

# **Approaches to Christianization among the Ewe People of Ghana**

**Delanyo Tsidi Besah Adadevoh**

**The University Of Leeds**

**(Oxford Centre For Mission Studies)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a contribution to the Christianization debate. Christianization here addresses the impact on peoples and their culture resulting from the interaction between Christianity and other religions, particularly the African Traditional Religions (ATRs). This work is necessary because there is evidence that Christianity has not deeply transformed the lives of Africans. Christians are reported to still go to the traditional religious and other sources for solutions to their practical life problems. Another concern is the dichotomy in Western Christian Theology which separates the spiritual from other aspects of life. Africans are calling for a Christianity that inter-relates and transforms all aspects of human life – spiritual, social and material. A third reason is that Africans are revisiting the subject because of their own involvement in taking the Christian message to other lands. How should African Christianity engage other religious and cultural understandings without imposing African values unnecessarily on those other cultures? Finally, there are concerns about the biblical soundness of African Christianity in light of the interest in de-Westernizing, and Africanizing Christianity. This research engages in this discussion by studying some approaches to Christianization among the Ewe people of Ghana. The lessons learned contribute to proposals on approaches to Christianization in a religiously plural Africa and world.

‘Approaches to Christianization’ addresses how selected Ewe Christians propose for the Ewe traditional religious and biblical understandings of concepts to interact. To explore these approaches, it was deemed necessary to apply consistently a selected hermeneutical conceptual tool in interpreting the works of the selected Ewe Christians, and in investigating how they propose for the Ewe traditional religious and biblical understandings to interact with one another.

The Theory of Communicative Action was selected as a hermeneutical tool for interpreting the works of the selected Ewe Christians because it seeks to understand utterances through understanding the author. Unlike the romanticist approach of Schleiermacher, the Theory of Communicative Action seeks to understand the author in the context of the communities of which he is a part. This was considered more appropriate to the African setting in which the individual’s identity is tied with the community of which he/she is a part.

In exploring the factors that contribute to the differences in the approaches preferred by the selected Ewe Christians to Christianization, it was deemed helpful to ensure they were all from the same ethnic and denominational background. The study also gave preference to Christianization of concepts of salvation for a common theme. As such, this study has explored the similarities and differences in the Christianization methods of Rev. Prof. Christian Gaba, Rev. Prof. Noah Dzobo, Rev. Dr. Elom Dovlo and Dr. Wilson Awasu as well as their influencing factors, having eliminated differences that would be due to ethnic, denominational or religious thematic factors.

The study also raises questions regarding the equality of the standards employed by the Ewe Christians in interacting with the biblical and Ewe or African traditional religious sources as part of the interpretation process. The study itself proposes a new approach to Christianization that ensures equality of standards in interacting with and interpreting biblical and traditional religious sources as part of the Christianization process.