

The Worship of the Biblical God in the Contemporary Times by the Indigenous Turkana Converts to Roman Catholic Christianity, in North-Western Kenya

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Abstract: This study examined the authentic God that the Indigenous Turkana converts to Roman Catholic Christianity (RCC) worship in the contemporary time. Christianity is one of the Religions of the Book. This is the Bible that is constituted by the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) sacred texts. The background of this worship has its roots in the adoration of Turkana indigenous God, *Akuj*, and Yahweh of OT that has been shifted by RCC to the worship of Jesus in the Trinity, in the NT. Hebrew Religion (of OT) has tremendous and profound influence on RCC (of NT) which the Turkana converts to it worship its God, Yahweh. This belief has been brought to reality by the arrival and expansion of European Roman Catholic Christian missionaries in Turkanaland early 1960s and after Kenya gained independence in 1963. Gradually, over time, Catholic beliefs and values exerted an incessant influence and impact and they are diffused and infiltrated into Turkana indigenous beliefs, practices, values and culture. This study draws upon the worship of the “new” inculturated biblical God by the converted indigenous nomadic Turkana persons to “new” religion, RCC.

Key words: *Akuj*, Yahweh, Turkana, Hebrew, Indigenous, Religion, Christianity, OT, NT

I. INTRODUCTION

The ancestral home of the indigenous Turkana tribe¹ is the arid and semi-arid region of North-Western Kenya, in Sub-Saharan Africa. They are Nilo-nomadic pastoralists whose livelihood and wealth are the “adored” domestic animals. In its very origin, their religion is indigenous, with its essential components being God (*Akuj*), venerated ancestors, Turkana indigenous man and the indigenous universe.

There are major basic religious elements and components of the indigenous Turkana people that are similar to OT Hebrews. They share a monotheistic belief in *One God*² as

¹ As per language and tribe is concerned, Turkana indigenous community is homogenous.

² C/f. Barret, A. J., Dying and Death among the Turkana. *Spearhead* 97 (1987) 10. Also see the definition of monotheism in Fisher, M. P., *Religionen Heute*. Köln: Könenmann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1999, 52. It is defined as: *Das Glaubenskonzept, daß es nur einen Gott gibt* (the concept that holds the belief in only one God). For a detailed analysis of the concept of monotheism in religions, esp. among the Hebrews, see Figl, J., *Got – monotheistisch*, in: Figl, J., (Hg.), *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft*. Religionen und ihre zentralen Themen. Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2003, 545-558.

practised in their respective religious, cultural and social functions.³ This belief in one God is enshrined in their respective original teachings and beliefs in God: *Yahweh* and *Akuj*. The indivisibility, unchanging, eternity, sovereignty and uniqueness of the *Oneness of God* has been demonstrated and singled out evidently by the fact that the only Supreme Being worshiped by these two human communities never had a child or family whatsoever.⁴ The other resemblance is seen in the geographical features of their respective environment; they live in the wilderness and the nomadic shepherds life styles. These conditions are hard since “In the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes.”⁵

Akuj is the original heritage and ancestral God of Turkana people before the arrival of RCC in Turkanaland. The “new” God that the Turkana Roman Catholic Christians (TRCC) worship today, in the contemporary time, is evolving and keeps on changing and being shaped by absorbing, to its liturgical system, some unique divine characteristics of the indigenous Turkana God, *Akuj*. Christianity in Turkanaland, through Inculturation⁶ of the liturgy, has assimilated a wide range of Turkana indigenous beliefs, rituals, practices and customs into their liturgical worship and other religious rituals. Consequently, the current image of God as taught by

³ C/f. Trigg, R., *Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 91-95.

⁴ In some diverse religious traditions of the world, one finds manifold families of gods with wives and children. Concretely, in the household of the nine Egyptian primeval gods, is the family of Isis who was the goddess of the sky, bore a son called Horus to her husband Osiris, the god of the underworld.

⁵ Oesterley, W. O. E., *et.al. Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*. London: S.P.C.K, 1955, 167. This is also dealt with in Gen. 31: 40.

⁶ Inculturation is a tool used by Christians as a medium to incorporate, adopt and assimilate some Turkana beliefs into the Christian liturgy and other rituals. In the 21st century the term evolved to be what it is through the progressive development from the terms acculturation, enculturation, as well as adaptation, indigenization, contextualization or accommodation. They are terms that were trying to establish or fix Christianity permanently in the culture that it meets. In so doing, Christianity struggles to find ways of accommodating itself in every culture in which it is born, thus ending up assimilating into its beliefs, practices and liturgy “pagan” ways of life, rituals, beliefs and practices. For a detailed study on *Inculturation* see AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), *AFER 100* (1980) 321-400.

the “new” religion⁷, RCC, and embraced by Turkana converts to it is that of the god Jesus professed in the *Trinity*.

Therefore, RCC is “here to stay” in Turkana land, and continue to grow while Turkana Indigenous Religion (TIR) shrinks systematically in the course of time. This has been brought to reality by the invincible contemporary religio-politico-socio ineludible factors and other changes that are undesirably exploding exponentially in Turkana land affecting TIR. They include the effects of religious and social interactions of TIR and culture with immigrants’ ethnic and cultural diversities; missionary work and processes of inculturating the liturgy; translation of English Bible⁸ to Turkana language; the use of English, Latin and Kiswahili languages in liturgical functions; current existing non-indigenous leadership styles; rapid urbanization and industrialization; and formal education system. Thus, resulting in combined blended and sustenance factors affecting Turkana Indigenous Culture and Religion, consequently Turkana heritage.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to arrive at the desired conclusion, this paper employs a systematic analysis of secondary data that are related to this study, by exploring a repository of books.

Turkana Roman Catholic Christians in Turkana land

The colonialists made Turkana land a “closed” area to the rest of the Kenyans and the world, thus retaining its 100% indigeneity and identity. It was in 1956 that African Inland Mission, used their religious “keys” and “miracles” to be the first Christian pioneers to “open up” the doors of the colonial isolated region. It was then that other Christian branches found their ways into Turkana land.⁹

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Lodwar was established in Turkana land by the Roman See in 1969. Since then, the number of TRCC has “tremendously” increased and established itself in this semi-arid land. The leading witness to this is the creation of the main diocesan Church, St. Augustine Cathedral, in Lodwar town with her head, the bishop, living within the same “city”.¹⁰ The Diocese of Lodwar asserts that

The Catholic Church started the work of evangelization in what is now the Diocese of Lodwar 50 years ago. Turkana has 77,000 km² and a total population of 860,000 people, of whom 60% are nomad pastoralists

⁷ C/f. Esposito, J., *et.al. Word Religions Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 499-500.

⁸ In this study, all Biblical quotations are taken from Wansbrough, H., (Ed.), *The New Jerusalem Bible*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1985.

⁹ C/f. Baur, J., *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History* 62-1992. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, 476-477. In 1956 when the missionaries opened the closed doors of Turkana land, the indigenous people of the land opened the doors of their traditional indigenous religion, heritage and culture to the world. Since then, the TIR continue losing its indigenous originality and identity.

¹⁰ C/f. Baur, J., *The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History*. Nairobi: St. Paul Communications. 1990, 155-159.

and most of them illiterate. Around 30% of them are considered Catholic; although the number of registered baptized are approximately 100,000 people.¹¹

The initial material baits used by the Catholic Church to convert the indigenous Turkana people to its faith, were the provisions and supplying them with basic necessities such as food, medicine, education, and clothing. The converts were indoctrinated to belief that the Trinity is the only true Provider *Akuj* and Lord of all creatures to be worshiped, as recorded in the Turkana Missal.

*Ee, Akuj naipolokinit ibore daang naiyei nabo jiiik, na nyedaun, Iyong ka Lokookon kanabo Etau lo asegan, erai Akuj apei, Ekapolon epei.*¹²

Further, the missal prays thus

*Ee Akuj Apa Kosi, ibu iyong tomeu akiroit kon nakwapin akitatam ngakiro kon. Tomeu Etau lo Akuj akiteseg sua, kotere nguna, kidodikinae sua ngakiro kon naparing. Na kilimoria sua anupit na erai aka iteni, kitochamunae sua apolou na a ngitunga a nguuni alu erai Akuj apei na ipolokinit ngiboro daang toyei jiiik. Ngikaru ka ngikaru.*¹³

The above quotations from the Missal are testimonies that the belief in the Trinity is concretely lived by the Turkana converts to Christianity as guided by the Catholic liturgical rituals. Jesus is specifically worshipped in the administration of the Eucharist, where total faith and allegiance to him as “God”¹⁴ is authentically expressed by his ardent followers (the converts). In different outstations where a priest comes only once a month, the laities led and guided by the Catechists, live the Catholic faith by preaching and sharing the Word of God.¹⁵ Tablino is a witness to this:

Lay men and women carried on their Christian activities, holding liturgical services and the catechism of children, organising meetings of the youth, and helping the poor.¹⁶

¹¹ Diocese of Lodwar, *2014-2018 Pastoral Plan*. Limuru: Franciscan Kolbe Press, 2013, 23.

¹² *Turkana Missal*, Kisubi: Marianum Press, 1986, 124. The book does not have the name of the author. The words in Turkana language are translated into English language as follows: Ooh God, you reign over all creatures, you who is eternal, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, are one God, one Lord.

¹³ *Ibid.* 82. The words in Turkana language are translated into English language as follows: Ooh God our Father, you sent your word to the world to teach us your precepts. Send the Spirit of God to make us holy and reveal to us the mystery of your words. Since we have confessed the true belief, make us accept the greatness of three persons of one God and lord of all creation who lives in eternity. Forever and ever.

¹⁴ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications-Africa, 1994, 347 (1374).

¹⁵ C/f. Bahemuka, Judith M., Formation of the Laity as Agents of Evangelization for the Church-as-Family of God, in: *AFER* 41 (1999) 211-225.

¹⁶ Tablino, P., *The Gabra: Camel Nomads of Northern Kenya*. Nairobi: St Paul Communications, 1999, 266.

The fruits of evangelization is vibrant and visible amongst the continued growing number of catechumens and baptism of infants as well as different groups being born within the TRCC who meet for prayers and religio-socio-political functions: Small Christian Communities, Legio Maria, Catholic Women and Men Associations, Choir members and Youth Groups, and many more emerging groups.

Major “successes” in the process of evangelization was realized in the “conversion” of Turkana indigenous Prophets and diviners to the faith of RCC. For instance: the late Natuba, the great Turkana Prophet and diviner, who lived in Lokirama, was baptized and given the Christian name, Joseph. Though nominally a Christian, the diviner continued performing his divinatory work and wore indigenous regalia for his noble duty totally contradicting the Christian faith, that he apparently “embraced”; he puts on “charms to ward off evil spirits,”¹⁷ the “wrist knife and ivory rings.”¹⁸ Such significant “conversions” were realised through *inculturating the liturgy*. It is done by assimilating into the Roman Catholic rituals, some essential core Turkana indigenous religious rites or values: e.g. rites of passage, a catholic priest assuming the role of an indigenous diviner, prophet or sacrificer-prophet.

It was easy for Roman Catholic missionaries to evangelize and convert Turkana indigenous people to its religion because they already believed, before the advent of RCC in Turkanaland, in one God: *Akuj*. For Turkana indigenous people, God is inherently conceived explicitly and uniquely as the only *actus purus*, single divine transcendent as well as immanent Being, the Creator and Sustainer¹⁹ of the universe.

Amongst the varied ways of worshipping God, Turkana indigenous people have unique qualities of praying and praising *Akuj* which are expressed in songs. Songs reveal the inner heart of the singer, as well his feelings, emotions, joys, sorrows, fears and anxieties, and the connection of the singer to the world, the natural and the supernatural. It is a reflection of the true identity of Turkana indigenous person and his own peculiar “characteristic way of praying to God.”²⁰ As per the liturgical hymns are concerned, the TRCC have adopted and assimilated the Turkana indigenous tunes, rhythms and intonations into Christian songs of praise and worship of *Akuj*. The richness in content of the indigenous traditional

Turkana prayer, worship and “their religiousness is expressed mostly with songs.”²¹

In the performance of the Roman liturgical rituals, the language used by the Turkana Christians is either *Ngaturkana* (Turkana language), Kiswahili or English. Majority of them use Turkana language that has been made possible because “we missionaries working among them have always presented the message in their own language, either through interpreter or speaking ourselves in”²² *Ngaturkana*. Their prayers are directly addressed to their “God and man”²³ Jesus or to *Akuj* through Jesus, “who indeed intercedes for us”.²⁴ Theo Sundermeier affirms that: “The Baptised, the Baptised, to whom do they pray? Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ!”²⁵

Yahweh, God of The Old Testament

In the beginning God created heaven and earth ... Elohim (translated as God) said, ‘Let us make man in our own image ... God created man in the image of himself, (Gen. 1. 26, 27).

for in him (Elohim) were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible (Col. 1: 16).

Gather the elders of Israel together and tell them, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors ... the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob ... Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews (Ex. 3. 16-18).

Elohim is from a Hebrew term *’Ēlōhīm*, though plural in form, but in Hebrew Bible, it is commonly referred to a single God, Israelite’s divine being. In this paper, we’ll discuss one OT name of God which is commonly used, known, prominent and taught to TRCC by their missionaries. This household divine name is YAHWEH.

As indicated in the above verses, the OT history of the Hebrews with God is traced back to the times of the biblical creation of the world, the departure of the Israelites from the Egyptian enslavement, Yahweh’s Laws, the Patriarchs, and the Prophets.²⁶

In the book of Genesis, as summarised in Gen. 1, God (Elohim) is revealed as the Creator, the supreme creative Deity who completed the work of creating everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) in six days and rested on the seventh day. Creation (Heb. *bārā’*) account “indicates a work which is

¹⁷ Pavitt, N., *Turkana: Kenya’s Nomads of the Jade Sea*. London: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997, 35. See also p. 34. and p. 188: wearing of indigenous protective magical charms is religious, normal, medicinal, valuable and accepted in Turkana culture as possessing protective mystical powers but rejected by Christian religion as devilish as evidently explicated in Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *op. cit.*, 499 (2117) and Baur, J., *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 66-67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 79. For a detailed account on Turkana indigenous diviners, see pgs. 78-81.

¹⁹ Compare with the sustaining power of God of the Hebrews in: Gen.1:1, 26; Ne. 9:6; Ps. 23:1-6; 55:22; Jeremiah (Jr).2:7.

²⁰ Consolata Fathers – Nairobi, *Turkana*. Turin: Stamperia Artistica Nazionale. The quotation is found in the second last page. (The book has no page numbers and no year of publication).

²¹ *Ibid.* For evidence see Pavitt, N., *op. cit.*, 188-193.

²² Tablino, P., *op. cit.*, 266. *Ngaturkana* means Turkana language.

²³ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *op. cit.*, 347 (1374).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 346 (1373).

²⁵ Sundermeier, T., *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*. Bd. 6. Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1998, 120. This prayer formula is biblical in nature: *Kilipi ani a Yesu Ekapolon kosi*: we pray in Jesus our Lord. See Rom. 16: 27; Eph. 3: 21; 1 Pet. 4: 11. Maranatha in 1 Kor. 16: 22. See also Theobald, M., Trinität/Trinitätslehre. Neues Testament, in: *RGG*⁸ (2005) 602.

²⁶ C/f. The Hebrew Bible: The Pentateuchal books, the books of the Earlier and Later Prophets.

distinctively divine, which no agent less than God can accomplish.”²⁷

In the episode of the burning bush, The Book of Exodus (Torah’s second book of OT) accounts the name Yahweh as revealed to Moses as “the original form of the Hebrew personal name represented in our English Bibles by the word LORD.”²⁸ The Sinai experience cemented “the coping-stone” and “the beginning of the religion of Yahweh among the Hebrews centred in Moses; and it was the Sinai revelation to which was primarily due the acceptance of Yahweh as their God by the Hebrew people.”²⁹ The divine name Yahweh³⁰ was explicitly revealed to the Israelites through Moses by God Himself when he was herding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, at Mt. Horeb, the mountain of Yahweh.

Moses

received a special revelation at a sacred mountain. Here there appeared to him a God named Yahweh; he was bidden to lead out of Egypt his kinsmen, the Hebrews, who had been subjected to forced labour by the Egyptian Government ... Moses is expressly told, according to one ancient account (Exod. iii. 6), that Yahweh may be identified with the God of Israel’s remote ancestors, though it is clear that the name will be strange to the present generation.³¹

The liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian enslavement, was carried out through the divine strength of Yahweh under Moses’ leadership.

The Exodus event commenced with the dialogue between the mysterious invisible Supernatural Being and Moses at Mt. Horeb, located in Sinai Peninsula. As the interaction between the two advanced, Moses urged the being to manifest oneself by unveiling its name. He wondered: who are you, what is your name? At this point, the being revealed to Moses that He is YHWH: “I am he who is.” YHWH takes the responsibility of declaring who He is: “I am Yahweh”³² with ALL what it means to be *your God*: “I am he who is ...I am the God of your ancestors ... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations to come.”³³

²⁷ McKenzie, J. L., *Dictionary of the Bible*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966 (Reprinted 1994), 159.

²⁸ Oesterley, W. O: E, *op. cit.*, 151. On Yahweh’s name and some of His attributes, see comments on footnotes 33, 42 and 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 146.

³⁰ For a detailed account on the names of Yahweh, God of the Israelites see Figl, J., *op. cit.*, 549-551.

³¹ Oesterley, W. O: E, *op. cit.*, 151-152.

³² Is. 43: 10-12. Also see Ex. 24: 1-11; 33: 18-23.

³³ C/f. Ex. 3:1-15: theophany and commissioning of Moses. The word used for “the LORD” is the tetragrammaton YHWH. Find out how God reveals His nature and identity by uttering His own name in: Ex. 33:18-19; 34:5-6, 9.

So say to the Israelites, I am Yahweh. I shall free you from the forced labour of the Egyptians; I shall rescue you from their slavery and shall redeem you with outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgement. I shall take you as my people and I shall be your God. And you will know that I am Yahweh your God, who has freed you from the forced labour of the Egyptians.³⁴

In this theophany and commissioning of Moses, it was not enough to reveal oneself as Yahweh, but He also disclosed Himself as a God who journeys, partakes and identifies personally with the history of the Israelites. As recorded by Prophet Isaiah (*I am Yahweh*), Yahweh *knows* their problems.

I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings.³⁵

God applied all the human faculties to give hope to the Israelites: he has *seen*; he has *heard*; he does not only *know* (aware) their problems but Yahweh decisively and at the right time *acts* on them accordingly. That is the sole reason of removing them from Egypt.³⁶ He is a God who is a *Helper*.

I lift up my eyes to the mountains; where is my help to come from? My help comes from Yahweh who made heaven and earth.³⁷

Yahweh is the Lord of lords who does marvellous things on behalf of the Hebrews; He is a Saviour who delivered them from the bondage of slavery; He is a great God who brought them to Canaan the land flowing with milk and honey; He is powerful, the Almighty God who is the conqueror in wars and He is the only God who has emerged as the God of gods and the God of the patriarchs.³⁸ He will reign as King forever.

Hitherto, in ancient Hebrews the idea of monotheism begun to develop in accordance with Hebrew Scriptures, the belief of Abraham, Moses and the Hebrew Prophets, and the rabbinic traditions:

‘P’ seems to suggest that the Israelites had never heard of Yahweh until he appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush. P makes Yahweh explain that he really *was* the same God as the God of Abraham.³⁹

³⁴ Ex. 6: 6-7. See also Sattler, D., *et.al.*, Gotteslehre, in: Schneider, T., (Hg.), *Handbuch der Dogmatik*. Bd. 1. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1992, 54-75.

³⁵ Ex. 3: 7.

³⁶ C/f. Fretheim, T., *The Suffering of God*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 127-130. See also Zulehner, P., *Pastoral Theologie Band 2*. Gemeinde Pastoral. Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989, 116.

³⁷ Ps. 121: 1-2.

³⁸ At the time of Abraham, people had worshipped many gods whom they inherited from their ancestors; though idols, they were believed of having divine powers. The Canaanites also worshipped different gods at the time when the Israelites came to their land. Details are given by Oesterley, W. O: E, *op. cit.*, 174-184.

³⁹ Armstrong, K., *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present: the 4000-year Quest for God*. London: Vintage, 1999, 21.

This is the transcendent eternal God who alone is a Saviour to His people, a jealousy God who alone deserves the worship. In consequence, the Israelites were taught strict monotheism by God Himself, as reflected from different texts of OT and its Prophets. For instance, Prophet Isaiah announced that:

Thus says Yahweh, Israel's king, Yahweh Sabaoth, his redeemer: I am the first and I am the last; there is no God except me... You are my witnesses. Is there any God except me? There is no Rock; I know of none.⁴⁰

The worship of *there is no God except me* signifies rejecting all other kinds of gods, their existences, beliefs and rituals and to plant in their hearts the belief in *One God* of the Israelites. To stamp properly the belief in *One God*, and to cement the early concept of monotheism in their hearts and whole life, the Israelites had to recite the *shema* daily: *Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh.*⁴¹

Accordingly, for Hebrews, the name Yahweh is the original orthodox and unique name, exclusively proper to God alone who is different from other gods such as *Ba'al*⁴² (possessor) or *Adon* (master)⁴³. He is simply "I am" YHWH - I am God, incomprehensible by human descriptions.

Yahweh is the authentic name that acts as the source (German: *Quelle*) which all other names of God get orientation, definition or character (as attributes of God).

Trinity, Christian God of the New Testament

The Trinitarian Christian's dogma propagates that

God is one who subsists in the form of three consubstantial and coeternal persons in One Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Is. 44: 6-8; 45: 6, 18.

⁴¹ Deut. 6: 4. Also see vv. 5-9. *Shema Yisrael (Shema Israel or Sh'ma Yisrael*; Hebrew: שמע ישראל; "Hear, O Israel") is a Jewish prayer, and is also the first-two-words of a section of the Torah, and is the title (better known as **The Shema**) of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish-prayer-services. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Hebrew: שמע ישראל יהוה אחד יהוה אחד). Retrieved on 17.12.2019 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shema_Yisrael. Details on the development of monotheism are given in Figl, J., *op. cit.*, 548-554. See declaration of monotheism in: Deut. 11: 13-21 and Num. 15: 41.

⁴² C/f. Oesterley, W. O: E, *op. cit.*, 57: "Ba'al (plural; *Be'alim*) means "lord" or "owner," and Ba'alism, in its origin, centred in the belief that every spot of fertile ground owed its fertility to the fact that a supernatural being dwelt there and made it what it was."

⁴³ In the Hebrew Bible, some of the attributes that are used to refer to Yahweh are *Adonai* (Yahweh is Lord); *El Shadai* (God Almighty); *El Elyon* (God most high).

⁴⁴ Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:26. Find the formation of the Trinitarian dogma according to Roman Catholic Church in: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *op. cit.*, 89-92 (249-260).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.⁴⁵

RCC teaches, believes and confesses that their God is the *Holy Trinity*. To support this dogmatic belief (in the Trinity), RCC purports that the bible echoes varied passages that they rely upon to be the manifestations of the Holy Trinity as a unit (in the Godhead) and at the same time distinct persons of the Godhead. Precisely, Christian religion propagates that, in the NT some of the particular verses that have exhibited the distinctions of persons and unity of the Holy Trinity are the baptism of Jesus and the great mission whereby Jesus sends the disciples to proclaim the Gospel message to the whole world.

In the narrative of baptism by John the Baptist, we read that;

And when Jesus had been baptised he at once came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And suddenly there was a voice from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'⁴⁶

Immediately after John had performed baptismal ritual on Jesus at River Jordan, a voice from the heavens declared Jesus as "my Son" (*God* the Son: the second person in Trinitarian Godhead). The heavenly voice is believed by Christians to be that of *God* the Father (the first person in Trinitarian Godhead), and that *God* the Holy Spirit (the third person in Trinitarian Godhead) came down in the form of a dove: one God in three persons.

When Jesus sends out his disciples to the whole world, he

came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'⁴⁷

The disciples were commanded (*go*) and then commissioned to *make disciples* by baptising them in the name of the *triad*. Though the verses don't categorically dictate that the disciples be made in the name of any particular god, Christianity believes that the verse displays the existence of the Trinity, as one indivisible unit (one God).

Trinity, according to Christian belief and teaching, is not Tritheism (Greek: τριθεϊσμός), the Three-God-doctrine (three divinities; contradicts Trinity), but a unity without insubordination of the divine persons, equal in the Godhead. This faith was drawn from the expressions of Jesus who alleged that

⁴⁵ 2 Cor. 13: 13.

⁴⁶ Mat. 3: 16-17.

⁴⁷ Mat. 28: 18-19.

The Father and I are one.⁴⁸

And that

‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... I am in the Father and the Father is in me ...but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.’⁴⁹

Conclusively, the Athanasian (295-373) Creed obscurely resolved unequivocally that

the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God and yet there are not three Gods but one God.⁵⁰

Akuj, The Yahweh and Trinity of Turkana Roman Catholic Christians

In their practice of worship, liturgical functions, performance of rituals, the Turkana bible and missal, prayer and hymn books, TRCC have adopted and invokes the Turkana indigenous, traditional and cultural God, *Akuj*. They have owned and assimilated Him as their God, thereby *wholly* agreeing *entirely* with Turkana traditional and indigenous belief in *Akuj*. This belief is expressed and demonstrated especially in official TRCC daily ritual prayers and Eucharistic celebrations, feasts and solemnities. For instance, in OT (Hebrew Bible), the name of God is *Akuj* as found in Isaiah 30:18, 27, and 30.

Moreover, the Jewish name for God, Yahweh, has been adopted by TRCC to connote *Akuj* as documented by Turkana Missal:

*tolimok Natan tama; Ebalā Ekapolon; Akuj a Israel iruoro, Kewos ayong arau ekatukon a Isiraēl, kaiu iyong anakan a Saulo.*⁵¹

This is the *Akuj*, God, *who was* and *who is* immanent, transcendent and eternal.⁵² The God who is portrayed precisely by the TRCC in NT as the Holy Trinity as demonstrated in the Baptism of Jesus at River Jordan.

Napei arumoror akibatisare Yesu, topud ngesi anakilip. Sodi tangaar adis kingolik ngesi Etaū a Akuj lo ikoni akuuri etiyaun todo kidiama keng. Kiirarae etoil anadis

⁴⁸ Jn. 10: 30.

⁴⁹ Jn. 14: 9-11, 26. See also Jn. 20: 22-23; Mat. 10: 20; Gal. 4: 6, and Victorinus, M., *The Church Fathers: Theological Treatises on the Trinity*. Vol. 69. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981, 10-18.

⁵⁰ “The Creed of Athanasius” in: <http://www.holybible.com/resources/athanasius Creed.htm>. Also see Victorinus, M., *ibid.* 10-18.

⁵¹ *Turkana Missal, op. cit.*, 683. The words in Turkana language are found in 2 Sam. 12:7-8: Nathan then said to David, ‘You are the man! Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, “I anointed you king of Israel, I saved you from Saul’s clutches.”’

⁵² See the attributes of African God in: Mbiti, J. S., *African Religions & Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1969 (2015 Reformatted Edition), 29-37, 47-48.

*ebala, Lokoakang lominat ngesi lo alakara ayong kotere ngesi.*⁵³

In Turkana language, the term *etaū* is an analogous word that could either mean heart or the life giving principle. In this study, we discovered that *Etaū* has been used by TRCC in their religious beliefs and practices as the Third Person of the Holy Trinity; the Holy Spirit. They call Him as the Spirit of God (*Etaū a Akuj*) while Jesus is referred to as the beloved Son of God (*Lokoo kang lominat*).

Therefore, TRCC teaching and belief on God, did not begin in the NT (i.e., with Christianity) nor with the advent of Christianity in Turkanaland, but its roots are founded in or traced back to indigenous Turkana and Hebrew cultures, beliefs and practices. Specifically, the Christian notion of God goes far back to the time of the biblical creation, the exodus, Yahweh’s Laws, the Patriarchs and the Prophets. That is the reason why Christianity asserts to be one of the religions of the book, monotheistic, prophetic and religions of the revelation that is “im „abrahamitischen” Ursprung erblickt wird.”⁵⁴

Precisely, the RCC bases the teaching on their deity fundamentally as recorded in the OT and NT books and as expressly preached by the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. However, the centre of worship, in the NT, has systematically, uniquely and dramatically been shifted from *Akuj* and Yahweh to Jesus. Yahweh and *Akuj* have become apparently sub-gods of Jesus who plays the Principal character as the Supreme God of the NT, subsequently of TRCC.

III. CONCLUSION

The investigation of this study ascertained that with the emergence of RCC in Turkanaland, about 30% of the indigenous people of this vast *terra firma* who were converted to it, worship the inculturated biblical God, Yahweh, as delivered to them (by RCC). The daily lives of the converts are rooted and regulated by Roman Catholic’s inculturated liturgical life, tradition, dogmatic, catechetical and biblical teachings as established solely by Turkana and Hebrew indigenous religions, the NT and OT teachings since: “No Christian, indeed, can fully understand the New Testament apart from the Old, but it is equally true that no Christian can contemplate the Old Testament apart from the New.”⁵⁵ Therefore, the origin of TRCC worship of *Akuj* is traced back

⁵³ *Turkana Missal, op. cit.*, 14. The words in Turkana language are found in Mt. 3:16-17: And when Jesus had been baptised he at once came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And suddenly there was a voice from heaven, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.’ Note that just like in *Ngaturkana*, the Christians too belief that *adis* is heaven. In Turkana language the heaven or the sky is *adis* and that distinguished *Akuj* from being the sky or a god of the sky.

⁵⁴ Figl, J., *op. cit.*, 548. Christianity traces its origins to the figure of Abraham (i.e., of Abrahamic origin). To the Jews, Moses is a saviour (esp. through the Exodus events) and Judaism is a prophetic religion due to divine revelations that Yahweh channelled through the Prophets to them, His people.

⁵⁵ Oesterley, W. O: E, *op. cit.*, 411.

to its foundational sources: in the OT Hebrew worship of Yahweh, blended with the Turkana native belief on *Akuj* and the NT Trinity, facilitated by Inculturation.

TRCC is a reflection of Roman Catholic Christian Religion in Turkana land, waiting for the “mysterious” second coming of their saviour-god: Jesus.⁵⁶

Way forward: Not to be strangers to their own indigenous way of life and slaves to foreign cultures, ideologies and religions, it is inevitable and inherent religious duty, responsibility and mandate of all true Turkana people and interested researchers (such as Anthony Barret and Nigel Pavitt) to jealously preserve and conserve the indigenous Turkana cultural homogeneity, religion, self-identity, mentality, character, heritage, and way of life and pass it wholly and in its entirety to the next generations “before it is too late ... When pastoralists lose their livestock ... customs change or are lost for ever. This is now becoming more and more apparent in Turkana land.”⁵⁷

Recommendation: The worship of Jesus by TRCC as their God, Son of God and Saviour is a potential grey area that we would recommend for further research.

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⁵⁶ Find Jesus the Saviour and source of Christian salvation in Acts 5: 31, Heb. 5: 8-10; and the prophecy of the Parousia of Christ (Second Coming or Second Advent) in Jn. 14: 3, Acts 1: 11, 1Thes. 4: 16-17, Rev. 1: 7, 22: 12-13.

⁵⁷ Pavitt, N., *op cit.*, 239.