainline churches still apply the same missionary Christianity methods and approach of conversion that do not adequately address the Haya ontological Traditional religious life.

It was further assumed that the conversion that was applied by missionaries did not achieve the intended goal for it did not, and perhaps even today still doesn't, apply both relevant missiological and biblical principles. The methods applied were more a western cultural, modernization and imperialistic approach that did not take seriously into account the spiritual dimension and African cultural-religious spirituality and worldview of the Haya Christians. Hence the reality of continuity and discontinuity was generally overlooked and therefore a failure by most western missionaries in the area to see the Haya Traditional religious discourse as a *praeparatio evangelica*.

The study has made use of integrated interdisciplinary missiological research that applies the convergence of missiological and sociological theory (Wan 2003:8-10). Drawing on a sociology theory of structuration of a famous sociologist, Anthony Giddens, and at times drawing on socio-anthropology, missiological and missionary historiographical insights, the study has employed an interdisciplinary approach whereby the whole dissertation has been divided into seven chapters.

In the first place, whilst chapter one has worked as an introductory chapter, chapter two has been a foundational chapter of the study whereby the theoretical scaffolding matrix of conversion from an interdisciplinary perspective has been constructed in order to lay a foundation for the entire dissertation discussion and analysis. Thus, understanding of conversion from biblical-missiological, theological, socio-anthropological, and missio-sociological perspective has been examined. In this line, theories, patterns and models of conversion have been identified and highlighted.

We have further in chapter three examined the Haya culture in context. The Haya people's religion, culture and spirituality, among other things, have been extensively researched and discussed. It was argued in this part of the research that Haya Traditional Religion played a central role in their lives as it was the life and soul of their being. It was also argued that Haya Traditional Religion was a *praeparatio evangelica* that was preparing them for the Gospel of Christ presented in missionary Christianity.

It has consequently been brought to our attention through discussion that Haya Traditional Religion and conceptual worldview take the issue of spirituality very seriously and that for them religion is a totality of life, thus, dichotomizing, departmentalization or demarcation between spiritual and temporal, sacred and profane, among others, is unintelligible. We ascertained that the Haya religious conceptual worldview and the ontology of life inherently embrace both the spiritual and physical world and in a sense the spiritual world controls the physical world.

Accordingly, we suggested that for any missionary conversion approach to the Haya to be relevant and meaningful to them it should have taken their religio-cultural spiritual conceptual worldview seriously in order, among other things, to establish affinities that would act as a foundation for the missionaries to effect conversion that would be sensible and relevant to the Haya. Therefore for the Haya, and indeed for the Africans, both continuity and discontinuity during early missionization of the Haya was a necessity rather than an option. Thus, any conversional model that could act as an imposition on the new religion, Christianity, at the expense of the perversion of Haya religio-cultural roots would be unappealing to most Haya converts.

I have further explored in the fourth chapter how missionary Christianity brought the Gospel to the Haya and how western missionaries in particular converted the Haya to Christianity. It has been ascertained that Christianity among the Haya community was brought with colonial imperialism and western religio-cultural influences that informed the missionaries' conversion methods and approach which from the outset, aimed at uprooting Haya primal religion and replacing it with Christianity that had a western



missionary outlook. It was found that missionary Christianity's cultural influence was accompanied by the effect of enlightenment, rational renaissance and other scientific discoveries such as Darwin's theory of evolution and a quasi-scientific worldview that had influenced them with regard to rationalization of every sphere of life. For this reason they considered African spirituality that was based on spirits and ancestral veneration devilish and demonic because they could not be rationally tested and explicated.

While some missionaries saw the necessity of learning and inculturating Christianity into African soil, the majority of them overlooked this important aspect in evangelization of the Haya people. It was also disclosed that the way Christianity was conveyed to the Haya by western missionaries almost amounted to westernization, cultural imperialism, and it was closely linked with western education, western names, new ways of dressing and a new religion, to mention but a few.

The research has, however, demonstrated that the missionary Christianity conversion approach was also important to the Haya community as it had some positive aspects that cannot be underestimated. It brought about social change in the Haya society that exposed the Haya to modernity and globalization. Through the contact with western missionaries and through the missionary Christianity approach and methods such as using some social services and infrastructure like education, hospitals, literacy and new ways of life accompanied by new ways of dressing and new names, just to mention some, the Haya accessed new ways of life that include modern medicine, different kinds of skills, and formal education that were instrumental for the future socio-economic transformation of the Haya people and the wider society in the country. As Morton's theory of intellectualist would put it, the Haya moved from microcosm to macrocosm (Hanciles 2004:160-161).

In the fifth chapter I have also investigated the Haya responses towards missionary Christianity's conversion methods and approach. These responses are categorized at two levels. The first level is the earlier response and later response. The earlier response is based on the Haya uncritical reaction to the introduction of Christianity among them and the later response is based on their critical reaction based on their conceptual creativity in

attempting to indigenize conversion that resonates with their religio-cultural spirituality and worldview.

In doing so we answered the question of why Christians who are converted within the Lutheran church in the Northwest Tanzania within the church's conversion orthodoxy framework find this conversion inadequate and so go for another conversion advocated within the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. We unpacked that the missionary and post missionary orthodoxy teachings on conversion within the Lutheran Church and how they were presented and continue to be presented, to a great extent, do not make sense to most of the Haya ordinary Christians. The influence of Haya Traditional Religion and cultural spirituality on their understanding of conversion was also discussed. Eventually the place of the East African Revival Movement and Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in indigenizing missionary Christianity conversion through its theology, structuring and shaping Haya conversion was also unpacked.

The missionary conversion methods and approach and both the Haya's earlier and later responses to the missionaries' methods and approach were analyzed in chapter six within the framework of both misiological and structuration theory. We argued in this section that Haya religio-cultural context constitutes social systems and structure from which Haya converts within their mainline churches draw on spiritual recourses and rules in realizing conversion that makes sense according to their worldview. The Haya understanding of conversion is not only determined by the missionary Christianity methods and approach, or by the catechetical teachings that are embedded in the theology of conversion as was presented by missionaries, but also social systems and structures of where Haya Christians belong to a certain degree shape and structure Christian conversion within the Haya cultural system.

As many Haya joined Christianity through cultural conversion, mass conversion, medical work, education, material incentives, liturgical and other modern ways of life, it was apparent that in the initial stage of its introduction, conversion was more cultural and accessing modernity and less religious, leading to superficial Christianity and hence a dual

religious personality of the Christian converts. This dualism was manifested especially when dealing with existential crises that needed a religious solution. The missionary Christianity approach, thus, did not touch the hearts of most of the Haya as did not take into account the Haya spirituality and religio-cultural worldview.

The study has revealed that it is true that missionary conversion among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania to some Haya Christians seems to lack authenticity and relevance for it does not strictly take into account the cultural and spiritual nature of the Haya people. Hence, it is argued that the first interpretive (working) hypothesis in our study indicates to be both right and wrong:

*Since mission Christianity conversion was introduced and applied among the Haya people being accompanied by western cultural worldviews and values, it was perceived to be more cultural conversion and less religious conversion leading to negative consequences for their Christian life.*

While it is true that missionary Christianity conversion approach and methods were seen as more of a cultural conversion and accessing modern ways of life as we have seen in this study, it has also been established in the study that it accelerated social change and exposed Haya people to western education and medicine, just to mention some, that were instrumental in their future development in terms of religion and socio-political life.

Hence it is not true that all the consequences of missionary Christianity were negative for Haya Christian life. The weakness of missionary Christianity as was pointed out in chapter three, mainly lies in its inability to adequately address the Haya religio-cultural worldview that incorporates both physical and metaphysical dimensions in their religious discourse.

This inadequacy led some Haya converts to convert within the Revival, especially the East African Revival Movement and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity in order to experience a “real conversion”, since this form of Christianity addresses fundamental

ontological questions of the Haya that are rooted within their spiritual and physical worldview. Thus, this form of conversion appears relevant and meaningful to most of the Haya Christians who undergo its experience. The East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity attempt to provide an arena for indigenizing conversion among the Haya, as issues related to the Haya ontological worldview are addressed.

It has been argued, however, that conversion in both the East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity should not be seen as absolute. The conversion within these spiritual movements and churches still needs theological and critical evaluation for Haya converts in these movements do not regard seriously the basic church teachings as important for their conversion. Hence, as Mbaya (2012:12) has recently put it, they seem to “lack doctrinal stability”. The dialogue and incorporation, or rather integration, of some of the spiritual dimensions and structures from these movements and other forms of Christianity into mainline church basic teachings and structure should, therefore, be more desirable than adopting everything from them.

The analysis of the whole study through engaging structuration theory has conclusively unfolded that the tendency of most of the Haya seeking to realize what to them seems to be a “real” or authentic conversion in the Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity is an ongoing Haya activity in attempting to indigenize conversion that addresses Haya ontology of their religio-cultural context. The study has ascertained that the interpretation of conversion that makes sense to the Haya was not only determined by western missionaries, but the socio-cultural system and structure where Haya people belong, as these systems and structure, according to Anthony Giddens (1984), constitute resources and rules which Haya Christians have drawn on to actualize the conversion that meets their existential religious needs. In other words, it was maintained that Haya are not only converted to Christianity through missionary Christianity activity, but their social system and structure to which they belong reproduces within their Christianity to make sense of their conversion. Hence this understanding indicates that our second hypothesis was right:

*The Haya's perception of indigenous religion as a totality of life that incorporates one's whole existence has moulded their perception of strict religious adherence, and is continuing to impact and shape their inception and perception of Christian conversion in general and Christian life in particular.*

### **7.3. Recommendations and Suggestions**

Pertinent recommendations and suggestions requires providing fundamental remarks for mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania in particular and Tanzania in general to apply conversional approach and methods that will take into account a multidimensional approach in order to present a conversion that is contextual, biblical, theological, universal and yet make sense to the Haya.

This observation leads us to suggest that if conversion among Africans in general and in this case among the Haya of Northwest Tanzania is to be relevant to the indigenous Christians, it needs to be contextually and culturally indigenized. Any endeavour to introduce conversion should take into account their strict spirituality in their primal religion, as noted in chapter three of this dissertation, without ignoring other forms of Christianity in the area that seem to play a significant role in indigenizing Christianity within the local and cultural context of the people. As was noted in the previous pages, the old plays a significant role in the realization of the new, and Haya Christians need to realize the contemporary conversion discourse based on their worldview and social cultural primal religious frame of reference which does not dichotomize spiritual and temporal, metaphysical and physical, sacred and profane, secular and religious matters among others.

As Pretorius (1983:42-43) suggests, peoples worldview shouldn't be underestimated in the continuing task of evangelization that is preaching, demonstrating and witnessing the gospel within the peoples contextual worldview. He nevertheless, warns that the proclamation should not address the African worldview as such but those elements within the contents of the worldview which are at variance with the biblical message. So he

suggests that the gospel should be communicated in such a way that Jesus Christ is declared to be the centre and Lord of their worldview.

While agreeing with Pretorius views, I suggest that conversion among the Haya, and Christianity in general should be articulated in such a way that its actual realization goes beyond the formalized creeds and catechism recited during Baptism and Confirmation classes and services. Christian conversion among the Haya should be indigenized within the Haya religio-cultural spiritual and contextual frame of reference. Christian conversion methods are not only supposed to take into account the Haya ontological and cosmological worldview in addressing adequately the Haya existential issues such as curses, barrenness, agricultural challenges, poverty, sickness, model of worship, but also their conceptual understanding of God and the way they approach him have to be religio-culturally contextualized all together. Contrary to that, un-contextualized and un-indigenized inherited missionary Christianity methods and models of conversion approach will for a long time continue to yield nominal Christians among the Haya Christians, which will continue to have undesired impacts on their spiritual aspects of their lives.

Since religion for the Haya and Africans in general is not only rational and cognitive but also experiential and interventional (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2003, Lugazia 2010), a space should be given in the Lutheran church in Northwest Tanzania to allow for the experience of God's love, revelation, prayers for healing, intervention and experience of the power of the Holy Spirit as is the case in the revival movements and Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement where they move to for "reconversion" when mainline churches fail to offer such a kind of experiential Christianity<sup>84</sup>. Since this suggestion, doesn't mean copying

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<sup>84</sup>Asamoah-Gyadu (2003:76) affirms that Pentecostal Christianity where Haya mainline Christians move to for reconversion is featured by its ability to affirm the reality of God and other supernatural entities. He points out that "[d]emons who seek to destroy the Christian and angels as transcendental helpers both feature in the Pentecostal worldview." He therefore sees that one of the reasons that makes revival Christianity and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity appear relevant among many Africans lies in the fact that like Traditional Religion, it has the ability to offer personal support in times of sickness or ill health and is thus one of the main reasons for the popularity of the movement in Africa. This view is not different to what Allan Anderson (2011:66-67) observes when he maintains that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity does well among Africans because they claim a pragmatic gospel in which they seek to address what he calls practical and contextual issues like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery. Anderson sees that in this form of Christianity in different ways and through their inherent flexibility, they seem to offer "answers to some of the fundamental questions asked in their own context. A

everything from this movements and form of Christianity, it should be done so with much care and theological scrutiny whereby a fair balance between experiential and cognitive dimension of conversion shall be maintained.

The mainline church missionary endeavours along with social services should go hand in hand with spiritual re-evangelization as a way of internalization of Christian faith among the Haya. If conversion and Christianity among the Haya are to be relevant, as I argued elsewhere, it should take into account Haya religiosity and spirituality which is manifested in the experience of power and spiritual gifts in the Haya primal religion and also appears in the revivals and Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements. It is believed that this will minimize the tendency of the Haya Christians to switch away from their respective mother churches seeking another conversion.

Conversion among the Haya therefore, and indeed among the Africans, should not be conversion to a new religion called Christianity, but rather conversion to Christ. Conversion to Christ will make Haya people experience the grace of salvation of Jesus Christ and have an intimate relationship with him and by the power of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Haya African spirituality and worship styles of emotional expressions of joy and dancing should be incorporated in the mainline churches as one aspect of contextualization and inculturation of Christianity in the Haya cultural life.

#### **7.4 Conversion and Future Research**

Conversion is a complex phenomenon. It is multifaceted, multidimensional, and paradoxical and understood differently by different groups (Rambo 1993:176). Due to this fact, no-one can claim to have studied conversion comprehensively. My major concern in this research has been to explore conversion in a specific geographical part of Africa, Northwest Tanzania, with the aim of investigating Haya conversion in relation to approach and methods of missionary Christianity. Along with what has been ascertained and recommended, my research has tried to explain from a missiological - sociological

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sympathetic approach to a local culture and the retention of certain cultural practices are undoubtedly major reasons for their attraction.”

intergrative approach on how conversion in Northwest Tanzania especially among the Haya is being indigenized within the East Africa Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

Hence, firstly, I suggest that in the context of sociological and missiological intergrative approach the future research can mainly try to focus around conversion narrative stories and social change in a different cultural and religious tradition and try to find out, how culture and society impact the indigenious converts' traditional discourse of conversion apart from missionaries' transmission of the gospel to the indigenious people.

Secondly, among the Haya the future research can also focus more on how Haya in the Lutheran church and probably in the other main line churches in the region can indigenize liturgy and other forms of worship such that to these Christian converts Christianity will be fully realized as their true religion. The church's focus should be to have converts who feel at home with their Christianity and see that in Christianity they have met Jesus as their Lord and Saviour of their lives and that indeed He is enough not only for their spiritual life, but also their physical life thus, a realization of Christ's desired total transformation of His people in all areas of life such as religious, social and economic welfare.

I believe that Africa and African Christians need liminal Christians, missionaries, church leaders and theologians who will be able to read signs of times and see what God is doing in Africa through his Holy Spirit in indigenizing Christianity in general and conversion in particular through Revival and the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement and provide critical theological explanations in an integrative approach that will lead the church to remain both theologically and spiritually grounded by taking seriously into account the African conceptual worldview and frame of reference.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The study has been wrestling with the question of conversion in missionary Christianity, Northwest Tanzania especially, in the area of conversion methods and impacts on the



Haya Christian life. The entire dissertation has pointed out these methods and their shortfalls in addressing adequately the Haya religio-cultural worldview. This has been found to be the major reason for most Haya Christians finding the missionary Christianity conversion model and approach inadequate and therefore resorting to Haya Traditional beliefs, especially during existential crises and going for re-conversion to African revival movements and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. Suggestions for the African Christianity conversion approach that suits the Haya cosmological and religio-cultural understanding of religion and spirituality has been pointed out in this research.

The study finally suggests that the sociological theory of structuration, in an interdisciplinary study of conversion, provides a useful tool in attempting to understand the dynamics of conversion among the Haya within the Lutheran Church in Northwest Tanzania, along with their tendencies to actualize their “real” conversion within the revivalistic or Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. The research finally proposes an integrative model of conversion as a most relevant conversional approach and method in our contemporary missionary preoccupation and engagement as it suggests the practice and hermeneutics of ecclesiological conversion, which suggests harnessing spirituality and religio-cultural rules and resources of conversion from within the framework of Haya Traditional Religion, missionary Christianity, East African Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity through a mutual dialogue.

It is believed that the future of Haya conversion in their current and future Christianity is certainly going to be determined by the Haya themselves through the realization of conversion that suits their conceptual worldview. The East African Movement and Pentecostal-Charismatic revivalism provide an arena for the ongoing indigenization of conversion in which converts felt more at home than in the formalized and systemized methods of missionary Christianity presented within western cultural approach and within the spectrum of catechetical presentation.

The study calls for theologians and church leaders to engage more on a contextual praxis that meets the religious and existential needs of people in a given socio-cultural context

rather than maintaining the missionary conversion approach that seems irrelevant to most Haya Christians and non-Christians as well. On the other hand the question of retaining traditional identity of a denomination and basic teaching of mainline churches in Northwest Tanzania is central; however, theologians and church leaders should admit that there are inevitable changes that require redefining and reinterpretation of traditions to suit the needs of people and respond to the current challenges and questions that people have. They should always try to avoid remaining in the prison of traditions that seem to make little sense to people involved. Traditions need to be regarded as important as long they significantly serve to the needs of people in a given context and time and not vice versa. From our discussion in the dissertation we can make a case that conversion should therefore be transformative, liberative and redemptive for the individual Christian believer, as well as the entire community of all believers within time and space based on both the present and in the eschatological discourses of life realities.

Finally, I should point out that I believe and hope that this study that has been conducted within this specific part of Africa (Northwest Tanzania) will be a viable contribution to the scholarly work on understanding conversion dynamics in the Lutheran Church, Northwest Tanzania in particular and in the wider community of other mainline churches in Africa that share similar context regarding conversion and the rapid growth of Revival and Pentecostal-Charismatic forms of Christianity.

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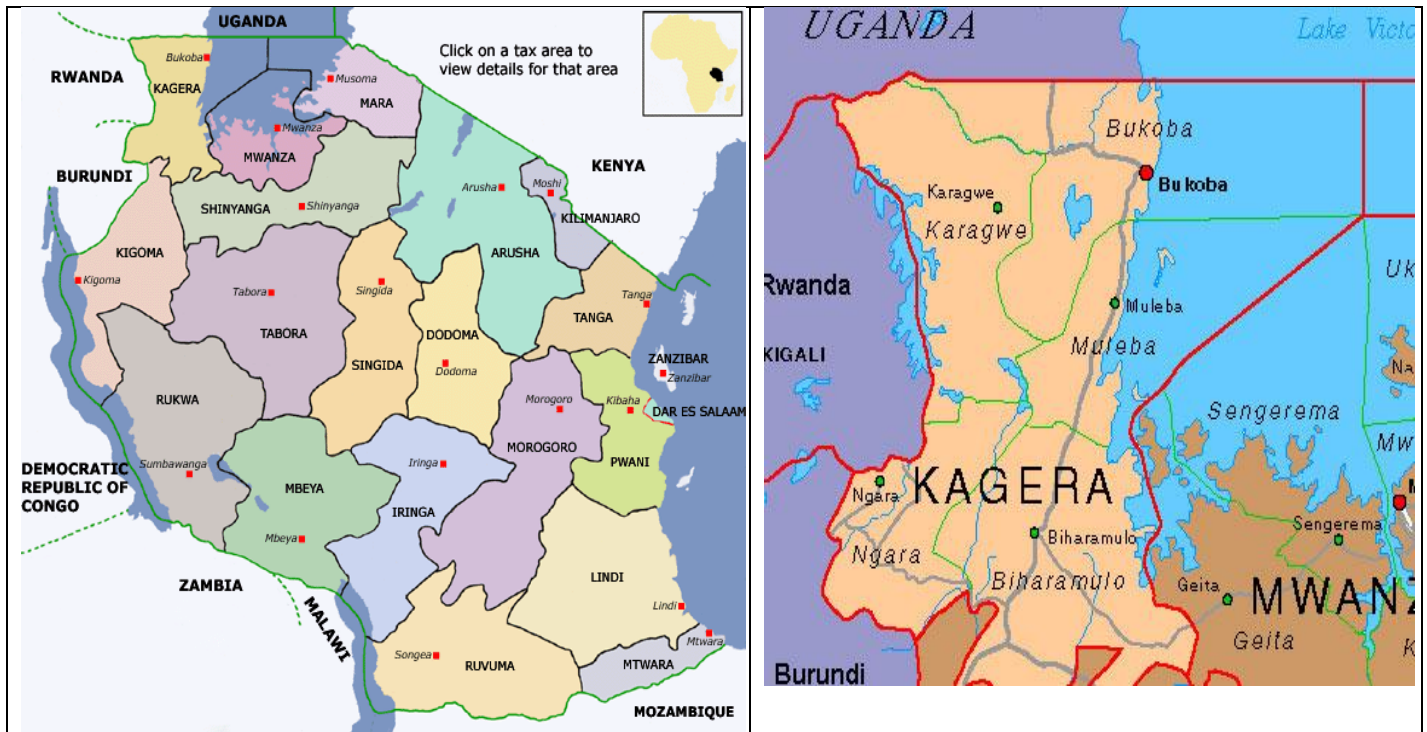


## APPENDIXES

### Table of Maps

Figure 1.

*Map of Tanzania, showing Kagera Region, Northwest Tanzania where Haya people inhabit and the study was carried out.*

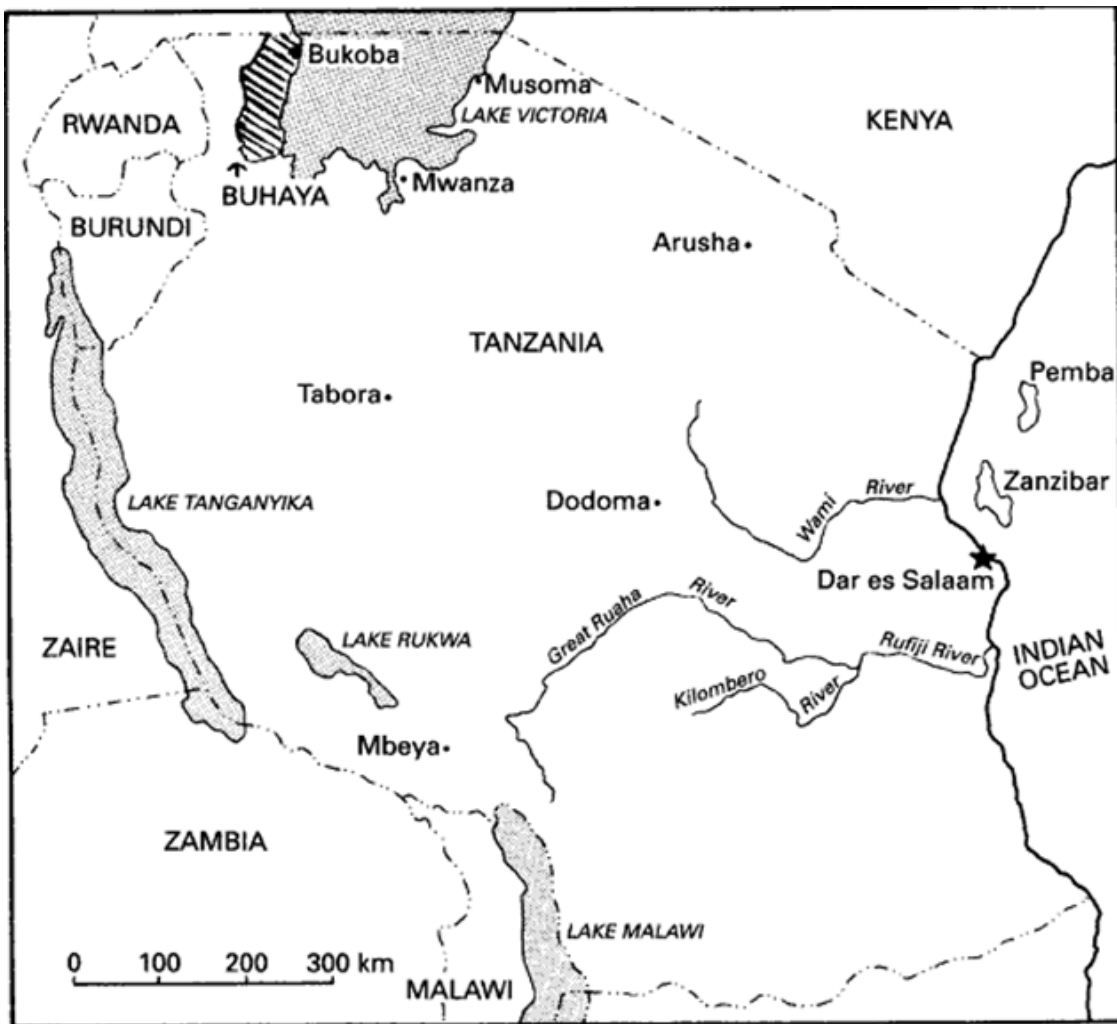


Source: <http://www.tra.go.tz/regions.htm>

<http://www.tanzania.gov.tz/census/maps/kagera.gif> (visited on 12/8/2010)

Figure 2.

**Map of Tanzania showing Buhaya (a geographical area of study) in the Northwest Tanzania.**



Source : Schmidt, P.R. (1997:394)