Roman Catholic and Aladura Baptismal Doctrines: A Comparative Study in the Nigerian Context

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of St Michael’s College and the Theological Department of Toronto School of Theology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology awarded by University of St Michael’s College and the University of Toronto.

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Abstract

Baptism is an integral part of Christianity. Most Christian denominations accept and practise water baptism invoking the Trinity, as an initiation into the life of Christ and their church. Although both the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and Aladura Churches (AC) practise water baptism with a scripture-based Trinitarian formula, there are differences in understanding and theology. This leads to problems, such as re-baptism on the part of AC, and conditional baptism by the RCC.

Thus, this thesis researches and documents each church’s sacramental theology, doctrine and practice and compare the two, so as to use the resulting conclusion of compatibility as a basis for constructive dialogue between the AC and the RCC in Nigeria. Since Unity does not necessitate uniformity, if properly handled and open-heartedly embraced, such dialogue could lead to better mutual understanding of each other’s doctrine and theology and promotion of ecumenical unity reaching back to John 17:20–21.
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General Introduction

Africa has long been a destination for Christian missionaries, but there are also Christian churches that have originated on the continent. In recent decades, these African Initiated Churches (AIC) have emerged and grown in Nigeria.¹ Some of these churches pose ecumenical and pastoral challenges, especially regarding reconciliation and unity. In Nigeria, most mainline Christian churches mutually recognize the baptismal rites of one another, but there is division due to differing interpretations of scripture and doctrine. This sometimes leads to suspicion, criticism and mistrust. Historically weak ecumenical and inter-cultural dialogue in Nigeria also contributes to difficulties around the question of mutual recognition of baptism.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) in its preparation for the Jubilee 2000 issued a pastoral letter titled, *Baptism, our Common Heritage*.² It reflects the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church toward the recognition of baptism of non-Roman Catholic churches. Since the sacrament of baptism is the basis of Christian living, the CBCN urges every Roman Catholic to be aware of this, and of the ecumenical dimension of our common baptism. It reminds every baptized Catholic of the statement in the Catechism of the

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Catholic Church: “Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC 1271).  

One of the most popular of the Nigerian AICs is the ‘Aladura Church’. The Aladura Church is comprised of four churches, each of which broke away at different times from the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle Church in south-west Nigeria. These four are the Eternal Order of Cherubim and Seraphim (1925), the Christ Apostolic Church (1930), the Celestial Church of Christ (1945), and the Church of the Lord Aladura (1930). The last is the focus of this thesis, and hereafter ‘Aladura Church’ and AC will refer to the Church of the Lord Aladura.

The AC’s conviction in preaching the gospel, use of inculturated music and spontaneity in religious celebration are attractive to those inside and outside of it. Caleb Oladipo, a scholar of Christianity in Africa, asserts that the AC draws their followers indiscriminately from devotees of African Traditional Religions (ATR), and from Christian mission churches. In the context of the AC, ATR prophets and prophetesses (mainly lay people with little or no formal education) took seriously the challenge to transform and

3 Ibid.

4 The Aladura is a Yoruba term that means ‘praying people.’ The church emphasizes healing by faith and prayer under prophetic leadership. Cf. Engelbert Beyer, New Christian Movements in Africa (Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer Books Ltd., 1997), 2. The Aladura Church started as a prayer group within the Anglican Church of Nigeria, to provide healing through prayer following the disastrous global influenza epidemic that invaded West Africa in 1918. Initially, there was no intention to form a separate church under the name Aladura. However, due to the prophetic activities among this group, it was labelled ‘devil possession’ by the Anglican Church; the Anglicans ostracized the prayer group. Those rejected became affiliated with the Faith Tabernacle Church missionaries from Philadelphia in 1922. However, the Aladura gradually seceded from the Faith Tabernacle Church, due to rigid doctrine and other domestic issues, which include: doctrine on marriage and leadership; an unaccommodating attitude by missionaries; and unavailability of bibles in the indigenous (Yoruba) language.
enliven Yoruba traditional religion within Christianity, through an innovative process of cross-fertilization.\(^5\)

For the RCC, a new awakening and ecumenical revival were brought through the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). The RCC liturgy and sacraments were renewed, and this helped with ecumenical dialogue. The relationship between the Nigerian RCC and AC continues to expand, although, disparity in doctrinal matters and understanding of sacraments, coupled with racial discrimination, does not result in mutual acceptance, especially in regard to the validity of baptism.

Baptism is not an end in itself; it is a beginning and is ordered toward a complete faith, and toward eschatology. For the RCC, it is one of the three sacraments of Christian initiation, the others being confirmation and Eucharist. Thus, for the RCC, initiation is incomplete without the two other sacraments. The AC mandates water and Holy Spirit baptism for initiation with little attention to the Lord’s Supper.

This thesis will demonstrate that both the RCC and AC celebrate in faith one Christian initiation, but in different ways and with different understandings. Both churches share the same intention, especially in regard to baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, despite some differences. Through historical, liturgical, and theological investigations of the practices of the RCC and AC, this thesis will demonstrate the alignment of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, [Eucharist will not be a focus of this thesis], so as to map a path

toward fostering ecumenical dialogue and Christian unity, specifically in the Nigerian context.

Methodology

A liturgical–theological approach will be used to analyze, compare and contrast the initiation sacraments of the two churches. This careful comparative study will demonstrate that the initiations of the two churches are complementary, and possibly equivalent. The liturgical rites of baptism and the official documents of both churches, with the writings of theologians, such as Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Yves Congar, Susan Wood, Kenan Osborne, Harold Turner, will be applied to the Nigerian context. The outcome is a path to dialogue and unity between the RCC and AC, which is largely lacking presently in Nigeria.6

Procedure

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One presents the Vatican II and post-Vatican II theology of the sacraments of baptism and initiation, using the conciliar and post-conciliar documents, and the works of theologians such as Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Congar, Wood and Osborne. Documents from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and agreements between the RCC and other Christian denominations are also studied. Chapter Two describes the history and theology of the AC in Nigeria, and in particular the AC’s teaching on and practice of baptism. The liturgical rites of baptism in the RCC and the AC are compared in Chapter Three, with the points of convergence and divergence highlighted

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and examined. The fourth chapter draws and discusses the implications of this comparative theological study, and identifies a communal path ahead.
Chapter 1
Post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Theology of Baptism

1.1 Introduction

One of the goals of Vatican Council II (1962–65) was the unity of all Christians, a unity based on mutual acceptance and recognition of one another. Since then, Christian denominations have been involved in discussions on the mutual understanding and recognition of baptism and other sacraments. Although the mutual recognition of baptism is hardly denied among most churches, making this theological understanding a lived reality among the faithful is another matter. Pope John Paul II expressed this in strong terms:

The "universal brotherhood" of Christians has become a firm ecumenical conviction…. It needs be reaffirmed in this regard that acknowledging our brotherhood is not the consequence of a large-hearted philanthropy or a vague family spirit. It is rooted in recognition of the oneness of Baptism and the subsequent duty to glorify God in his work.

In baptism, Christians are brought into the saving mysteries that reconcile humanity with God through Jesus Christ, who has broken the barrier of disunity by his passion and resurrection. Through baptism, we participate in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, which enables us to call one another brothers and sisters.

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7 Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio), 1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Vatican II are taken from Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1988). In the following, the council documents will be cited using Unitatis Redintegratio.


In most places in Europe and North America, Christians today can boast a common recognition of baptism in Christ. In this way, some churches have been able to enter new inter-relationships of communion.\textsuperscript{11} The situation is different on the continent of Africa, especially in Nigeria. Some churches there recognize one another’s baptisms as encouraged in the documents of Vatican II, and in the conviction of Ephesians 4:4–6. However, various Nigerian churches are still divided concerning the sacrament of baptism.

There are manifold reasons for the non-recognition of baptism.\textsuperscript{12} These include faulty Christological and Trinitarian doctrine, conflicting ecclesiological principles, different interpretations of Scripture. There are also reasons specific to the African/Nigerian context, such as an over-emphasis on African or Nigerian culture, which sometimes lead to suspicion, criticism and mistrust. Another challenge to overcome is historically weak ecumenical and inter-cultural dialogue in Nigeria.

In this chapter, I will discuss some Vatican II documents on the sacrament of baptism, especially \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, \textit{Lumen Gentium} and \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio}. I will elaborate on the teaching of theologians like Karl Rahner, Susan Wood, and Kenan Osborne on the Church as a basic sacrament of salvation. Also, I will touch upon contemporary

\textsuperscript{11} Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, \textit{Eighth Report 1999–2005} (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 45. An inter-relationship of communion is not just a statement of how an individual’s baptism is regarded, but how the churches accept and accommodate each other. It happens for example that, in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, Christians of one confession no longer consider other Christians as enemies or strangers but see them as brothers and sisters. Again, the very expression separated brethren tends to be replaced today by expressions which more readily evoke the deep communion — linked to the baptismal character — which the Spirit fosters in spite of historical and canonical divisions. Today we speak of "other Christians", "others who have received Baptism", and "Christians of other Communities". (cf. Ut Unum Sint, no.42.)

teaching on Jesus as the primordial sacrament of God, and on post-conciliar Roman Catholic teaching on baptism and initiation. These will include the RCC reformed rite of initiation, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) on baptism. These official documents of the RCC specify and interpret the RCC’s position concerning the recognition of baptism in other Christian communities. The RCC’s official documents also note ways that the church may receive validly baptized but previously non-Roman Catholic Christians into full communion. Last, I will analyze ecumenical agreements on baptism among various churches, including the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) convergence documents on baptism, particularly *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM).

1.2 Vatican II Teaching on Baptism

The RCC approach to ecumenism since the Second Vatican Council has expanded opportunities for ecumenical rapprochement. The documents of the Council call for the reform of the liturgy of the RCC and mandate changes in the sacraments. The Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano* observed that “the Second Vatican Council introduced certain modifications in the very essence of the sacramental rites.”

*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II, ordered that the rite for the baptism of infants and adults be revised. Unlike previous councils with decrees and declarations on baptism, Vatican II had no individual document promulgated on baptism –

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14 Vatican II, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), 66–69. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Vatican II are taken from *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1988). In the following, the council documents will be cited using “Sacrosanctum Concilium.”
the various declarations by the Council concerning baptism are scattered through several of its documents. These various declarations insist not only on new aspects, and restoration of forgotten practices, but they also clarify theological issues on baptism such as the relationships between baptism and faith, the Church, and between baptism and confirmation.\textsuperscript{15}

The Second Vatican Council was not dogmatic in its various documents, but rather spoke to its contemporaries about faith in a form that gives value to the riches of Scripture and Tradition.\textsuperscript{16} In its teaching on baptism, Vatican II does not deviate from the manuals prefigured in the Fourth Lateran Council, which were developed further by Thomas Aquinas in his treatise, \textit{Articles of Faith and the Sacraments of the Church}. These were later constituted as the Decree for the Armenians, and extended by the council of Trent. The points presented in the manuals include: the institution of the sacrament of baptism, the matter and form of baptism, the minister, the recipient, necessity, and the effects of baptism. The Second Vatican Council did not retract any of the statements of the manual, rather its writings attempt to clarify and explain them in the light of Scripture and the tradition of the Church.

\textit{i. Lumen Gentium}

\textit{Lumen Gentium}, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964), reveals a deeper notion of the sacramentality of the Church as being both totally Christocentric and open to


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 49.
the world. The Church is defined as “a type of (veluti) sacrament, i.e., a sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among people.” In other words, the Church is an instrument Christ uses to perpetuate his word and his work on earth. This sacramental theme is repeated again and again, where the Church is described as the visible sacrament of the saving unity, and also the instrument for the salvation of all. The Church is defined as “the universal sacrament of salvation.” In other words, *Lumen Gentium* goes beyond merely teaching that the Church is the sole Church of Christ, with the fullness of Christ’s truth and means of grace, to further say that the Church is necessary for salvation (LG 14). It explains how the truths and graces of Christ granted to the Church can nevertheless be extended beyond her visible boundaries. According to Kenneth Whitehead, “this indeed is one of the most mysterious of realities in the total mystery of the Church.”

Baptism is a sacrament of faith:

For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn, not from a corruptible seed, but from an incorruptible one through the word of the living God (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23), not from flesh, but from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:5–6), are finally established as “a Chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation…who in times past were not a people, but now are the people if God” (1 Pet. 2:9–10).  

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17 Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, 1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Vatican II are taken from Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1988). In the following, the council documents will be cited using “*Lumen Gentium.*”


*Lumen Gentium* gives two biblical points of reference concerning faith and baptism. First, the teaching of Vatican II insists that the Word of God is essential for a new birth. Christ preaches the Word, through the ministry of the bishop and with the assistance of priests, preaches the Word to all. Further, these ministers, by administering the sacraments, incorporate the faithful, through a supernatural rebirth, into the body of Christ (*LG* 21, 11, and 14). Thus through baptism, believers enter into the Church as through a door, thereby possess the Spirit of Christ. *Lumen Gentium*, following the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 12:13) states that we are baptized into a body (*LG* 7). The second part of LG 14 refers to the RCC, which is composed of persons who, under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, are united by the threefold bond of faith, the sacraments, and the leadership and communion of the Church.

**ii. Sacrosanctum Concilium**

The Second Vatican Council called for liturgical reform, and a number of items in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963), deal with this. Liturgical reform is necessary for the unity of Christians. This reform avoids offensive language, and tends to acknowledge and recognise different cultural rituals of initiation that do not contradict Christian values. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for changes to initiation.\(^{22}\) The first norm states that “in place of the rite called ‘Rite for supplying what was omitted in the baptism of an infant’, a new rite is to be drawn up. This rite should indicate more fittingly and clearly that the infant baptized by the short rite has already been received into the

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\(^{22}\) *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 64–70.
Church. So also a new rite to be drawn up for converts who have already been validly baptized. It should indicate that they are now admitted to communion with the Church.”

Sacrosanctum Concilium also addresses initiatory elements from other cultures, particularly those which are already in use and which can be accepted in congruity with faith (65); baptismal rites for adults, both simple and solemn forms, were to be revised with a new ritual and inserted into the Roman missal (66); infant baptismal rites, which were to be revised to clearly specify the roles of parents and godparents (67); rites to be developed for special circumstances (68); and having baptismal water blessed within the ceremony, except during the Easter season (70).

It is necessary to observe how these changes support both unity in Christ and in the Church. Before the council, the RCC’s position called for waiting passively for a “return” of the lost sheep into Christ’s true fold, the RCC. The trouble was that most non-Catholic Christians had never belonged to the RCC, so they could never contemplate any such “return” – and only a trickle of converts ever did, as a matter of fact, “return.” Thus the council decided to adopt a more active policy of going out in search of the lost sheep, like the Good Shepherd. Especially in Lumen Gentium (cf. 1.2, i. above), the point was that some non-Catholic Christians, though lacking the fullness of truth and most of the sacraments, nevertheless usually possessed at least some “element of sanctification and truth,” even if they did not possess all the sacraments or the truth of Christ in its fullness. The idea was to emphasize what elements the RCC possesses, and are agreed on by all Christians, not on

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23 Ibid., 69.
24 Whitehead, The Renewed Church: The Second Vatican Council’s Enduring Teaching about the Church, 29.
what points the separated brethren disagreed with the RCC. For instance, consider LG 7, concerning baptism:

In this sacred rite fellowship in Christ’s death and resurrection is symbolized and is brought about: “For we were buried with him by means of baptism into death”; and “if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be so in the likeness of his resurrection also” (Rom. 6:4–5).

The rite of baptism is a representation and realization of union with Christ’s death and resurrection. This is what Thomas Aquinas calls “what is necessary for the sacrament,” and which is otherwise known as “the essential part,” that is, the part that symbolizes and effects grace. Thus, we gain a clearer conception of the symbolic character of baptism. “Faith alone concerning baptism contains the entire fullness of the effect of baptism. The visible action of baptism must be interpreted by taking this faith as our starting point.” It is on this note that the RCC will accommodate Christians of other churches rightly baptized into the RCC.

iii. *Unitatis Redintegratio*

In *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964) Decree on Ecumenism, the Second Vatican Council declared one of its principal concerns to be the restoration of unity of all Christians. Thus, the RCC is working toward removing barriers to unity, since “there is one chosen people of God: ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph.4:4).” Building on the communion set out in *Lumen Gentium* 15: “The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who

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27 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1.

28 *Lumen Gentium*, 32.
are honored by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter … who are sealed by baptism which unites them to Christ.” *Unitatis Redintegratio* goes on to iterate the different “degrees of communion, for those who believe in Christ and who have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church” (UR 3). This document establishes degrees of communion that differ from those in SC 69, and LG14 and 15. For the first time in *Unitatis Redintegratio* the Council clearly states that the RCC has not in any way relinquished its claim to be the one, true Church of Christ  

> For it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. 

However, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22, offers a doctrine of incorporation into Christ through baptism, and avoids speaking of incorporation into the Church. Paragraph 2 of the same document states: “Baptism, therefore, constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn. But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, toward a complete integration into Eucharistic communion.”

This same teaching is reasserted in *Lumen Gentium* 14 and in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* forming a three-fold

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30 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3.

31 Ibid., 22.
expression of this doctrine that taken together emphasize the reason why the sacrament of baptism cannot be understood in isolation from the other sacraments of initiation. According to Osborne, the sacrament of baptism is intrinsically and foundationally related to the humanness of Jesus on the one hand, and to the Church on the other. Contemporary sacramental theology emphasizes Jesus as the primordial sacrament and the Church as the basic sacrament. Therefore, it is impossible to have a proper theological understanding of the sacraments outside the ecclesiological and Christological reflection. “There are no sacraments that are not sacraments of the Church. There is no Church without Christ, the word of God.” Thus, the Church is the basic sacrament of salvation and Jesus himself is the primordial sacrament.

1.2.1 Theological Understanding of the Church as the Basic Sacrament of Baptism

The Council Fathers of Vatican II define the Church as a type of (veluti) sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all people. Having risen from the dead, Christ drew all people to himself and sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples, and through the same Holy Spirit, set up his Body, the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Citing St. Cyprian, the Council fathers see the liturgical services as “the celebrations of the Church which is the ‘sacrament of unity,’ namely, ‘the

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34 *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

holy people united and arranged under their bishops.”

Therefore, whatever benefit that the people of God can confer on humankind during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the Church’s being “the universal sacrament of salvation.”

Thus, the Church as a basic sacrament is not a new development. In other words, “the sacramentality of the Church is part of the ordinary magisterium of the Church.”

To speak of the Church as a basic sacrament is not just a theological assertion but it is one of the major ecclesiastical approaches to the Church of our time.

Karl Rahner developed the theology of Church as a sacrament prior to Vatican II. He emphasizes God’s unified plan for the salvation of all, and the dynamic openness of grace that God planted in each nature.

Rahner maintains two presuppositions. First, grace is conceived primarily as uncreated grace, that is, God’s direct presence in the soul. Second, he developed the theology of “real symbol,” whereby the plurality within all beings is understood as constitutive of its essence.

Since God is the reality of salvation, all of God’s interactions with human beings will find expression in symbol. The Church therefore is guaranteed, by divine predestination, not only continuance as the principal sign of grace until the end of the world, but also the power of infallibly defining the content of belief.

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36 Sacrosactum Concilium, 26.
37 Gaudium et Spes, 45.
40 Ibid., 166.
41 Ibid., 167.
Rahner argues that the proper understanding of baptism demands a better knowledge of Christianity and of the Church. The Church understands and teaches that baptism is the sacramental entrance into the Church, and thus into the fullness of Christian life.\(^{42}\) “It is an effective sign of grace not as an isolated event occurring between God and soul but precisely insofar as it marks the incorporation of the baptized into the Church of Christ,”\(^{43}\) that is, into communion with one another.

In relating baptism to Christ and the Church, Karl Rahner defines baptism as the sacrament of faith and justification that imparts the life of God on us, through the sealing with the Holy Spirit, so as to make us capable of participating in eternal life, and in immediate unity and community with God.\(^{44}\) Rahner talks about baptism as the irrevocable offer of God to all persons; even though human freedom may reject that offer, it is always available and always irrevocable. This ever-present divine offer exists whether each human being knows of it or not, because God has willed that the whole of humankind be adopted by God in Jesus. That is why God’s innermost offer of grace, which is all-embracing, is integral to Christianity.\(^{45}\) Thus, this divine life continues to dwell in every person, irrespective of his or her knowledge and understanding of it. If accepted, even if not in some expressly


\(^{44}\) Rahner, *Final Writing*, 195.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 196–197.
conscious way, the person welcomes and manifests this divine offer in what we call faith, hope, and love.⁴⁶

Rahner argues that baptism is the concrete ‘becoming-visible’ of the divine life, and insofar as this life is also a Christian life, it is therefore an ecclesial life. Individuals cannot decide on their own how this life will be shaped. They must shape it in ways given to them by God and the ecclesial community. Thus, baptism incorporates the baptized into the Church of Christ (see footnote 31).

Similarly, Kenan Osborne argues that without proper knowledge of the sacramentality of the Church (and the milieu in which other sacraments take place), all ritual sacraments are meaningless. Osborne affirms that there have been several explanations of the Church as a basic sacrament in general but none on the Church as a basic sacrament for the individual sacraments.⁴⁷ Thus, Osborne argues that the Church as a basic sacrament of individual sacraments has been a theological opinion, and not the teaching of the Church. According to Osborne, “the Church is not only a locus for baptizing individuals, but the Church itself is a baptized people of God. In this case, just as with Jesus baptism speaks of an intimacy of his humanness and God, so too, the baptized Church speaks about the real presence of the baptized one within the Church.”⁴⁸ Put differently, the Church will be the Church if and only if it makes present Christ and his Spirit. “Presence,” explains Osborne, is the mutual offering and accepting from a human standpoint, a religious experience, since the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197.
⁴⁸ Ibid.
initiator and prime agent of this presence in the Church is Christ and God. Thus, the Church is a baptized people because of the real presence of Jesus (and therefore the total Godhead) in, and to the community.

1.2.2 Theological Understanding of Jesus the Primordial Sacrament of Baptism

Jesus as sacrament was neither a topic for the early Fathers of the Church nor for the Second Vatican Council. Jesus as the primordial sacrament is a twentieth-century theological approach to the issue of sacraments. Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx analyzed Jesus as the primordial sacrament and the Church as the basic sacrament. Explaining Jesus as the primordial sacrament, Rahner says: “This is what we mean by saying that Christ is the actual historical presence in the world of the eschatologically triumphant mercy of God …. There is the spatio-temporal sign that effects what it points to. Christ in his historical existence is the reality and the sign, sacramentum and res sacramenti, of the redemptive grace of God.” In his analysis, Schillebeeckx expresses this clearly when he says:

The man Jesus, as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of redemption is the sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the son of God himself, is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption. Human encounter with Jesus is therefore the sacrament of the encounter with God … For a sacrament is divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility.

Osborne, building on the theology Rahner and Schillebeeckx, argues that Jesus in his humanity is the baptized: Jesus is in himself what baptism is all about. Thus, when “baptism”

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49 Ibid.
is mentioned, one might think immediately of “water,” or of “original sin,” or of “entrance into the Church.” However, if Jesus is the primordial sacrament of baptism, then when one says “baptism,” the first thought one should have is “Jesus,” not water, original sin, or entrance into the Church. Osborne sets out to explain Jesus as the primordial sacrament of baptism by considering the meaning of Jesus’ baptism within the framework of sacramental theology.

Osborne bases his explanation on the first words of the first chapter of Mark’s Gospel, “The beginning of the Good news of Jesus Christ” (Mk. 1:1). The first thing Mark takes up is the portrayal of John the Baptist, and the account of the baptism of Jesus himself. This makes Mark’s Gospel different from the other Gospels, which portray first the infancy narrative (Luke), genealogy (Matthew), virgin birth, or spiritual beginning (John). The literal translation of Mark 1:1 would read: “Beginning of good news . . . ,” since there is no definite article prior to the noun in the Greek language. This expresses that in the baptism of Jesus lies an absolute beginning of Jesus himself, and therefore of good news, since the Jesus-event is the good news.

The presence of the divine Jesus establishes the very beginning of what Jesus is all about. Mark expresses this as the peak of the entire episode, that the very origin, the beginning of Jesus is the presence of God. “One cannot understand Jesus unless one understands this relationship between Jesus’ humanness and the presence of the divine, and it

52 Osborne, The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism Confirmation Eucharist, 81.
53 Ibid.
is this presence of God incarnate that is the beginning of salvation, good news, redemption, sanctification.”

Each of the symbolic actions explored in the ritual and liturgies of baptism, from the early Church to the present time, point to what is at the very heart of baptism: the presence of God to an individual. No person has ever been more intimately united to the presence of God than the humanness of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus is deeper than just mere immersion; it is the immersion of Jesus into God’s own self. As Christian Schütz, O.S.B., remarks: “Jesus is not only baptized, but he is the baptized.” Jesus has no other reason to undergo the Johannine baptism; otherwise, the baptism would not be the beginning. A beginning has within itself its own reason, thus, the baptism of Jesus has within it its own why, its own purpose, and its own meaning. Therefore, according to Osborne, Jesus “is truly seen as the original sacrament insofar as he is the original baptism, the Urtaufe. All other ‘‘baptisms’’ are secondary, and derivative from him as the baptized.” This is the meaning of what we profess in the creed of the Church: “We profess one baptism…”

Susan Wood in her book, One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimensions of Doctrine of Baptism, provides a thorough and useful introduction to ecumenical dimensions of the doctrine and practice of baptism. Wood sets out to study the ecumenical convergence and divergence of baptism, based on the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord,

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54 Ibid., 84.
55 Ibid., 85.
56 Ibid., 86.
one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6), and the acknowledgement of the Nicene Creed, “I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” According to Wood, Christians generally agree that baptism is of fundamental importance, but disagree on the doctrine and theology.

Despite the recognition of valid baptism by Vatican II and the WCC, doctrinal disagreement and theological differences continue to cause rejection and ill-feelings among churches. Even within those traditions which affirm a mutual recognition of baptism, there still exist different practices of admitting the baptized to the Eucharistic table. Questions therefore arise about the interrelationship of the three sacraments of initiation as well as the relationship between baptism, Eucharist, and church membership.\(^58\) Such is the case for RCC and the Aladura Church (AC) in Nigeria.

In tracing the history of the doctrine and theology of baptism, from the early Christian era to the eve of the Reformation, Wood, following Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, points to a number of crucial developments. According to Wood, when coupled with the complex history of doctrinal interpretation, the loss of an integrated rite of initiation after the medieval period – which was later inherited by the reformers – contributed to divisions among Christians.

Although baptism is the first ritual of initiation, Wood argues that baptism goes far beyond mere initiation. It is more than just the gateway into the Church; it is also oriented toward eschatology.\(^59\) In other words, baptism is not just about the beginning. A better

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 21–22.

understanding of it also has to do with the end times, which were inaugurated by Jesus’ own baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Baptism announces the reign of God, which was manifested in the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, baptism, in water and the Spirit is a participation in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Wood further observes that “Baptism into Christ is also baptism into his ecclesial body.”60 This is expressed in the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints.” Baptismal life is a share in the triune life of God. Christians enter into the inner life of the Trinity, a sort of “vertical” relationship with God, and also enter into “horizontal” communion with one another. “The vertical life of contemplation and worship, and the horizontal one of service complement one another.”61 This idea links to Osborne’s phenomenological approach62 to understanding the sacrament. Baptismal life is a way of imitating Christ’s death, whereby Christians take up their crosses and lay down their lives. Baptismal initiation finds its completion in going the way of the cross.63

Kenan Osborne’s comprehensive work, Sacramental Guidelines: A Companion to the New Catechism for Religious Educators, elaborates the theology of sacraments. In his studies on the sacraments, Osborne argues that for proper theological understanding of sacraments, 

60 Ibid., 8.
61 Ibid., 16.
one’s methodology is of the utmost importance. Aidan Kavanagh shares this idea. Most theologians, according to Osborne, begin the study of sacraments with a biblical or historical methodology, which is not a bad methodology, but this approach only offers an ideal starting point rather than a full understanding of the theology of sacraments. Osborne prescribes two methodological approaches toward the understanding of the sacraments: the Christological and phenomenological.

In his first approach, Osborne asserts that for a proper understanding of the theology of a sacrament, its study must be preceded by the study of Christology. In the Christian Church, sacramental action is based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This event of Christ affected and transformed the world. The principle of causality may further his point, since God, as argued by scholastic theologians such as Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, is “the main cause of all the power and effectiveness of the sacraments and that Christ’s life death and resurrection are but major secondary causes.” In Aquinas’ expression, the sacraments of the New Law have two kinds of cause: principal causes and instrumental causes. Since God is the principal cause, the instrumental cause can be called the sign of some hidden effect it produces, since it is itself not only cause but also effect,

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66 Ibid., 537.
67 Ibid., 538.
68 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 550. “A principal cause or agent produces an effect in virtue of its own form or nature, reproduced in some way in the effect; fire, in virtue of its own heat, heats other things. Only God can cause grace in this way, since grace is a shared likeness in God’s nature: you are to be sharers of the divine nature. Instruments on the other hand, don’t produce effects in virtue of their own form, but in virtue of being moved by the agent wielding them. The effect doesn’t reproduce the form of the tool but that of the tool-usher.” Cf. Summa Theol. III, q. 62, a.1.
something used by the principal agent. Rahner and Schillebeeckx capitalized on Thomas' affirmation of the sacramental axiom: *significando efficiunt et efficiends significant*. They fleshed out the implication of this axiom for sacramental causality, with an additional consciousness of its relation to a theology of the word, Christology and ecclesiology.

In the Christological approach, God is acting in and through the humanity of Jesus, and it is for this reason that Christ is called the *Ursakrament*, the original sacrament. Therefore, “Christ in his humanness is the sign, the symbol, the sacrament of God’s self-communication to us; all other signs, symbols and sacraments are secondary.” This notion reflects the theology of Rahner, Schillebeeckx and others, who argued that Jesus in his humanity is a primordial sacrament, while the Church is the *Grundsakrament*, the basic sacrament. Since the Church is the body of Christ, “it is the sacrament of Christ in visible, audible, tangible continuation of the salvific role of Jesus in the world.” Osborne differentiates between the primordial and the basic sacrament as follows:

The humanness of Christ is the sacrament of God's self-revelation, as described in the citations from Schillebeeckx and Rahner. His humanness is the original and fundamental revelation of God's reconciling relationship to our sinful world. On the other hand, the Church is a sacrament of the Christ event; it is a sacrament of a sacrament, it is the basic sacrament of an original sacrament.

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69 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
This maintains the primacy of Christ and the auxiliary position of the Church. The Church is the basic, historical and abiding sacrament of the original, revelatory and one salvific self-communication of a God who so loved the world that he gave it his only Son.74

It is in the context of the twofold sacramentality of the humanness of Christ and of the Church itself that the individual sacraments find their significance and function.

In his second, phenomenological approach, Osborne argues that the word “sacrament” transcends Christian phenomena. Sharing the views of the Dutch Reformed scholar Gerardus van der Leeuw, Osborne explains, “in this phenomenological approach each of the sacramental actions should be considered in the light of that human phenomenon which has been caught up into the sacrament itself.”75 For the case of baptism, a phenomenological methodology would lead the theologian to isolate and examine all those instances of interpersonal behavior where there is some form of initiation.

Baptism is not an end in itself, but is directed toward a future to be built and lived with Christ. It is on this note that the sacrament of baptism – being the first ritualized sacrament of the sacraments of initiation – cannot be isolated from the remaining sacraments of initiation. A theological explanation of baptism which does not at the same time involve Eucharist (and confirmation) is insufficient, and vice versa.76 Thus, baptism is intrinsically Eucharistic, and Eucharist is intrinsically baptismal, so that the one cannot be understood or

74 Ibid., 542.
75 Ibid., 544.
explained without the other. Baptism is a process and an “action-event reality,” which can be truly understood only in its actual celebration and unfolding.

The depths of the meaning of the Rite of Baptism for Children, as well as that for adults (RCIA), are centered on four issues, as stated by Osborne:

The celebration is primarily a celebration of what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do in the lives of those involved. The response of the Christian individual and of the community is always a matter of secondary importance.

The initiation liturgies celebrate, again in a primary way, the paschal mystery by which Christ saved us. We do not save ourselves; salvation, justification, and liberation are due entirely to the full efficacy of Jesus’ paschal mystery.

The sacraments of initiation are celebrations of the action of the Holy Spirit within the community called church.

The entire Church, the gathered and worshipping Christian community, are the primary celebrants of the sacraments of initiation. The sacraments of initiation are not celebrated primarily by clergy. The sacraments of initiation can only be understood when they are experienced as celebrations, and the spirit of celebration should permeate the entire liturgical process.\(^{77}\)

1.3 Post-Conciliar Documents on Baptism

The RCC continues to implement the liturgical and sacramental reform introduced by Vatican II and develop by theologians since for the theology and practice of baptism. The following section discusses some of the documents of the RCC on baptism:

1.3.1 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Pope Paul VI inaugurated a special commission to implement the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and later promulgated the new RCIA in 1972. The general introduction to this rite elaborates on the theology of baptism and the other sacraments of initiation:

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 45.
In the sacraments of Christian initiation we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption and are part of the entire people of God in the celebration of the memorial of Lord’s death and resurrection.

Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God’s people. The first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children …

By signing us with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to him before the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness as soon as possible.

Finally, coming to the table of the Eucharist, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that we may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God’s people. …

Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to his full stature and to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world. 78

The first two paragraphs of this excerpt, according to theologian Michel Witczak, provide an overall view of the theology of baptism as seen from the perspective of initiation:

“They offer a vision of baptism within the economy of life in the Church that goes beyond the categories of the scholastic and manual syntheses seen in the period before the Second Vatican Council.” 79 This vision takes into consideration the historical traditions and practices of the Church, and presents a scripturally rooted theology in line with the principles of Vatican II. 80


80 Ibid.
It describes baptism as a sacrament that opens the door to life in the Church. Baptism is a sacrament of faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the gospel of Christ. Thus, faith is required of the catechumens (incipiently in children), the parents and the godparents. For this reason, the RCC prescribes pastoral instruction for the catechumens and parents of the children to be baptized. Baptism is a permanent incorporation into the Body of Christ, and into the temple of the Spirit. It is not repeatable. It cleanses from sin. Baptism is a participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is clearly stated in the RCIA general introduction that there should be no re-baptism.  

The requirements for the celebration of baptism follow the office and the ministries of baptism. These include the use of pure and clean water in a running water font, preference for immersion, and use of the Trinitarian formula. The Word of God needs to be included, and there should be a single ceremony that gathers all recently born children. Finally, baptisms must be recorded in the parish register.

1.3.2 Canon Law

The 1983 Code of Canon Law elaborates the teaching of Vatican II and post-conciliar rites of baptism in which Sacraments are instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church (can. 840–841). Baptism is necessary for other sacraments, and must then be complemented by confirmation and Eucharist for a full Christian initiation (can. 842). For validity, except in a case of necessity, baptism is to be conferred by a washing in real water with the proper form of words (can. 849), and the water should be blessed according to the norms of the liturgical books (can. 853). The celebration of baptism should be properly prepared, meaning

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adults preparing for baptism should be admitted into the catechumenate, and parents seeking baptism for infants should receive adequate catechetical instruction (can. 851). Sacraments of baptism and confirmation imprint a character and must not be repeated, but if doubt remains concerning the authenticity of baptism after diligent enquiry, then baptism should be administered conditionally (can. 845 and 869, art.1).

1.4 Dialogue and Common Agreements

As an outcome of Vatican II, the RCC and other Christian denominations have had more than four decades of international ecumenical dialogue, producing a series of ecumenical documents. The following are some of the agreements between RCC and other Christian denominations.

1.4.1 Roman Catholic – Orthodox

Though they possess baptismal liturgies that differ in significant ways, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches share a heritage of Christian initiation from the patristic period. The joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue (1987) between the

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82 *The Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on ecumenism* explains how to remove doubt toward baptism conferred in other non RCC Christian denominations: “It is strongly recommended that the dialogue concerning both the significance and the valid celebration of baptism take place between Catholic authorities and those of other Churches and ecclesial Communities at the diocesan or Episcopal Conference levels. Thus it should be possible to arrive at common statements through which they express mutual recognition of baptisms as well as procedures for considering cases in which a doubt may arise as to the validity of a particular baptism.” (94). Also no. 99, article b, says: “With regard to Christians from other Churches and ecclesial Communities, before considering the validity of baptism of an individual Christian, one should determine whether an agreement on baptism (as mentioned above, n. 94) has been made by the Churches and ecclesial Communities of the regions or localities involved and whether baptism has in fact been administered according to this agreement. It should be noted, however, that the absence of a formal agreement about baptism should not automatically lead to doubt about the validity of baptism.” Cited in “Pontificium Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam,” accessed Dec. 15, 2015, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/christuni/documents/rc_pe_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html.
Orthodox Church (OC) and the RCC identified similarities of doctrine and differences in practice.  

They agreed that baptism is necessary for salvation, and it is linked with the death and resurrection of the Lord. It liberates the recipient from original sin and confers new life and the Holy Spirit. It incorporates an individual into the mystery of the Trinity. Water is necessary for the celebration of baptism.

The document also identified differences regarding baptism. Both churches recognize baptism by immersion, although in the RCC, infusion is the ordinary practice. The deacon can be an ordinary minister of baptism in the RCC, but not in OC. The RCC admits to first communion baptized persons who have not yet received confirmation, even though the disciplinary directives that called for the traditional order of the sacraments of Christian initiation have never been abrogated. Also in the RCC, infant baptism is not celebrated concurrently with chrismation and Eucharist.

The areas of agreement are all doctrinal while those of disagreement are in practice.

1.4.2 Anglican – Roman Catholic

On Oct. 4, 2006, the Anglican Church–RCC celebrated 40 years of dialogue. Article 33 of Building on 40 years of Anglican – Roman Catholic Dialogue was devoted to baptism. Both churches agreed on one baptism, administered with water and a Trinitarian formula.

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84 Wood, One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimensions of Doctrine of Baptism, 94.

85 Ibid.
They consider baptism a sacrament instituted by Christ, through which we are incorporated into Christ and his body. It is a sacrament of faith, by which a person embraces the faith of the Church and is embraced by it (GTUM 33).86

In union with other Christians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics accept the scriptural meanings of baptism, the tradition, and practices of the early Church. Baptism unites Christians with Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. They are buried with Christ and raised to a new life, which begins here and now, in the power of his resurrection. There is only one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and it is an unrepeatable sacrament of justification and incorporation into Christ.87

By the power of the indwelling Spirit, baptism initiates a renewal of life and growth in holiness which God will bring to completion in eternal life. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. The sacramental process of Christian initiation also includes confirmation, which is an empowerment by the Holy Spirit for witness and mission, and a public manifestation of membership in the Body of Christ. The Anglican Communion and the RCC recognize the baptism each confers; it is regarded as a basic bond of unity.88

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
1.4.3 Lutheran – Roman Catholic

The Lutheran Church (LC) and the RCC are conscious that they participate in one and the same baptism. This is visible in articles 11, 25, and 28 of the document *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*: justification is the forgiveness of sins, liberation from the dominating power of sin and death, and from the curse of the law. It is acceptance into communion with God, already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom. It unites the believer with Christ and with his death and resurrection. It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body. All this comes from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in the gospel of God's Son. The two churches confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, believers are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. Together in baptism, the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace.

1.4.4 World Council of Churches on Baptism

The Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC has done ground-breaking work in the area of unity and mutual recognition of the sacrament of baptism among Christian churches. Their most important text is *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry BEM*. This

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90 Ibid., 25.

91 Ibid., 28.
“convergence” document tries to formulate what churches can say together on the issue.

Regarding baptism, in particular, it also makes proposals about what churches would need to change to be united. BEM notes two areas of convergence concerning baptisms.

First, the institution of baptism: Christian baptism is rooted in the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God’s people. Baptism is a gift of God and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The authors of BEM believe that all the churches agree on the institution of baptism by Jesus Christ (BEM, art.1).

Second, the meaning of baptism: baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people. Baptism is a participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (BEM, art. 2). It is a sacrament of conversion, pardoning, and cleansing. It is the gift of the Spirit and it incorporates believers (Christians) into the body of Christ. It is the sign of the Kingdom.

The document takes up two major issues concerning baptism: “baptism and faith” and “baptism practice.” Article 8 of BEM presents baptism as God’s gift and our human response to that gift. It looks toward a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). All churches acknowledge the necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism. Personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ.\(^92\)

For the churches that do not practice infant baptism, on the basis that infants are incapable of making personal profession of faith, BEM argues that the difference between “infant’s baptism” and “believer’s baptism” is one only of emphasis. “Believer’s baptism” emphasizes an individual and explicit confession (profession) of faith, in and through the community of faith, while the infant baptism emphasizes the corporate faith and the faith which the child shares with its parents. According to BEM, “All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ’s faithfulness unto death.”93

BEM also attests that baptism is to be administered with water and using the Trinitarian formula. The act of immersion is recommended, so as to vividly express the reality that in baptism the Christian participates in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Baptism is not to be repeated, and any practice which might be interpreted as re-baptism must be avoided.94

In its response to BEM’s statements on baptism, the RCC carefully points out places where further work could be done and suggests language that could strengthen and deepen the convergence. The interim report of the Catholic Theological Society of America on “the Lima document” (another common name for BEM) on baptism finds that: BEM does not address the re-institution of the catechumenate, and thus weakens the treatment of conversion; the ecclesiastical mediatory role is not underscored by the text; the effect of

93 Ibid. 12.
94 Ibid. 13–18.
infant baptism is not properly treated; the theology of original sin is omitted; and the relationship between baptism and confirmation is not handled well.  

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored post-Vatican II teaching on the sacrament of baptism, and examined it in an ecumenical context. Selected official documents of the RCC indicate that baptism is a bond of unity among Christians. Karl Rahner’s work has been helpful in an exploration of the meaning of baptism, and why the divine grace afforded through this sacrament does not pertain to individuals alone. Human beings have received an irrevocable divine gift freely from God, even though they may be unaware of it, and even though people’s inner presence of grace may be with or without apparent outer embodiment and manifestation. Baptism is nonetheless an epiphany of the divine life, insofar as this life is also a Christian one, and therefore ecclesial.

Susan Wood’s and Kenan Osborne’s works articulate the ecclesial and ecumenical meanings of baptism and why it is a sacrament of faith. Recent ecumenical agreements between various churches and the RCC on the nature of baptism assist in seeing how important baptism is, and why it must be a foundation for other sacraments. This is one of the WCC’s concerns in its BEM document, discovering areas of convergence for mutual recognition of baptism among churches. This exploration of RCC baptism and ecumenical pursuits offers a framework for how Christian rapprochement in Nigeria could look.

Chapter 2  
The Aladura Church

2.1 Introduction

As with other churches in Nigeria, the AC holds the sacrament of baptism in high esteem. Baptism was one of the issues that led to the emergence of the AC from Anglicanism around 1922.\textsuperscript{96} The AC Article of Faith (No.7) professes belief “in the water baptism by immersion for the believers only, which is a direct commandment of our Lord, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{97} Despite the AC not having an extensive theology of baptism, it insists that baptism by immersion is a command from Christ and the Holy Bible.\textsuperscript{98} This chapter will study the historical development, growth and beliefs of the AC in Nigeria. It will also examine and clarify the AC position concerning the doctrine and practice of baptism, inculturation, and the Lord’s Supper.

2.2 History of the Aladura Church in Nigeria

The name \textit{Aladura} has its origin in the Yoruba\textsuperscript{99} word for prayer, \textit{adura}. It means the “prayer people,” demonstrating the AC’s emphasis on the power of prayer. Indeed, it is a commonly held belief among AC members that God answers all prayers. Just as aspects of a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[98] Matthew 28:19-20.
\item[99] The Yoruba tribe are an ethnic group which constitute almost 21\% of the population of Nigeria and this translates to about 40 million people. They inhabit the southwestern part of Nigeria but also live in other countries in West Africa including Benin Republic, Ghana, Togo and surprisingly Brazil and the Caribbean.
\end{footnotes}
uniquely African theology arose as a reaction\textsuperscript{100} to the insensitivity of foreign theologians and colonialism, so also the AC developed as a reaction to the failure of missionaries to relate Christianity to the traditional African world view.\textsuperscript{101} The missionaries were limited by their own culture, and they worked hand-in-hand with colonial governments. They neglected to pay attention to the culture of the Africans.

The co-operation of church and state extended beyond a strictly religious field: “The attacks on polygamy and the ancestor-cults of Africa were conducted by both secular and religious authorities.”\textsuperscript{102} Missionaries often condemned the traditional African way of life and wanted to transform Africans into “Black Europeans.”\textsuperscript{103} Africans who came forward for baptism were asked to choose “Christian” names, meaning European ones, since African names were unworthy of Christian faith.\textsuperscript{104} According to Bénézet Bujo:

The measures against African rituals and customs were executed by the colonial government with the full co-operation of the missionaries of the Catholic Church. These were deeply marked with the Roman spirit, which took it for granted that the catechism used in the Roman West was entirely suitable for Africa, and considered that in the work of evangelization the emphasis must be on stamping out savage and immoral customs. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the missionaries adopted an attitude of blanket condemnation of African culture in all its aspects.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{100} Bénézet Bujo, \textit{African Theology in Its Social Context} (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 49.


\textsuperscript{102} Bujo, \textit{African Theology in Its Social Context}, 44.

\textsuperscript{103} Ositelu, \textit{African Instituted Churches: Diversities, Growth, Gifts, Spirituality, and Ecumenical Understanding of African Initiated Churches}, 47.

\textsuperscript{104} Bujo, \textit{African Theology in Its Social Context}, 45.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 44–45.
The AC started as a prayer group within the Anglican Church. The prayer group provided spiritual support and healing for victims of the influenza epidemic that invaded West Africa in 1918, which claimed some 250,000 lives in southern Nigeria. Initially, the group had no intention to form a separate church under the name Aladura. However, due to the opposition encountered by the group from the Anglican leadership in Nigeria and the charges of practising syncretism levelled against it, it separated from the Anglican Church. The group first began a branch in Lagos State, Nigeria, and was later affiliated with Faith Tabernacle, a North American non-Pentecostal, fundamentalist church. The literature of Faith Tabernacle emphasized divine healing and adult baptism by immersion. Eventually, the relationship between Faith Tabernacle and the Aladura diminished. The reasons included doctrinal differences over the Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit, particularly speaking in tongues; an unaccommodating attitude by missionaries; the unavailability of Bibles in the indigenous language; and the introduction of cultural tradition into Christianity by the Aladura.

The prayer group split into four churches, which broke away at different times from the Faith Tabernacle in southwest Nigeria. These include: the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), founded by St. Moses Orimolade Tunolase; the Church of the Lord (Aladura), founded by Primate Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu; the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), founded by Prophet Joseph Ayo Babalola; and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), founded by Samuel Bada Oshofa.

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The founder of the AC, Oshitelu, was a native of Ogere, Ijebu Remo in Ogun State, Nigeria. He was a school teacher and catechist in the Anglican Church before his call to ministry. While still a teacher, he began having a series of intense visionary experiences in 1925. An old prophet named Somoye investigated, and he explained that Oshitelu had been called to work in God’s vineyard as a prophet. After this Oshitelu heard a series of voices, confirming what the old prophet had predicted. Oshitelu grew in spiritual development, through the disciplines of fasting and prayer. He later participated in the great revival of 1930, but he separated himself from Faith Tabernacle because its leaders did not accept his visions of “holy names.”

He established his own “Church of the Lord Aladura” in July of 1930.

Oshitelu began the AC with just the ten people who attended its inauguration at Ogere. Oshitelu and his disciples promptly embarked on mass evangelization and revival, which yielded fruitful results. The AC spread quickly within Nigeria, especially in the southwest. Reasons for its growth include the provision of moral and spiritual support and healing for the people; revelation of past history and future events; interpretation of dreams; inculturated forms of worship and uses of the vernacular. Other popularizing features were

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108 The AC was noted for the use of sacred words and secret names for God which are referred to as the ‘holy names.’ This practice belongs to a spiritual template for invoking the Holy Spirit. Examples include: Ajagorah, Huillah, Aogola Sakula, Elli Yowarah, Yawotta-Saharah, Iyama, Elli, Ajuba, Sajubba and Kajubba. These were considered to be names for the power-changed attributes of God. These names were in most cases the exclusive realm of the “glossosolates” (Elemi). Oduwole, one of the foundational prophets, claimed that “through the great power of the Holy Ghost… the Almighty God revealed abundantly most of His secret Holy Names to the people of this Church, the power of the Names, the Virtue, the riches, and the way to use them.” (Cf. Harold W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church II: The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord (Aadura)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 272; Also, Jegede Gabriel Gbenga, “The Church of the Lord (Aladura, CLA): An Examination of a Charismatic Movement [sic] in Ekitiland (South-Western Nigeria), 1937-2005” in *Medwell Journals*, “The Social Sciences,” (2010), Vol. 5, No. 2, p.94. http://docsdrive.com/pdfs/medwelljournals/sscience/2010/89-95.pdf.

based on individuals’ search for spiritual development or a real power, with some conversions involving a change of life like stopping drinking.\(^{110}\) In 1945, Oshitelu embarked on the expansion of the AC beyond Nigeria, to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, the United States, London and other parts of Europe. According to the WCC as of 2015, the AC has approximately 3.6 million members and 2,000 pastors.\(^{111}\)

2.2.1 Doctrine of the Aladura Church

AC doctrine was drawn from the doctrines of the antecedent churches from which it broke away. The AC teaches six major tenets. First, the AC describes the Bible as the supreme authority, and teaches and accepts the infallibility of the Bible, citing the word of God to support all matters of faith and morality. Second, it ascribes the administration of the church to the direction and influence of the Spirit. Third, the AC teaches that evangelism is its primary goal. Fourth, the AC teaches that every member is endowed with prophetic power for the benefit of humanity. Fifth, the AC teaches that it is established for the social benefit and blessing of the society and community where it is situated. Sixth, the AC embraces and encourages brotherly and sisterly love among the believers.\(^{112}\) Adejobi, who became the primate after Oshitelu, summarizes: “In the Church of the Lord you know neither poverty nor want. There is the spirit of brotherhood, and one’s sorrow or joy is the sorrow or joy of another. There is no distinction of class…. We pray, serve, and worship God together; we eat


in common. This is the secret of the success of the Church of the Lord. Because there is brotherly love, the Spirit of God dwells among its members.”

Beyond the six major tenets, the AC professes 13 other articles:

i. That God inspired both Old and New Testaments.

ii. That our God is a Trinity in Unity manifested in three persons but one in essence: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

iii. In the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Virginal Birth, in His Sinless Life, in His Miracles, in His Vicarious and Atoning Death on the Cross, in His Bodily Resurrection, in His Ascension to the Right Hand of the Father, and in His Personal Return in power and glory.

iv. In the Regeneration by the Holy Spirit for the salvation of the lost and sinful person, through faith in the Redeeming Blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for all at Calvary.

v. In a life of holiness without which no person can see the Lord, through sanctification as a definite, yet progressive, work of grace.

vi. In the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, received subsequent to the new birth with the speaking of other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gives utterance through grace, as the initial physical sign and evidence. And it is the same Holy Spirit of God that is filling the hearts of those who diligently seek Him today.

vii. In the water baptism by immersion for the believers only, which is a direct commandment of our Lord, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

viii. In observing the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus proclaiming the Lord’s death till He returns.

ix. That Divine Healing is provided for in redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, and is available to all who truly believe.

x. In the pre-millennial second advent of Jesus, first to resurrect the righteous dead and to take away the living saints to meet Him in the air; and second, to be with Him and reign with Him a thousand years.

xi. In the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost, they that are saved unto resurrection of life, and they that are lost into the resurrection of damnation.

xii. In living a holy, sanctified life. We believe in divine healing, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God on everyone who calls on the name of the Lord diligently and as allotted to each one individually as the Spirit chooses.

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In the body of Christ and in the communion of believers. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.\textsuperscript{114}

These articles adapt the Apostles’ Creed. They include faith in the Trinity, which comprises of the Father, the maker of all things, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (articles i–v); baptism into the life of the Trinity (v–vii), which transforms Christians into likeness of God in preparation for the eschatological events which await everyone at the end; and the final resurrection, the communion of saints, and final judgement (articles x–xiii).

\textbf{2.2.2 Aspects of Inculturation in the Aladura Church}

A factor that led to the development and growth of the AC in Nigeria is its insistence on giving Christianity an African “colouration.”\textsuperscript{115} The AC is pragmatic in contextualizing Christianity in African culture. It responds to the problems and needs of the people in an African way, with an African worldview. According to R.C. Mitchell, “whatever motivated the Aladura leaders and their followers was a desire to reform existing Mission Protestant Christianity and make it more relevant to the needs of the daily African life.”\textsuperscript{116} No religious movement emerges in a historical or social vacuum, and the AC is conditioned by a number of factors. These include spiritual, cultural, political, and social factors that have visible effects in the church’s worship, celebrations and ceremonies. In particular, there are aspects of inculturation within the AC: within the AC:


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 21.
i. **Inculturated liturgy**

The AC introduces elements of African culture in its liturgy, whereby the worship becomes more meaningful and open to the expectations of African people. These include singing, drumming, clapping and dancing.\(^{117}\) Most of the songs are indigenous featuring traditional lyrics, and they are accompanied by the ringing of bells and the use of native musical instruments. Unlike the mainstream churches, which usually designate a separate place for the choir while the congregants most time only participate in the songs by listening, the AC’s worship is relaxed, and members are fully involved in its liturgy from the beginning to the end. In the words of Ayandele, “the individual is a heart and soul participant in the service and not the passive members who allow only the clergy and the key officials to be *dramatis personae.*”\(^{118}\) Also T. D. Oye expresses:

… during services, many would kneel as they sang praises in reverence to God. The lifting up of hands, eyes, and voluntary shouts became normal practices at worship. Members also went into trance and prophecies were uttered freely in the congregations. These spiritual phenomena were enhanced by the use of indigenous elements that had been brought into the church ... local instruments like "gangan," "agogo," "akuba," "omele," "ako," "omele abo," "agidigbo," "selt," "sekere," among others are extensively used. Prayer is spontaneous and everyone participates in clapping, dancing, singing, and delivering messages.\(^{119}\)

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\(^{117}\) Ibid., 27.


With AC practices, instruments dedicated to various deities in African Traditional Religion (ATR) are now used at church worship. According to world religion scholar Caleb Oladipo, the AC integrates the wisdom of ATR into its own Christian life.\textsuperscript{120}

ii. Ancestral veneration:

One of the difficulties of the early missionaries was a lack of understanding of the African worldview. “The ancestors,” argues Bujo, “are models for the living. Time and history are real, irreversible and unrepeatable.”\textsuperscript{121} Charles Nyamiti defined an ancestor as:

\begin{quote}

a relative of a person with whom he has a common parent, and of whom he is mediator to God, archetype of behavior, and with whom – thanks to his supernatural status acquired through death – he is entitled to have regular communication.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

Evocation of the spirit of the ancestors is peculiar to ATR. Most divinities, in spite of their physical representation, are believed to be spirits. These spirit-divinities are often summoned during festive occasions to communicate with worshippers. This culture of evocation of spirits has a great influence on the prophetic activities of the AC. Traditionally, the dead are not dead, and according to Oladipo, “ancestrology and pneumatology were correlated positively in such a way that the functions of the ancestors and the functions of the Holy Spirit were understood to co-exist in mutual coordination.”\textsuperscript{123} Thus, in prayer the AC evokes the spirit of the ancestors and especially the spirit of its founder. This is similar to the

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\textsuperscript{121} Bujo, \textit{African Theology in Its Social Context}, 30.

\textsuperscript{122} Charles Nyamiti, \textit{Christ As Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective} (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984), 35.

\end{flushright}
intercession of saints in the RCC, although the AC does not wait for canonization. Leaders who have departed the world become ancestors and are capable of assisting the living.

iii. **Emphasis on prayer:**

The AC emphasizes prayer not only as the bedrock of its doctrine and practice, but also as the fountainhead of all blessings and successes. The church’s name, the *Aladura* ("praying people"), asserts centrality of prayer. Thus, members of AC pray several times both day and night, and observe hours of prayers, as in Judaism. Special places like mountain tops, lake shores, and consecrated gardens are designated for prayers of various types and are given specific names, such as “mercy land” (*ile aanu*), “place of refuge” (*abe abo*), and “garden of deliverance” (*ogba ominira*). It is a custom of the AC to regularly go to a sacred hill or mountain, desert or seaside to pray. Each year the AC communally visits one of the special and designated places, "Mount Taborar,"\(^{124}\) where they spend a whole week at prayer. This is an annual spiritual pilgrimage, part of the inspirations of the founder, Oshitelu.

iv. **Spiritual interpretation:**

As with ATR, the AC gives spiritual interpretation to virtually all life events. Misfortune, failures in life, illness, unemployment, barrenness, disappointment, and other life problems are interpreted with spiritual meaning, and thus demand spiritual investigations and deliverance services. Members believe that the intervention of the Holy Spirit features

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\(^{124}\) Taborah is a name revealed to Oshitelu that stands for a mountain of power and victory. It is an annual pilgrimage to a designated place and is a custom of the AC, imitating Christ and based on the influence of ATR. Cf. The Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide [TCLAW] Organisation *Tabieorar Festival*, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.aladura.net/tabieorar.htm.
prominently in worship, manifested through visions, interpretation of dreams, ecstatic
behaviour, and prophetic utterances.

v. Polygamy:

The AC does not see polygamy as a violation of religious principle; rather, polygamy
is claimed to be rooted in African traditional heritage\textsuperscript{125} faith. It blames the missionaries for
their failure to understand the African institution of marriage, which is different from the
monogamy of the Western world. According to Bujo, polygamy is the best way of ensuring
an abundance of children, and it contributes to the stability of marriage by rendering divorce
superfluous.\textsuperscript{126} Unlike some mainline churches which present catechumens with an
undignified choice between “baptism or wives,” which seems to have little to do with the
love of Christ,\textsuperscript{127} the AC welcomes polygamists into the sacramental life of the church. The
first primate of the AC, Oshitelu, had many wives, and he claimed that God permitted this as
a compensation for obeying God’s order to enter the ministry first before thinking of
marriage.\textsuperscript{128}

vi. Interest in divine healing:

To promote evangelization and social development, the early missionaries cut off
African Christians from African medicine, and especially from the African herbalist who had

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Ibid126} Ibid.
\bibitem{Ibid127} Ibid.
\bibitem{Ayegboyin and Ishola128} Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, \textit{African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective}, 95–
96.
\end{thebibliography}
come to be styled “witch doctor” or “medicine man.” They introduced new medical care with expensive imported medication, which many poor people were unable to afford. With the practice of *cura divina* (divine healing), through water and prayer, the AC became a refuge for the sick. Indeed, sickness is by far the most common reason which people give for attending Aladura worship. The AC sets aside special days (usually Wednesday and Friday) for healing. AC members believing themselves to be healed see their unique understanding of the Bible as a potent remedy for their experience of affliction: “In Africa ministry will be judged deficient if it does not treat healing as a function of religion.” Healing becomes a strong asset for AC evangelism.

vii. **Attention given to women:**

The AC is one of the indigenous churches that accord an elevated position to women. Despite the principle of equality among sexes preached by the mission churches, men usually hold the principal positions of authority. However, in the AC, as in ATR, women are bishops, deaconesses and prophetesses, and in some cases they are allowed to establish and head local Aladura churches. The presence and involvement of women with charismatic gifts is eminent in the AC, since women make up a great majority of their membership. According to Allan Anderson, “The ministry of women accorded well with the traditional prominence of women in African religious rituals and contrasted with the prevailing practice of older churches, most

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130 Ibid., 29.


132 Ibid., 254
of whom barred women from entering the ministry or even from taking any part in public worship."\(^{133}\)

2.3 **Baptism in the Aladura Church**

Baptism is an integral part of the life and practice of the AC. Since the AC has its roots in Anglicanism, its teaching on the baptism is similar to that of the Anglican Communion in Nigeria, and baptism is seen as a command from God. The Catechism of the AC, articles 47–50\(^{134}\) are devoted to the sacrament of baptism. The AC teaches that infant baptism is inappropriate and forbidden, because infants by themselves cannot confess their faith (Catechism of AC, no. 47). Thus, baptism is administered only to adults, ages eighteen and above, who are able to confess their faith and give an account of their stewardship. In place of infant baptism, the AC adopted the Yoruba traditional culture of a naming ceremony and child dedication as ways for welcoming a child into the community.\(^{135}\)

According to Harold Turner, a Protestant theologian and sociologist, one of the reasons for the rejection of infant baptism was to make a major change from the form of Christianity brought to Nigeria from the West.\(^{136}\) Also, the AC understands the meaning and function of baptism as a sacrament of regeneration and forgiveness of sin. According to the catechism of the AC, infants are sinless and, by themselves, cannot confess their faith. Since everybody shall give account of his or her stewardship before God, the idea of sponsorship is

\(^{133}\) Ibid.
\(^{134}\) Turner, *History of an African Independent Church II*, 181.
\(^{135}\) Ibid., 182–186.
\(^{136}\) Ibid., 188.
not acceptable in the AC.\textsuperscript{137} The interpretation of baptism and the nature of the church cannot be left out.\textsuperscript{138} Josiah Oshitelu, came from a pagan family and was twelve years old when he was baptized in a Christian school. Christianity was new in Nigeria, and missionaries who introduced Western education in Nigeria made denominational baptism a compulsory exercise for admissions into mission schools. Thus, baptism was seen as a corollary of schooling.\textsuperscript{139} In this case, the understanding of the sacrament of baptism depended on the particular mission school. In addition, the AC was encouraged to adopt believers’ baptism through the influence of Faith Tabernacle and kindred churches with Baptist views.\textsuperscript{140}

It is possible to see the AC’s reasons for rejecting infant baptism as limiting the grace of God. Karl Rahner argues that the grace contained in the sacrament of baptism and other sacraments is a free gift given to everyone. However, the AC argues that God’s grace is not limited to baptism. Those who have not yet reached the age of believers’ baptism can continue to be nurtured in faith and love in the church until they have attained the full knowledge of faith, and eventually consciously request baptism.

The AC views baptism as “the mode of entry into a particular church wherein one promises to abide by the Rules and Regulations, rather than as incorporation into Christ and hence into the church universal as His body.”\textsuperscript{141} This explains why, in practice, almost all who migrate from other churches where they have been previously baptized will voluntarily

\textsuperscript{137} Turner, \textit{History of an African Independent Church II}, 181.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 189.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{141} Turner, \textit{History of an African Independent Church II}, 197.
request to be re-baptized in the AC. For the AC, this practise is not a “re-baptism,” since the AC is the “real” Church of Christ in Africa, as claimed by its first primate.\textsuperscript{142} In his defence of the AC, Turner writes:

\begin{quote}
We must not try to judge the independent churches solely as the end-products of Christian missions in Africa; in one sense they are, but in another respect they represent new Christian beginnings of the kind that could serve the reformation of the ancient faith.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

Oshitelu claimed the AC is not a new religion, but the resurrection of the “dead” faith; it is the last church, and the one that Jesus Christ will come and meet at the Second Advent.\textsuperscript{144}

For the AC, baptism is the representation of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ,\textsuperscript{145} and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to confer the new life of Christ on the recipient.\textsuperscript{146} There is no haste or urgency in baptism, as people can become actively involved in the church’s activities, and remain in the church for as long as they desire without any supposition that their position is irregular. There is an exception for this if someone wants to become a leader or an officer,\textsuperscript{147} meaning, no one can be appointed into a position of leadership in the AC without being baptized.

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\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 197, 318–319.  \\
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 319.  \\
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 318.  \\
\textsuperscript{145} Turner, \textit{History of an African Independent Church II}, 195.  \\
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 194.  \\
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 190.
\end{flushright}
The ministers of baptism in the AC are the bishops and apostles, although these may sometimes delegate their authority to other ministers. Baptism requires catechetical instruction beforehand, which includes the memorization of “the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.” The Decalogue might be omitted for those who can neither read nor write. Baptism in the AC involves a three-fold immersion in moving or “living” water, such as a flowing river or the sea. For this reason, baptism is not celebrated in the church but in the open, and it is not celebrated during the dry season, when streams are dry.

There are two types of baptism practiced by the AC - the water baptism and the Holy Spirit baptism. There is also a secondary communion liturgy, the Lord’s Supper.

2.3.1 Water Baptism

The AC confers adult baptism by immersion, which is known as believers’ baptism. It requires the full consent of an individual seeking the sacrament of baptism. Prior to a baptism, the minister must consecrate the river or sea with a wooden cross planted near the particular river or sea spot chosen. After an interrogation in the form of questions and

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148 Ministry in the AC is of two categories, depending on the kinds of gifts possessed by the individual. The first category is for those who possess the spiritual gifts of visions, revelations, and prophecies. These are promoted through the various grades of prophet to that of the apostle. The second category is for those who possess other gifts such as pastoral, preaching, or administrative ability. These proceed from the office of captain to that of bishop. The office of apostle is ranked above bishop, since an apostle is expected to have both spiritual and administrative gifts, and thus can be elevated to succeed the primate. Cf. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church II.*, 36–41.

149 Ibid., 190.

150 Ibid., 189.

answers, the minister immerses the candidate three times in the water, with the statement, “I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”\textsuperscript{152}

The minister and all who are present offer prayers for the person being baptized, for steadfastness, for freedom from the bondage of Satan, and for the empowerment by the Holy Spirit for a true rebirth and newness of life. The newly baptized wears a white garment and carries a wooden cross, a symbol of discipleship. The cross is also a reminder that the baptized has been commissioned to carry out the mission of Christ; that is, the mission of preaching the gospel with prophetic power. The baptized is given palm-fronds, symbolizing victory and again, a call to discipleship.

2.3.2 Holy Spirit Baptism

The AC emphasizes the prophetic office of Christ and promotes a call to the priesthood for every believer,\textsuperscript{153} whereby everyone is called to exercise the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, typically only one in twenty people receiving water baptism manifests any sign of possession of gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{154} As a result, there is another service in the church after the water baptism, where the participants are prayed for in order to receive the manifestation of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{155} This is called the “Holy Spirit baptism.” More will be said on this in the third chapter of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 194.

2.3.3 The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper was a later development in the AC, beginning in 1953. The celebration is modeled on Anglican practice in Nigeria and is held infrequently. It must be at night, between 9 and 11 p.m., to literally imitate the last supper of Christ and his disciples. “It must be in private, behind closed doors and windows.” In the life of the AC, water and Holy Spirit baptism receive more emphasis than the Lord’s Supper. There is little about the Lord’s Supper in the catechism of AC. One of the motives for the development of the Lord’s Supper in the AC was a desire to imitate the older churches, and have everything that a “proper” church should have.

For the Lord’s Supper within the AC, “only the order for the consecration of an apostle confers a permanent mandate to celebrate the sacrament, but an apostle can extend this authority to ministers down to the rank of prophet.” Unlike the RCC’s Latin rite, which limits the matter of the Eucharist to unleavened bread and fermented grape wine, the AC uses any “genuine wine,” and ordinary (leavened) bread broken into pieces. Admission to the Lord’s Supper in the AC is open to every baptized member, including polygamists, but few members regularly attend, because of the conditions attached to reception. It is only open

157 Ibid., 201.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid., 219.
160 Ibid., 201.
161 Ibid. Genuine wine in the AC refers to the any alcoholic drink.
to those who are “clean,” that is, those who have gone through the ritual act of purification according to the custom of the AC.

An AC communion service is divided into two major parts. The first is called a “purificatory rite,” comprising the ritual action of sprinkling of water, modeled on ATR practice. This is linked to a foot-washing as found in the Gospel of John, when Christ washed the feet of his disciples, prior to the celebration of the Last Supper (John 13:3–11.) The second part is the communion meal, involving the drinking of wine. This bears a covenantal significance, since blood covenants are practised among the Yoruba religions from which the AC developed. Theologically, the AC understands the Lord’s Supper as commemorating the atoning sacrifice of Christ through which those who participate in the Lord’s Supper receive life and are washed and healed.

2.4 Conclusion

The AC is gaining ground in Nigeria not just because it preaches a gospel of liberation that is less doctrinally static, but because it adapted Christianity to the culture and worldview of the black people. It is an African Christianity that is all-embracing and all-involved. “The AC derives its great value in part from its readiness to admit failings in European Christianity: tendentiousness, didacticism, prolixity and obscurity in liturgy,

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162 To be “clean” is to be free of sins which can bring shame and dishonor to the Church of God, including hatred, animosity, immorality, and unforgiveness. Women who are having their menstrual period and those in any state of sin are charged to stay away from communion service. Ibid., 202.


164 Ibid., 215.

165 Ibid., 215–217.
superficiality in community, exclusiveness in the apprehension of spiritual truth.”  

The AC lays claim to the pulpit and preaches an undiluted Word in a very simple and contextualised manner. Anderson accords the AC a pneumatology that is contextual and remains consistent with the biblical revelation. While openly condemning practices that are not biblically inspired, the AC has biblically adapted ATR styles through worship, polity, and ethos to meet Africans’ felt needs. Polygamy is accepted as being one of the peculiarities of some Africans; in the AC, polygamists are actively involved in the church’s affairs.

The attitude of the AC to the older churches is kindly and tolerant, as to all fellow Christians, although it claims authenticity in its need to reform Christianity. Other Christian and Western writers have criticized the AC. It is labelled as syncretistic and is seen as a bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism. However, Rufus Ositelu argues, “those who labelled the AC as syncretistic should be reminded that no religion has ever existed in a cultural vacuum and that culture has always been the solvent of religion.”

For the part of the RCC, Nigerian Roman Catholic theologians and anthropologists have produced volumes on inculturation wherein, according to Nathaniel Ndiokwere, “Emphasis has been on the theories and dynamics of inculturation and little effort has been

170 Ibid.
devoted to experimentation or projects on the practical side of inculturation.”\textsuperscript{171} Successes by the RCC toward some level of inculturation can only be described as minimal, and most of these have not gone beyond “experimentation” on a local level. Most bishops in the Nigerian RCC have been cautious with “innovations” since the case of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo of Luzaka, Zambia. He was summoned to the Vatican and eventually stepped down from his position as Archbishop of Lusaka after criticism for exorcism and faith-healing practices unapproved by church authorities. The issue that Milingo brought to a crisis was inculturation: the development of an authentic African Christianity growing out of African values, including spiritual ones.\textsuperscript{172}

The practice of re-baptising still lingers in the AC, due to strong pneumatology. “The power of the Spirit,” argues Turner, “is the secret of the victories over enemies, which have some share in all human troubles.”\textsuperscript{173} The AC emphasizes the prophetic office of Christ, whereby everyone is called to an active prophetic mission. Everyone in the AC, both old and young, is a prophet or prophetess. To possess the power of the Holy Spirit in the AC demands Holy Spirit baptism, which must be preceded by water baptism of believers. A prospective communicant from other churches recognized by the AC may be admitted as a member, but in practice, almost all who transfer from other churches where they were

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\textsuperscript{173} Turner, \textit{History of an African Independent Church II}, 318.
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baptized will sooner or later be re-baptized.\textsuperscript{174} The AC does not admit that it practices re-
baptism since,

the AC is the resurrection of a dead faith. Therefore come and see for yourself. There are millions of our brother Christians today that have missed the way and they go astray….\textsuperscript{175}

The Nigerian RCC in turn practices conditional baptism, since being one of the ethnic or regional based sectarian churches, doubt usually arises concerning baptism conferred by the AC.\textsuperscript{176}

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the AC attaches little importance to the Lord’s Supper. Although the Lord’s Supper is not restricted to the monogamous, at the same time, it is not a public celebration, and most members of the AC have little knowledge of it. The celebration is held in a private setting, at night, behind closed doors and windows. This practice of having a private and separate celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the AC raises a theological question: is it part of initiation?

Since baptism is an important sacrament without which no one is admitted to the table of the Lord, the question arises: are both churches not practising the same thing, with the same intention, but in different forms? The next chapter will compare the liturgical rites of the AC and RCC, to assess areas of convergence and divergence.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 319.
\textsuperscript{176} Ojaje Idoko, e-mail message to the author on the validity of baptism by the Aladura Church in Nigeria, August 29, 2015. Ojaje Idoko is the director of pastoral and liturgical affairs, Catholic Secretariat Abuja, Nigeria.
Chapter 3
Comparison of Liturgical Rites of Adult Baptism

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter surveyed the historical development and growth of the AC in Nigeria and its practice and theology of baptism. The emphasis on pneumatology gives rise to Holy Spirit baptism, which members receive subsequent to the water baptism. This chapter will compare baptism by the two churches and address the following theological questions: How is the second baptism in the AC similar to confirmation in the RCC? Can baptism be validly conferred twice? How do the liturgical baptismal rites of the RCC and AC compare? I will investigate these questions by reviewing the similarities and differences between the AC’s and RCC initiation rites, including water and Holy Spirit baptism.

3.2 Baptism in Water

Water is an integral component in the sacrament of baptism, by which Christians participate in the death and resurrection of Christ. Just as Jesus died, and from death God raised him to newness of life, so also at baptism, Christians symbolically die by going down into the primordial water of baptism, and from there God raises them to newness of life.\(^\text{177}\)

The early church emphasized the analogy of womb and birth, as explained by Jesus in the Gospel of John 3:5, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into heaven.” The early church also emphasized the tomb, death, and resurrection, as in Paul’s “We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from

\(^{177}\) Michael G. Lawler, Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology (Omaha, Nebraska: Creighton University Press, 1995), 63–64.
the dead by the glory of the Father, [the elect] too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

Cyril of Jerusalem echoed this in his second mystagogical catechism:

Afterwards you were led to the holy pool of divine baptism, as Christ was borne from the cross to the prepared sepulchre. And each was asked whether he believed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And you confessed the saving faith and were immersed three times in the water and emerged again. In this way you signified in image and in symbol the three-day burial of Christ …. In the very same moment you were both dead and born, and that saving water became both tomb and mother (womb) for you.178

Tertullian explained the mystery of life that one receives at baptism: “water first produced that which had life.”179 Thus, for the early Church, baptism was conceived as a new creation, a new birth, effected in and through the ritual water by the Spirit of God, without any merit on the part of man or woman.180 Augustine extended the meaning of baptism when he introduced the theology of original sin in the RCC. For Augustine, baptism not only cleansed personal sin, but also the sin of the human race that came to be known as original sin.181

The symbolism of water in the AC church models that of ATR. In Nigeria and in almost all sub-Saharan African societies, water is seen as a product of divine action.182 The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, from which the AC has its origin, have a worldview that uses water as a symbol at different levels: mythical, mystical, natural and metaphorical. The

178 Ibid.
179 Lawler, Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology, 65.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
transportation of water from its profane use to sacred value is expressed in various Yoruba proverbs and narratives.\textsuperscript{183} Rivers, lakes, springs, and seas are believed by the Yoruba to have spirits dwelling in them, and cults were constructed for them. Some of these waters are believed to be the metamorphosis of certain divinities like Yemoja, Oya, Osun and Oba.\textsuperscript{184} These water divinities share common characteristics, such as a dual existence or nature. Each river, lake, or sea has a primordial existence, with some principal divinities (\textit{irunmole}), and a human nature through which state they live as human beings. Also, they are female at both their divine and ecological states. The waters fetched from these rivers are used for medicinal purposes.\textsuperscript{185}

Leaders of the AC claim that they receive revelations and authority to use water for healing.\textsuperscript{186} During AC revival services, members usually sing to show their belief and expectation of miracles through the use of water.\textsuperscript{187} It is not uncommon for some people to willingly surrender themselves for AC baptism for healing or liberation from barrenness and other social evils; baptism is considered to be a remedy for sin, and sin weakens a person and deprives them of healing and strength.\textsuperscript{188} Therefore, baptismal water is considered to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 25.
\item\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{186} Cf. Section 2.2.2 above.
\item\textsuperscript{187} Ogunbile, “Water Symbolism in African Culture and Afro-Christian Churches,” 29.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
especially effective for healing purposes in connection with so-called cultural diseases, that is, diseases associated with sorcery and evil spirits.\textsuperscript{189}

The renewal of RCC baptismal theology and practice mandated by Vatican II restored to the very center of Church practice a set of powerful rites, which in themselves owe little or nothing to the neo-Augustinianism of medieval scholastics. The rites also bear witness to a far less atomized and more holistic view of sacramental worship in the Church’s life.\textsuperscript{190} In this respect, baptism goes far beyond a mere rite of exorcism to one that addresses culpability in both infants and adults. “It is a paradigm of how faith in Jesus is to be lived. It is a pastoral-sacramental process of nurturing that stretches back prior to the water bath into catechesis, conversion, and initial evangelization. It also extends into the living of a sacramental life of faith, prayer, good works and asceticism.”\textsuperscript{191}

Baptism in both the RCC and AC reaches its most intense point in the water bath. However, the present practice in both churches reveals that baptism is not seen just as a water bath, but as incorporation into Christ and his church.

3.3 Liturgy of Baptism in the Roman Catholic and Aladura Churches

The word “rite” is used in a variety of ways. It may refer to the order of service for celebrating a particular sacrament like baptism, confirmation or the Eucharist. It may represent a liturgical or religious ritual process, which comprises ceremonies such as rites of

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{190} Kavanagh, \textit{The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation}, 92.

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 92–93.
initiation or passage. Talal Asad, an anthropologist and Islamic scholar, argues that ritual is not confined to Christianity or any religion; it is a symbolic unit that is integral to ordinary life.192 This symbolic unit is in the form of “objects, gestures, words, actions, relationships, and spatial arrangements, all of which interact within a ritual field.”193 The notion of a “ritual field” is complex and ever-expanding, since all its dimensions are significant. None of the elements that make up the ritual field can be isolated from one another. For instance, the sacrament of initiation must be studied within the ritual field of the Easter Vigil, which cannot be isolated from ritual field of the entire Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.194 Also, the rituals are produced and performed by social bodies of various kinds. Thus, ritual has anthropological, psychological and sociological meaning.

George Worgul, a contemporary sacramental theologian, differentiates rubrics from ritual. While rubrics are the red inscriptions in liturgical books, ritual is present in both secular and religious behaviour. Worgul cites the Episcopal priest and theologian Urban Holmes as defining ritual as “the repetition of those symbols which evoke the feeling of that primordial event initially called the community into being with such power that it effects our presence at that event… in other words, represents the primordial event.”195

Religious ritual falls into three categories for Worgul: magic, which attempts to control the divine; taboo, which seeks to isolate an individual or community from the divine;

194 Ibid., 31.
and relations, which endeavour to form a relational non-destructive bond between a community and the divine.\textsuperscript{196} Each of these three categories of ritual has in turn four elements, which are symbolism, consecration, repetition, and remembrance.

Worgul refines the definition of ritual as:

a medium or vehicle for communicating and sustaining a particular culture’s root metaphor, which is the focal point and permeating undercurrent for its world view. Through ritual’s operation, life’s binary-oppositions are contextualized within a culture’s metaphor and “resolved” into positive meaning for a culture’s individual members and the social unit as a whole. Ritual fulfills this function by placing the ritual participants in contact with the original charter-event, its past re-enactments, and its present celebration. … A people’s ritual is a code for understanding their interpretation of life.\textsuperscript{197}

Thus, according to Worgul, all the characteristics of ritual are exhibited in Christian sacraments.\textsuperscript{198}

In the last sixty years, Christian communities have come to rediscover and reclaim the early Church’s single complex rite of initiation. They have come to understand as a comprehensive process what is broadly termed “Christian initiation.” This is understood as an on-going process, with pre and post-baptismal formation into Christ, ending only with physical death and (the hope of) resurrection – the recapitulation of the baptismal act itself.\textsuperscript{199}

Baptismal rites across Christian communities generally include the following elements:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 224.
\item \textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
…proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism; an invocation of the Holy Spirit; a renunciation of evil; a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity; the use of water; a declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God; and, as members of the Church, are called to be witnesses of the Gospel.

The call for liturgical reform and the restoration of the catechumenate by the Second Vatican Council gives new meaning to the sacrament of baptism, and other sacraments, in the sense that the sacrament of baptism is no longer viewed as a single unit which can be isolated from the remaining two sacraments of initiation. Thus, the three sacraments of initiation are insufficient without each other. This is especially true in regard to adult baptism, or the baptism of a child advanced in years, which some consider “normative” Christian initiation. This does not mean that Vatican II documents anywhere denigrate the baptism of infants, or suggest that the baptism of infants does not represent the norm of Catholic tradition: “Equally, the Council nowhere suggests that the initiation of adults should be regarded either as exceptional or abnormal.” But, in the contemporary RCC, RCIA returns to the traditional norm of baptismal polity:

This is not just to provide liturgical recipes but to deal with the perennial Lebensprobleme that lie at the root of Christian communality in all its aspects—liturgical, ethical, doctrinal, ministerial, and ecclesial. Its purpose is to re-enforce where possible and re-create where needed the insights and structures that are capable of integrating facets of ecclesial life which strayed apart from each other in the past for a variety of reasons.

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200 Ibid., 218–219.
203 Ibid., 121.
The baptismal rite, according to Kavanagh, is ceremomial: “a perceptive vision of the radical unity of the faith lived in communion with God and its Church. This unity is economia – an elemental theological phenomenon that involves the richness of penetrating relationships sustained by divine initiative and faithful human response.” In other words, the baptismal rite in the RCC rests on the economic principle in which baptism, in itself, is inadequately perceptible apart from the Eucharist and cannot be isolated from the rites of Christian initiation. The RCC RCIA is a practicable vision of what the Church is and can become through the continuing renewal processes of evangelization, conversion, catechesis, and the paschal sacraments of Christian initiation. The liturgical reform of RCIA has four periods or stages.

The first is the period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate. During this period, the candidate is investigated. The local church tries to establish trust and communication with the inquirer. This culminates with the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumenate.

The second period is the catechumenate, during which doctrinal, liturgical, social and theological formation commences. The catechumen grows in faith and conversion to God. An important rite that takes place during the period of the catechumenate preceding enrolment is the rite of election, as stated in the RCIA ritual book:

Before the election is celebrated, the candidates are expected to have a conversion of mind and morals, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching, and a sense of faith and charity; a consideration of their worthiness is also required. Later, in the actual celebration of the rite, the manifestation of their intention and the decision of the bishop or his delegate should take place in the

204 Ibid.
205 Ibid., 127.
presence of the community. It is thus clear that the election, which enjoys such great solemnity, is the turning point in the whole catechumenate.\(^{206}\)

The bishop or his delegate is to preside at the rite of election, which is the focal point of the Church’s course for the catechumens.\(^{207}\) The catechumens are presented to the community, and the godparents or sponsors testify that the catechumens are worthy to be admitted to the sacraments of Christian initiation, and that they are sufficiently prepared to be enrolled among the elect.\(^{208}\)

The third period is that of illumination, purification and enlightenment. The catechumens are scrutinized and purified in preparation for the sacraments of initiation. This period, which is the shortest of all, takes place during the Lenten season. It is concluded by the liturgical celebration of the sacrament of initiation. The celebration is usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, during which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.

The fourth and final period is post-baptismal catechesis, known as mystagogy. This follows the celebration of initiation, typically during the Easter season, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community.

The AC has no catechumenate stages like the RCC. The naming ceremony introduces an infant into the AC church, and he or she continues to grow until the age of baptism, usually eighteen years. Through listening to the Word of God, the new adult convert


\(^{207}\) Ibid., no. 138, p. 63.

continues to grow in faith, until he or she decides to voluntarily demand baptism. After the new convert has made known his or her intention to be baptized, he or she is registered under a prophet of a lower rank who is in charge of Christian education. The candidate is asked to study and memorize the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.209

Before acceptance for baptism, which is the final stage, the candidate may be tested by the senior minister, who in turn certifies that the candidate is ready and worthy.210 The baptism takes place at the sea or at a river, in the presence of the assembly of the community which supports the candidate with prayer. “In some large congregations, the baptismal service is conducted several times a year, especially at the Mount Taborar season, in Holy Week, or some other important occasion; even Christmas Day has been chosen.”211

The final stage is the service for membership enrolment and Holy Spirit baptism. This takes place in the church after the water baptism and is held some distance away from the church building. The newly baptized, who might have fasted and prayed for three or seven days, will stand on the mercy ground with the minister and the church officers; there he or she rolls on the ground seven or twenty-one times, a cultural and symbolic act of humility and repentance. He or she makes a public confession of sins, and receives prayers for forgiveness from the officers. The newly baptized is sprinkled with holy water and given

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209 Turner, History of an African Independent Church II. 189.

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid., 189–190.
seven palm fronds for victory. He or she is led into the church for registration and payment of his tithes or dues, followed by prayers, during which the Holy Spirit is invoked.  

The Spirit baptism in the AC just as confirmation in the RCC differs considerably and theologically from the water baptism. By water baptism, the faithful are incorporated into the Church, appointed by their baptismal character to Christian religious worship, reborn as children of God, whereas confirmation renders them more perfectly bound to the Church and endowed them with the special strength of the Holy Spirit.

The AC has no solid theology of spirit baptism, rather it refers to the Pentecostal event in which the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles so as to empower them for mission (Acts 2: 1-10). Therefore, the AC gives a prominent place to the Spirit in its worship. According to Esther Obeng, “A common feature of the worship of the AC is tongues…” This is a compulsory gift for all baptised members, a sign for the reception of the Holy Spirit, as indicated in the AC articles of faith.

The RCC strictly maintains that the Holy Spirit is received at baptism, although the gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, is infinite. Confirmation therefore affords the faithful the opportunity to benefit from the increase of this gift, it imparts on the faithful the seven fold gifts of the Holy Spirit, which the faithful receives by the laying on of hands and the anointing with the oil of Chrism. Through confirmation, “Christians are consecrated and

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212 Turner, History of an African Independent Church II. 198–199.


214 Cf. 2.2.1, vi. Pp.36–38.
share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, so that their lives may give off the aroma of Christ.”  

The Faithful also receives a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action. It is essential to note that without a water baptism in both the AC and the RCC, one cannot proceed to receive the spirit baptism. Water baptism comes first and incorporates the faithful into the Church and Christ, while the spirit baptism is a zeal that completes baptism.

3.3.1 Roman Catholic Church and Aladura Church Liturgical Rites of Baptism

The structure of the baptismal rites of the RCC and AC are shown in the table found in the appendix. From this outline of the liturgical rites of baptism, and its relationship with confirmation and the Eucharist, some sensitive questions arise. These questions relate especially to the second baptism of the AC, and the laying-on of hands and anointing with Chrism in the confirmation of the RCC: Can there be more than one baptism? Bearing in mind that the RCC holds that the Holy Spirit is given at baptism, is there any need for another gift of the Holy Spirit? How do we reconcile that the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are unrepeatable, if the anointing with Chrism is done twice? What does confirmation add to the grace of baptism? Many early texts and the Church’s liturgy itself describe confirmation as the seal placed on what the baptism has brought about. Since the Spirit is already given at baptism, the grace of the gift is sealed liturgically. There is a single

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215 CCC., 1294.
216 See the appendix, 123.
process, the different aspects of which are detailed in the liturgy by its ritual expression of
them one after the other, including the baptism with water.\textsuperscript{218}

The confusion about baptism and confirmation or the Holy Spirit reception increases
in light of certain passages from the Scriptures. According to Catholic theologian Yves
Congar, through faith and baptism, “the believer begins a life in and through the Spirit,
serving ‘in the life of the Spirit’ (Rom 7:6; 8:2). The believer enters and follows the way of a
holy life.”\textsuperscript{219} This journey continues until the eschaton, when he or she will be deified. This
same Spirit who completed Jesus’ humanity (incarnation) as Son of God (through his
resurrection and glorification) does the same with us; we are of the flesh from the moment of
our birth, and the Spirit makes us children of God by adoption.\textsuperscript{220}

3.3.2 Holy Spirit Baptism

The expression “baptism in the Spirit” is of Pentecostal origin. Charles Fox Parham,
the founder of Pentecostalism, was originally a Methodist. At the heart of Pentecostalism was
a revivalist movement which taught and practiced the “second blessing,” also called “baptism
in the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{221} This was a rather emotional interior experience which converts to
Christianity experienced at some point in their spiritual growth. For Parham, the sign that
authenticated a baptism in the Holy Spirit was the gift of speaking in tongues. Thus, the
exercise of this charism began to spread during the succeeding decades in the new

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Phileppe Larere, \textit{Baptism in Water and Baptism in the Spirit: A Biblical, Liturgical, and
Theological Exposition} (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), 73.
Pentecostal Church. This began to influence a number Protestant churches, including the AC (although not without difficulty). Even the RCC was eventually affected through the post-Vatican II Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement.

In theory, the AC links the Holy Spirit to water baptism, but in practice due to a continuous presence of the Holy Spirit and daily experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their worship, the AC refers to it as the “second baptism” (baptism in the Spirit). This second baptism is a means through which newly water-baptized members receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is affirmed in the faith-statement of the AC: “In the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, received subsequent to the new birth with the speaking of other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gives utterance through grace, as the initial physical sign and evidence. And it is the same Holy Spirit of God that is filling the hearts of those who diligently seek Him today.”222 In view of the nature of the AC and its emphasis on Pentecostal gifts of the Holy Spirit, it may be expected that there would be manifestation of the gift of the Holy Spirit on the occasion of the first or water baptism. In most cases, however, not one in twenty show any sign of possession on the occasion of their baptism.223 The AC holds that the Holy Spirit manifests the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in the world: “It is not so much that Christ is ignored, as that his divinity is taken for granted, and his humanity overlooked, so that he is readily absorbed in the term God, whose presence manifestation in the Spirit is of more importance than his historical work in the flesh.”224

224 Ibid., 344.
The RCC has a different notion about the reception of the Holy Spirit, which is not separated from baptism. Baptism by water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is already a baptism in the Holy Spirit, in the sense that it communicates the divine life, a spiritual life, a life led in the Spirit. It is useful to recall how Protestant and Catholic churches interpret the way the Spirit communicates itself through sacramental action.

Protestants, from their inception, have recognized only two sacraments as being in accord with the divine will expressed in the New Testament: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Protestants reacted against the dangers of “magic” which both the sacramental doctrine and practices of the sixteenth century involved; they attached great importance to spiritual reality, and to the necessity of intervention by the Holy Spirit in sacramental action. “The sacrament is the Word of God, which is invisible and which alone can save; however, it is expressed within a ritual of divine institution: for example, in baptism, the visible actions are the bath with ‘water which washes,’ and that through the Word (Eph 5:26).”

The RCC recognizes that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is not limited only to the sacraments. There are various rituals or realities of a purely ecclesiastical origin which may equally, in imitation of the sacraments, be accompanied by spiritual effects. These belong to the sacramental order, without being sacraments. Is it possible to conclude that the baptism in the Holy Spirit of the AC, Pentecostals and charismatics, with its prayer and the possibility of imposition of hands, would not belong to this sacramental order? “Baptism in

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226 Ibid., 74.
the Holy Spirit is practised in conformity with the instructions taken from the Acts of the Apostles: they are thus attentive to the signs of the Spirit. These are diverse, but they all have the same source, which is the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4–8). For the AC, just as for the Pentecostals, the gift of speaking in tongues and the manifestation of one or more of the other charisms are signs of a certain manner of action of the Holy Spirit.”

The RCC sacrament that is especially of the Spirit is confirmation. It is one of the sacraments of Christian initiation, and in RCIA is situated between baptism and the Eucharist. According to Yves Congar, “The unity of the initiation with these three stages, baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, would even seem to be the object of an ecumenical agreement.” The reception of the sacrament of confirmation, whether directly connected with baptism as in RCIA or separated from it by an interval of time, is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. Notwithstanding, in the RCIA, Eucharist is the final rite.

Confirmation in the RCC is distinctive. “By aiming the individual for spiritual combat and passing on the power of the Spirit to them, this sacrament is distinctive in that it signifies the construction of the Church and carries baptism to its fulfillment.” In the context of the Council of Arles in the fifth century, Faustus, the bishop of Riez, distinguished confirmation clearly from baptism especially in infant baptism:

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227 Ibid., 76–77.
229 CCC. 1285.
In the baptismal fountain (the Holy Spirit) has accorded the maximum that innocence can receive; in confirmation, it offers an increase of grace. … In baptism, we are generated to a new life; after baptism, we are confirmed for the struggle. In baptism we are washed, after we are strengthened.\(^{231}\)

If Christian baptism with water is baptism in the Spirit, then what does confirmation add to the grace of baptism? Does confirmation not violate baptism, and simply add a kind of useless repetition to the sacrament already administered? If the Spirit is truly given in baptism, why is it necessary to add another sacrament in order to give the Spirit?

In his explanation, Congar defines confirmation as derived from the mystery of Christ. This is based on a relationship of analogies, in a combination of the Christological and the pneumatological aspects of the same mystery.\(^{232}\) Congar refers to the two ways of a dramatic approach described by L.S. Thornton and J. Lecuyer: Christ in his Pasch, which is baptism, and Pentecost, which is confirmation:

The two sides of the equation are closely connected – Pentecost is the fiftieth day of the feast of Easter and it is its fullness and completion. Baptism absorbs us into the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-11), and confirmation means life through the fruit of the Pasch, which is the sending of the Spirit by the Lord. The relationship of the two aspects of the same mystery has undoubtedly inspired the Church’s liturgy.\(^{233}\)

In baptism, we were conceived and born as children of God within the Church, and confirmation enables us to participate in Christ’s messianic anointing.

Confirmation is a sacrament in the mission of the Church. This is expressed in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council: “Bound more

\(^{231}\) Ibid. Quoted by Paul de Clerk, *La Maison-Dieu*, 1986, p.168


\(^{233}\) Ibid.
intimately to the Church by the sacrament of confirmation, believers are endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength. Hence they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ.”

Thus, Christians are called to build up the community, for “the manifestations of the Spirit are given to each for the benefit of all” (1 Cor. 12:7).

Congar speaks of the two sacraments of baptism and confirmation and the two missions of Christ and the Spirit:

In the one single process of initiation, which is consummated in the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, a symbolic aspect, which completes the act of baptism and seals the gift received in it, the sacrament of the ‘seal of the Spirit,’ has been distinguished from the baptism strictly so called. I believe that this is the liturgical expression of the two missions of the Word, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, who are closely associated in the task of accomplishing the same work.

3.4 Points of Convergence and Divergence

The liturgical baptismal rites across the two Christian communities are similar, as shown in the table 3.2.1. The baptismal rite itself, which is an aspect of the initiatory rites, completes the work of conversion in the catechumenate and the determination to grow in faith. The RCC and the AC follow a similar pattern of renunciation of evil and profession of faith, and in the form and matter of baptism. The following points of convergence (sections 3.4.1–3.4.3) and divergence (3.4.4–3.4.5) can be noted.

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234 Lumen Gentium, 11.

3.4.1 Matter and Form

Both churches teach and use water as the matter of baptism. The RCC and AC understand that water is necessary for purification and re-generation; water manifests the character of baptism as the bath of new birth. For both churches, prayer over the water is an important aspect of the ritual of baptism. This prayer introduces an invocation of the Trinity at the very outset of the celebration of baptism. The Holy Spirit is invoked, and Christ’s death and resurrection are proclaimed: “By the power of the Holy Spirit give to this water the grace of your Son, so that all those whom you have created in your likeness may be cleansed from sin and rise to a new birth of innocence by water and the Holy Spirit.”

In the AC rite, the water is blessed, possibly some days beforehand when planting a wooden cross in the place chosen. The AC minister invokes the Trinity in prayer, and dips an iron rod into the water; angels may also be invoked by name to come and bless the water.

The baptismal form for both churches is a Trinitarian formula. The RCC recognizes the primordial importance of baptism by immersion, but ordinarily practises baptism by infusion, or pouring. The AC accepts and practises nothing but immersion. In the RCC rite, the minister will mention the name of the elect: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father (as he immerses or pours water on the candidate a first time), and of the Son (as he immerses or pours water on the candidate a second time), and of the Holy Spirit (as he immerses or

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236 Catholic Church, “Christian Initiation of Adults,” The Rites of the Catholic Church, no. 215, p. 95–98.


238 Ibid., 107.
pours water the third time).” The mentioning of the name of the baptized is significant since name confers identity and baptism is conferred on a person (subject) and not on a thing (object). A Christian name or a neutral name that is not offensive to Christian sensibilities is necessary for baptism. Thus, “the parents, sponsors and the pastor are to see that a name foreign to a Christian mentality is not given.” In the AC, the minister does not mention the name of the person receiving baptism, saying during the candidate’s three-fold immersion in water: “I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

3.4.2 Ecclesial Incorporation and Celebration

Baptism is an ecclesial action both in the RCC and the AC. In the RCC, the role of the Christian community is emphasized. As in all sacramental celebrations in the RCC, the context of the rite of the sacrament of baptism consists of the presence of the assembly presided over by an ordained minister, the book of the Scriptures from which one or more readings are taken, and a homily based on the proclaimed Word of God. In this case, one of the effects of baptism comes forth, since baptism incorporates the believer into the ecclesial life of the Church. The AC celebrates baptism in a different place, outside the church building. Although it may be held at a stream or seashore sometimes kilometers away from the church building, it is still a communal celebration of joy. The minister explains the meaning of baptism based on the scriptural passage of Matthew 28: 19-20. Other members of

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240 Can. 855.

the AC are present to give moral, pastoral and spiritual support to the candidate receiving baptism.

With the restoration of the catechumenate in the RCC, the convert’s intent to be joined to the Church in baptism has already begun to take ecclesial form, in his or her engagement in the catechumenate. Thus, entry into the Church does not begin in the waters of the font but with entry into the catechumenate. In the AC, no urgency is attached to baptism, except in a case of one becoming a leader or officer. Some people become active church members, but may remain unbaptized for a long time, and without feeling that their standing is irregular.

3.4.3 The Relation of Baptism to Faith in the Trinity

Baptism is a sacrament of faith. This is visible through a profession of faith in the Trinity. Adults who receive baptism in both churches must openly profess their faith in the Trinity through the short form of the creed, while the parent and the godparents do this on behalf of infants being baptized in the RCC. According to Worgul, “Absence of faith will dull sacramental celebrations and hinder revelatory power of their symbols and symbolic activities.” Thus, baptism becomes meaningful in both churches because it is celebrated in communion, with the reality of God and his love, that is, the most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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Points of divergence in regard to the liturgical rites of baptism of the RCC and the AC are considered in the following two sections.

3.4.4 Laying on of Hands and Anointing with Chrism (Oil)

The post-baptismal anointing that came to be known as confirmation is absent in the AC rite of baptism. Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Constitution on the sacrament of confirmation, ordered the laying-on of hands and anointing with chrism on the forehead. These actions are accompanied by the words: “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . .”\(^\text{245}\) The anointing with chrism and imposition of hands confer the sacrament of confirmation by which the believers are perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit.\(^\text{246}\)

3.4.5 Uninterrupted Celebration

In the RCC, adult initiation is celebrated without interruption. Baptism is celebrated with the other sacraments of the rites of Christian initiation. Thus, for adults, the sacrament of confirmation is to follow immediately after completing baptism. In the case of infants and children of non-catechetical age, this is postponed until a suitable age. The conjunction of confirmation and baptism for adults signifies “the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized.”\(^\text{247}\) The liturgical rite of baptism culminates in the Eucharist,


\(^{246}\) *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

\(^{247}\) Catholic Church, “Christian Initiation of Adult,” in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, no. 34, p. 30.
which is the third sacrament of Christian initiation. This underscores the unity among the sacraments of Christian initiation, their close relationship to the mission of the Church, and the responsibility of the local church to share in the catechumens’ growth in faith. This is explicitly stated in the general introduction of rites of Christian initiation:

Finally they come to the table of the Eucharist, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that they may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God’s people. By offering themselves with Christ, they share in his universal sacrifice: the entire community of the redeemed is offered to God by their high priest. They pray together for outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God’s family.248

The Lord’s Supper is not compulsory for the newly baptized in the AC. It is not a continual daily celebration, as in the RCC, but a once-or twice-a-year event.

3.5 Conclusion

Seeking mutual acceptance and recognition of baptism and other sacraments is part of the ongoing debates of 21st century Nigerian Christianity. Contemporary Christian churches assume a unity based on a practice of a baptismal rite. They believe this to be in response to Jesus’ command for his disciples to make disciples of all nations, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matt. 28:19). Thus, mutual recognition rests on a common confession of Jesus Christ within a Trinitarian relationship.

Non-recognition of baptism may occur for multiple reasons, including faulty Christology or weak Trinitarian doctrine, arguments regarding the recipients of baptism (whether infants or adults), and ecclesiological principles. “Even with those traditions with which we affirm a mutual recognition of baptism, significant differences lurk beneath

assumptions of commonality,” such as the disagreement in the relationship between the sign of baptism and the reality it signifies, the form and matter of baptism, the minister of baptism, and so on.

The Vatican II decree on ecumenism asserts that baptism in Christ is the basis for accepting as brothers and sisters all who have been justified by faith in baptism. So also, the WCC has made fostering unity among Christians its mission. Through (BEM), the WCC asserts that “through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity.”

This chapter has provided an examination of the liturgical rites of baptism in the RCC and the AC. By placing side-by-side the features of the rituals of baptism of both churches, the similarities and the differences in practice come forth. Water baptism and its significance were examined, so also was the ‘baptism in the Spirit,’ and its meaning in both the RCC and AC. The points of convergence and divergence were highlighted, which offer insight into the liturgical practices of the RCC and the AC.

With the multitude of similarities in the liturgical rites and practices of baptism in the RCC and AC, the two churches should be able to establish an agreement regarding the acceptance and understanding of each other’s baptism. In principle, the RCC in Nigeria accepts as valid, baptism of other churches when celebrated with right matter and form; that

250 Unitatis Redintegratio. 2.
is, baptism that is conferred using water and Trinitarian formula. However, in practice, doubt often arises. The AC, on the other hand, does not accept infant baptism or forms of baptism that are not conferred by immersion. Thus, the practice of being re-baptized is common in the AC in Nigeria, especially when anyone is converting from another church to join the AC. The practice of a conditional baptism which the RCC claims to suffice when doubt arises concerning the first baptism is common. This has pastoral and ecumenical implications for Christianity in Nigeria that will be explained in the next chapter.
Chapter 4
Implications of the Study

4.1 Introduction

According to the German theologian and cardinal, Walter Kasper, “Church and baptism belong together.”\(^{252}\) Separating one from another destroys the sacramentality of the Church. This is one of the reasons why the committee, headed by Michael A Fahey S.J., set up by the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) in response to the Lima document raised some concerns. According to the committee, further clarification and reflection is necessary on baptism, especially the reinstitution of the catechumenate (which the WCC document omitted), the sacramentality of the church, the effects of infant baptism, and the relationship between baptism and confirmation.\(^{253}\)

Baptism is conceived as the basis for the bond of Christian unity.\(^{254}\) However, this unity is not necessarily achieved in practice. This is especially the case for the RCC and AC, because of the churches’ differing ecclesiology and understanding of the sacramental meaning of baptism. Borrowing the words of Thomas Best, the former Executive Secretary for Faith and Order in the World Council of Churches, “The unity we share in Christ is


\(^{254}\) World Council of Churches, “Baptism,” in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, BEM*, 6; see also CCC. 1271.
greater than all the difference – historical, theological, cultural – which divide Christians and the Churches today: unity is our birthright, shown forth brightly in our common baptism.”

Chapter 3 reviewed similarities and differences between the liturgical rites of the sacrament of baptism in the RCC and the AC. Points of convergence and divergence were examined, including water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. Ritual is historical, it is not static. This means that rites continue to develop with time, although the essentiality of rite remains. The essential rite of baptism as elaborated in chapter three is the necessary matter (water) and form (Trinitarian formula). This is reiterated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The essential rite of baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

This final chapter focuses on the implications of this study. In the doctrine of the RCC, it is the beginning of a journey which often with confirmation, culminates in the Eucharist. For its part, the AC also accepts baptism as the first sacrament. This has implications ecumenically, culturally, communally, pastorally and theologically. These implications will be considered along four dimensions: ecumenical dialogue, questions of incultration, community living, and pastoral and theological considerations and recommendations.

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256 CCC., 1278.
4.2 Ecumenical Dialogue

The Second Vatican Council brought a shift in the view of the RCC concerning other Christian and people of other faiths.\textsuperscript{257} *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) sees the ecumenical movement as a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in our time for the restoration of unity among Christians,\textsuperscript{258} through which the RCC establishes the importance of dialogue with separated brothers and sisters and with separated churches and communities.\textsuperscript{259}

Ecumenical dialogue is a “dialogue between those who believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized in the name of Jesus but belong to different churches often contradicting each other in matters of faith, church structures and morals.”\textsuperscript{260} This is different from interreligious dialogue, which has to do with dialogue between different religions. The ultimate goal of ecumenical dialogue, according to Cardinal Walter Kasper, is the visible unity of the Church. This is understood by the RCC not as just uniformity, but as unity in plurality, and as a communion of Churches.\textsuperscript{261}


\textsuperscript{258} *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 4; 9; 11; 14; 18; 19; 21–23.


\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., VI.
Cardinal Kasper reiterates the dimensions of ecumenical dialogue as presented in the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II:

Firstly, there is theological dialogue, where experts explain the beliefs of each individual church, so that their characteristics become clearer and better mutual understanding is fostered. The second dimension involves practical operation and especially common prayer, and represents the very heart of the ecumenical movement. The third dimension is renewal of our own Church so that she becomes more fully an authentic sign and witness of the gospel and an invitation for other Christians (Unitatis Redintegratio, 4).262

Successful ecumenical dialogue demands personal interest and investment, and institutional renewal. In this case, ecumenism ad extra (the dialogue with other churches) presupposes ecumenism ad intra (learning from each other and self-reform).263 The historical doctrinal and theological differences between the RCC and AC make this first dimension of ecumenical dialogue difficult.

With the cultural and linguistic complexities of Nigeria, it can be difficult for Christian churches to participate in ecumenical dialogue. As an example of these challenges, consider the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). It was founded on August 27, 1976 under the military regime of Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. The group’s objective was to meet regularly to take joint actions on vital matters, especially on issues which affect the Christian faith and the general welfare of Nigerians. At first, the founders of CAN classified the association’s member churches into three parts – the Roman Catholic Church, the Christian Council of Nigeria, and others. Over time, the number of churches which

262 Cardinal Kasper, “Consequences for Ecumenical Dialogue.”
263 Ibid.
earnestly desired to join CAN increased.\textsuperscript{264} Traditionally CAN has been a unified body representing all Christian churches, but due to political instability in Nigeria since 1983, it has since been more focused on political challenges. Thus, most of the discussions of this association have been about politics and religious crises in Nigeria rather than on theological issues that affect the unity of Christians.

A lack of ecumenical dialogue between the RCC and AC has helped to foment unhealthy suspicion between the two churches. Fr. Ojaje Idoko, the Director of Pastoral Affairs for the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria in Abuja asserts that “the issue of validity of non-Catholic churches or ecclesial communities in Nigeria has not been perfectly resolved at the level of Bishops’ conference because of the diversity of the nation and many churches we have. Apart from the main churches like the Catholic, Methodist, and Anglican and of recent, the Pentecostal sects, most of the other churches are ethnic or regional based.”\textsuperscript{265} This makes it difficult to come to consensus concerning the validity of baptism especially among the African Instituted Churches, of which the AC is a member.

4.2.1 Rebaptism by the Aladura Church

A particularly intense problem between the AC and RCC is that of “rebaptism.” The two churches, and most Christian denominations, agree that baptism is unrepeatable, since it symbolizes the once-and-for-all act of redemption achieved by Christ in his death and resurrection. Most often, in Nigeria this agreement is only in principle, and fails in practice.


\textsuperscript{265} Ojaje Idoko, e-mail message to the author on the validity of baptism by the Aladura Church in Nigeria, August 29, 2015.
The AC believes in and confers believers’ baptism necessarily by immersion in flowing water, thus rendering any other form of baptism invalid. Further, those who have already been baptized validly by immersion in another church, may themselves sometimes willingly request another baptism, due to their own inadequate knowledge of baptismal doctrine.\footnote{266} The AC and other churches that baptize candidates a second time – for any reason – do not generally regard this as \textit{rebaptism}, since they recognize only the baptism of believers as true baptism.\footnote{267} The suitability of rebaptism in particular circumstances is a pastoral consideration within the AC, but it can be an ecumenical stumbling block beyond the AC’s boundaries.

\subsection*{4.2.2 Conditional Baptism by the Roman Catholic Church}

As promulgated by the Vatican II fathers, the RCC strives to limit “conditional”\footnote{268} baptism:

Indiscriminate conditional baptism of all who desire full communion with the Catholic Church cannot be approved. The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated, and therefore to baptize again conditionally is not allowed unless there is prudent doubt of the fact, or of the validity, of a baptism already administered. … If after serious investigation as to whether the baptism was properly administered, a reasonable doubt persists, and it is necessary to baptize conditionally, the minister should maintain proper regard for the doctrine that baptism is unique by (a) suitably explaining both why he is in this case baptizing conditionally and what is the significance of the rite of conditional baptism; (b) carrying out the rite according to the private form.\footnote{269}
The investigation of any previous baptism for those seeking full communion with the RCC is therefore left in the hands of the local priest. It is not uncommon for parish priests and their associates in the Nigerian RCC to not undertake the pains necessary to carry out a proper investigation; instead, almost all AC members who seek full communion with the RCC are baptized conditionally. There tends to be enduring but hasty generalizations and misinformation about the AC which still maintains traces of ATR in their worship.270

Because of frequent mutual misunderstanding between the two churches, ecumenical dialogue and openness to studying the doctrines of each other are needed. These would facilitate dealing sensibly with suspicion caused by perceived or genuine doctrinal differences.

4.2.3 Baptism and the Sacrament of Marriage

Since doubt sometimes arises among Catholics concerning the validity of baptism of the AC, it can affect the way other sacraments are treated, especially matrimony. With the multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of Nigeria, churches cannot avoid mixed and inter-religious marriages resulting in confusion how these marriages are celebrated. RCC clergy, for example, who refuse for doctrinal or cultural reasons to witness a marriage in an AC church, are seen to do so without genuine reason. In the case of mixed marriages, baptism is often imposed on a non-RCC person so as not to make the union a mixed-marriage. Young RCC couples who desire to marry outside the church are perplexed by clergy who request

Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1988). In subsequent footnotes, the post-conciliar documents will be cited using Ad Totam Ecclesiam.

that they adhere to teaching requiring them to marry in a church. What results is that it is not unusual for an active member of the RCC to select civil ceremonies instead of a church wedding thereby foregoing the sacramental aspect of marriage.

4.2.4 Ecumenical Training in Theology

Establishing ecumenical schools of theology would provide avenues for ecumenical interactions, which are lacking in Nigeria. Presently, each church has its own separate seminary and theological school, thus enabling ignorance and isolation among the ministers-in-training. A robust avenue to exchange ideas is needed, so as to help ease doctrinal and theological confusion and suspicion among churches, especially the two churches in this study.

The current annual universal week of prayer, whereby various churches come together to pray for peace, is of benefit but not sufficient. Common prayer meetings, seminars and workshops should be organized to foster sharing and exploration of doctrinal and theological issues among churches.

4.3 Questions of Inculturation

The Spanish Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe defined inculturation as “the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to
bring about a new creation.”

Nigeria is a country rich in culture and diverse in language. According to Nathaniel Ndiokwere, a renowned Nigerian Catholic theologian, “the survival of Christianity in Africa will largely be determined by the successful ‘implantation’ or inculturation of Christian faith with the African culture.” It is on this note that Popes Paul VI and John Paul II encouraged Africans to use all available means to make the gospel message meaningful to people.

With its resilient religious-ethical and social values, ATR rendered valuable services to humanity long before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, as expressed by A. Ekwunife, CSSp:

African Traditional values are therefore, those habitual, basic frames of minds of the Africans which influence their general attitude towards life and motivate their actions in their selection of what is worthwhile and what is not; what is good and what is bad. They can further be described as inbuilt impulses by which Africans interpret and evaluate all realities, a type pervasive impulse which motivates them in their choices of defined goals and aspirations.

The AC makes inculturation a backbone of its liturgical practices and adapts the Christian religion to the traditional mentality and ways of life of Africans. As an example, the AC adapted the naming ceremony of ATR and made a rubric out of it. Whereas in the RCC infant baptism is seen as a transition (passage) into Christ and the Church, the AC instead maintains a Christianised ATR naming ceremony, with some of the forms borrowed from the

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272 Ibid., 12.

273 Ibid.

274 Ibid., 17.

275 Ibid., 42.
order for infant baptism in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.\footnote{Turner, History of an African Independent Church II, 183.} This represents incorporation not only into a biological family, but also into Christ and the AC family of God at large. The child begins a transitory journey with the supports of parents and the community into eventual baptism and other sacraments of the AC church.

Although inculturation is often not mere adaptation, the act of adaptation cannot be left out of inculturation. Some RCC bishops, priests and laity are described by Ndiokwere as being too cautious, looking to avoid giving any impression that the RCC in Nigeria is imitating the AC; this may be due to a Nigerian RCC ‘superiority complex.’\footnote{Ndiokwere, The African Church, Today and Tomorrow Vol. II: Inculturation in Practice, 42.}

In his address to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Nigeria during his visit to Nigeria on February 15, 1982, Pope John Paul II encouraged inculturation, extending the already numerous pronouncements of the Church on:

\begin{quote}
An important aspect of your own evangelizing role is the whole dimension of the enculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people. Here, you and your priest co-workers offer to your people a perennial message of divine revelation – “the unsearchable riches of Christ” – but at the same time, on the basis of this “eternal Gospel”, you help them “to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought”.\footnote{Pope John Paul II, “An Address of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of Nigeria,” accessed April 29, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/february/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19820215_vescovi-nigeria.html.}
\end{quote}

The intention of Vatican II was not to diminish the advantages of culture, but to protect it and, through the power of the Gospel, purify those values. In an attempt by the RCC to promote inculturation, an experiment has been undertaken in the southwest of Nigeria, the
Yoruba land, whereby infant baptism is incorporated into the traditional Yoruba naming ceremony. However, the introduction of the practice has not been intensive enough to attract widespread awareness. 279

Gerald Tanye described the incorporation of Yoruba naming ceremony into RCC’s infant baptism in his dissertation, *The Church-as-Family ad Ethnocentrism in Sub-Saharan African*. According to him, the naming rites which takes place on the eighth day of the birth of a child is the first most important rite of passage that forms the formal acceptance and incorporation of the new family member into the family. 280 The peak of the event of the Yoruba traditional naming ritual is the pouring of water on the roof top of the house and the mother of the child ceremoniously carries the new born in and out of the house seven times with water dripping from the roof top. Each time the water drops on the child, it cries out of probable shock, “mo ti de”, interpreted, I have arrived, while the gathered assembly joyfully exclaims, “Kaabo”, which means, welcome, the sign of their unconditional acceptance of this life and their readiness to nurse it to growth. 281

Tanye argues that, the symbolism of water in the Yoruba naming rite lends meaning to the sacrament of baptism. The dripping of water on the child, its consequent cry and the joyful response of welcome by the assembly are essential. The integration of the two rites (Yoruba naming and infant baptism), through inculturation will mean that the two belong

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279 Cyprian Chima Uzoma Anyanwu, *The Rites of Initiation in Christian Liturgy and in Igbo Traditional Society: Towards the Inculturation of Christian Liturgy in Igbo Land* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 278.


281 Ibid. 272–284.
together and can really mutually enrich each other; it anchors Christian baptism to the cultural patterns of the people.\textsuperscript{282} Since the AC and RCC have a common heritage, which is the culture of Africa, Ndiokwere argues, “the important point that should be taken note of is that Catholics are not ‘imitating’ any other church. It is only coincidental that all are just drawing from the same common source, namely African culture.”\textsuperscript{283}

4.3.1 Fear of Adulteration and Syncretism

While the AC actively accommodates cultural heritage in their liturgical worship, RCC leaders are typically cautious when it comes to matters that could cause displeasure to the church authorities in Rome. Nigerian RCC leaders sometimes insist on written approval from the Vatican before embarking on any liturgical experimentation, so as not to deviate from the established norms.\textsuperscript{284} As Ndiokwere observes, most initiatives toward inculturation by the RCC have been undertaken by expatriate missionaries, while the Nigerians themselves have been left out.\textsuperscript{285} This leaves indigenous theologians, thinkers and ordinary people in a state of confusion.

Josiah Oshitelu, the founder of the AC, argued that his intention was to bring about a discontinuity from the older church, so as to build a fresh church founded under the direction of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{286} Any corresponding attempt at inculturation by the older churches cannot be successful without directly involving the Nigerian people. At the same time, I argue that

\textsuperscript{282} Ibid. 284.
\textsuperscript{283} Ndiokwere, The African Church, Today and Tomorrow Vol. II: Inculturation in Practice, 43.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{286} Turner, History of an African Independent Church II., 319.
inculturation can be seen as the purification through the Gospel and the Holy Spirit of the culture of the people.

4.3.2 Clericalism

Another stumbling block toward inculturation is the historical problem of clericalism in the RCC. Unlike the AC, the RCC in Nigeria depends much more on its clergy. While the AC practises a common priesthood of all believers, with emphasis on the prophetic mission of Christ, the RCC continues to rely on ordained ministers. Further, the AC accepts both males and females into its clerical state. Despite ongoing and intermittent discussion within the Catholic world, there is no place for women in the RCC priesthood. Compared to the AC’s broad approach, the RCC may be perceived as implicitly stating that women are not good enough to be admitted into the clerical order. Not even the RCC nuns (religious women) are permitted to celebrate the sacrament of baptism except in grave pastoral conditions. Additionally, there is a problem of systematic misappropriation of authority in the Nigerian RCC, whereby bishops and the hierarchy are seen as the ‘church’ and everyone else must follow whatever they say, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu rightly observes that throughout the RCC provinces in Nigeria, the church’s hierarchy is understood as constituting the ‘Church.’ One province may be more dynamic than another but Nigerian bishops are always ‘turning towards Rome.’ In the Nigerian RCC, the vocation to the permanent diaconate (married) is not promoted due to the

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abundance of transitional deacons that the RCC has yearly. Thus married individuals (men) who feel drawn to ministry of diaconate are only accepted as catechists and in some other cases, prayer leaders. An example of the unintentional demonstration of clericalism was seen at a 1988 study session on inculturation convoked by Nigerian RCC bishops. The presenters included bishops, priests and religious nuns. In this session, the lay members of Christ’s faithful were not represented.  

4.3.3 The Choice of Baptismal Names

The name given at baptism is another area of inculturation that merits examination. Although the directive on RCIA encourages the conferences of bishops to promote the cultural names, provided this can admit a Christian interpretation, this is yet to be implemented in most Catholic Dioceses in Nigeria. The pioneer RCC missionaries rejected indigenous names chosen by the people. These names were seen as part of the “evil” the missionaries were sent to destroy. Though the choosing of saint’s names (which is the present practice) expresses solidarity with the universal Church, this practice brings with it some difficulties. The percentage of illiteracy is still high in Nigeria as in other African countries. Thus, most saints’ names are meaningless to the people. The situation according to Tanye is worsened by the fact that there are hardly any African saints apart from those of the early North African Church. The Nigerian RCC has not named local saints except Blessed

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289 Ibid. 276


Nweni Tanssi. To enable people to identify with their cultural values, the taking of traditional names for baptism is vital. This will be an inculturated practice that will help to explain African and Christian virtues inherent in those names. It will anchor Christianity more intimately to the cultural and traditional life of the people, and create a sense of belonging and an intimate link with their ancestors. In contrast, from its genesis the AC has afforded a central place and importance to indigenous names.

4.3.4 Catechetical Definitions and the Meaning of Baptism

Nigeria has over 400 indigenous languages, which presents a challenge for the translation and dissemination of scripture, as well as that of church documents and religious writings. This challenge has given rise to a widely used written but simplistic catechetical definition of the sacrament of baptism in the RCC, handed on by the missionaries, which does not clearly reveal the fuller meaning of the sacrament of initiation.

Much of the RCC in the southwest of Nigeria, including priests and theologians, depends on the Protestant-translated bibles that flood the Christian book market. However, the Bibli Mimo (Holy Bible) has recently become available, single-handedly translated by an RCC bishop. Nothing has been done about translating the Catechism of the Catholic Church into Nigerian native languages. Most Nigerian RCC catechists and other teachers of faith still rely on the somewhat rudimentary Catechism of Christian Doctrine, called the

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“Penny Catechism,” which was published in 1973, and approved by the archbishops and bishops of England and Wales. Most RCC priests typically depend on English editions of the rites and improvise whenever necessity arises.

The definition of baptism as written in the Penny Catechism is, “a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God, and members of the Church.”294 (The issue of original sin is itself controversial,295 but is not within the scope of this thesis.) Translation into various Nigerian languages has never been an easy task, not only for the colonial masters and missionaries, but also for Nigerians. Due to the high level of illiteracy and diversities in languages and symbols, there are no sufficient adequate expressions for translation. The ethnographer and the anthropologist have contended this. According to Asad, “the ethnographer’s translation / representation of a particular culture is inevitably a textual construct, that as representation it cannot normally be contested by the people to whom it is attributed, and that as a ‘scientific text’ it eventually becomes a privileged element in the potential store of historical memory of the non-literate society concerned.”296

294 Ibid., 104.
295 There has been series of disagreement over original sin with respect to detail. Catholics and Protestants differed over the character and effects of original sin after baptism. Many churches tracing their lineage back to the radicals of the Reformation era attacked the idea that persons could be damned on the basis of original sin alone, this leads them to reject the practice of baptizing infants. Other argues that the doctrine of the original sin is cultural invented and it not in the Bible. Cf. Ian A. Mcfarland, In Adam’s Fall: a Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, in Wiley-Blackwell Online Book, 2010,pp. 3 – 4. Accessed September 22, 2016.
296 Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam, 197.
4.4 Community Living

Another implication of baptism as lived by the AC is the communion of life. This is called “a brotherhood of love” in the teaching of the AC. Baptism introduces the members of the AC into a brotherhood of love, and true solidarity, which knows neither poverty nor want. Adeleke Adejobi, one of the foundational members and leaders of the AC, expressed this in his journal:

In the AC you know neither poverty nor want. There is the true spirit of brotherhood, and one’s sorrow or joy is the sorrow or joy of another. There is no distinction of class – no Jew or Hellene, and whether you are a Krio, a Temne or a Mende, Kroo or Limba, Nigerian or Sierra Leonean, it does not matter…297

This is in line not only with the communal nature of African life, as opposed to an antithetical individualism, but also the unity of the Gentile Church and the Church in Jerusalem which Paul preached in his epistles, The AC expresses this communality through its code of dressing; every member must wear a white gown, surplice, cape, and girdle.298

The RCC professes the unity of the Trinity, but the Western culture of the pioneer missionaries has suppressed the culture of the people. This has been exacerbated by the concern of local RCC leaders for retaining an “authentic” Roman Catholicism.

4.5 Pastoral and Theological Implications

Through baptism, Christians are introduced into the life of Christ and the community of believers. Renunciation of Satan and evil are part of the ritual of baptism. Unfortunately,

297 Turner, History of an African Independent Church II., 324.
298 Ibid., 105.
despite these certainties there are still pastoral and theological questions that need to be considered.

4.5.1 The Problem of Exorcism

African worldviews comprise various beliefs, one of which is a belief in demonic possession. Because of enduring political and social-economic breakdown in Nigeria, a majority of the population suffers from poverty and sickness. Popular folk wisdom holds that these unfortunates are under the influence of evil spirits, psychic illnesses and related emotional problems.\(^{299}\) Often times, failure in business or study, delay in marriage, unemployment and other social ills are popularly connected to demonic possession.

Most of those already baptized in a non-AC church who later willingly sought another baptism from the AC did so for the sake of deliverance from possession, since the AC will undertake exorcism before water baptism. Ndiokwere observes: “many Catholics wander about in search of security. They cross rivers and mountains to obtain relief from worries and problems. And they are ready to consult traditional healers or prophets of the AC.”\(^{300}\)

This leads to a practical pastoral and theological question for the RCC in Nigeria. Do the prayer of exorcism and the anointing with the oil of catechumens prior to baptism in the RCC not deliver people from the bondage of the devil? Or could it be that the prayer is merely

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worded in an overly simplified way, one neither adequate nor powerful enough to capture people’s need for a sense of deliverance?

4.5.2 Pastoral and Theological Understanding of the Holy Spirit

The nature of the Holy Spirit has been another concern. The RCC links the Holy Spirit to baptism, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit to the sacrament of confirmation. Unfortunately, most often those RCC members who undertake these sacraments experience no visible spiritual manifestation to prove that the Holy Spirit is truly present in them. (There are external applied signs, namely the oil of Chrism and the laying-on of hands.) Christians from other churches, including the AC, who seek full incorporation with the RCC have to receive confirmation despite the validity of the baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit in their former churches. How do we account for this theologically, if truly the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are not repeatable? The AC, on the other, not only links the Holy Spirit to water and to the second baptism, but also relies on the presence of the spirit being manifested through speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts such as prophecy and vision.

4.6 What the Aladura Church and Roman Catholic Church can learn from each other

It cannot be disputed that the AC has found its roots not only in Nigeria but also in other African countries. This church posed series challenges to the RCC and this is expressed in the first and second assemblies of the synod of Africa. “In light of the challenges posed by the new religious movements (cults, esoteric movements, etc.) local Churches are required to
devise forms of evangelisation which best meet the existing problems of the faithful.”

Bearing in mind that the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian RCC may not be different from those of the Nigerian AC, since both churches share much in common, especially since both involve Nigerians, it is of utmost importance to highlight what both churches can learn from each other.

First, the RCC has much to learn from the AC especially in the area of inculturation. Inculturation is not just mere adaptation, thus, the RCC needs to make an in-depth discernment, so as to identify those aspects of culture which promote and those which hinder the inculturation of Gospel values. For instance, what prevents the Nigerian RCC from discerning and using Nigerian materials like vestments and sacred vessels in the liturgy? A Ceremonial or Royal flute is better used at solemn liturgical occasions like consecration rather than bells or the English bugle. Second, the AC can also learn from the RCC theological approach to doctrinal and theological issues. This will enable the AC scholars to be able to participate and contribute meaningfully to theological debate rather than mere scriptural citations. Thirdly, the Nigerian RCC still needs to do more in the area of women’s ministries and empowerment. This is well pronounced in the AC. Women are accepted into ministries and the authority of the AC church resides in the entire body, that is, members.

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302 Ibid., prepositio 33.

4.7 Conclusion

Christianity has been soundly established in Nigeria for many years, although cultural diversity coupled with ethnic biases continue to make for a sometimes difficult path for Christian churches. Within this context, and as someone committed to the ecumenical and sacramental vision of Vatican II, I have compared baptism within the AC and RCC through their liturgical and theological teaching.

Four particular implications of this study emerged, along with their relationship with the sacrament of baptism. The first is ecumenical dialogue as a means of creating awareness and as an avenue for the exchange of ideas between the RCC and AC. Ecumenical dialogue assists individual churches in the area of self-discovery, and in the discovery and acceptance of others. The second implication is inculturation with an eye to truly “implanting” church into the cultural heritage of the people, toward spiritual transformation and evangelization. This is practised more, and more successfully, by the AC. Any fear of syncretism can be dispelled, since the duty of inculturation is the incarnation and transformation of whatever tends to be syncretic. The third is communal living as one of the effects of baptism. Baptism incorporates Christians into the life of Christ, and that of the church. The AC manifests this clearly, while the western culture of individualism brought by the missionaries tends to outshine any culture of community in the RCC. Finally, pastoral and theological implications were addressed, especially the place and effect of exorcism and the understanding of the Holy Spirit in regard to baptism, confirmation, and rituals.
General Conclusion

The basis of this research has been an analysis and comparison of the sacraments of baptism of the AC and the RCC through theological investigation and examination of liturgical rites. The first goal was to analyze the areas of convergence and divergence, demonstrating that the two churches practise the same sacrament but with different understandings. The second goal has been to show that there are commonalities between the two churches, and also, that there are ways they can learn from each other.

Baptism has always been integral to Christianity. Most Christian churches agree that all the baptized are members of Christ’s body. Vatican II documents, especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, coupled with the reformed rites of the sacrament and writings of various theologians have emphasized and established the ecumenical importance of baptism as the sacramental bond of unity. This is attested to by the WCC and the AC itself. Thus, if baptism is the first sacrament of Christian initiation, if it stands at the centre of all Christian denominations, if it is the only sacrament common to all Christian, then, why are there discrepancies?

The disparity arises from faulty ecclesiology. This is one of the reasons why rites are so important for sacramental celebration. The point is not just to bring about uniformity, but also to curb any excesses on the part of individuals, and to aid in understanding what the rite means. Rites were adopted and reformed after Vatican II to return to the sources, the original ways of the early Church, and also to promote a better theology of church. The changes also contextualize the sacraments, since without ritual, individuals and whole cultures are bound to face the threat of dissolution, both internal and external.
Every sacrament commences with the theology of the word of God. Baptism for instance is about the death and life of Christ: Christ is the primordial sacrament. This also leads to the ecclesial nature of sacraments, since the Church is a basic sacrament of Christ in the world, a sign of unity and of reconciliation of the whole community. In the sacraments, then, the Church does not just speak the word, it also performs the word. Church is the instrument of salvation. The sacrament of baptism is not an end in itself, not just a mere initiation, but a beginning of a journey in the *koinonia*, which continues eschatologically with the deification of believers.

For its part, the AC expands on a daily basis in Nigeria. It continues to offer meaningful worship to the people, through promotion of *koinonia* and inculturation. The AC has approached Christianity with the ‘eyes’ of ATR, which is the cultural religious heritage of the people, thus making faith more acceptable and meaningful to the people. The insistence of the AC on baptismal immersion is one of the aspects that clearly brings out the concept of the symbolism of washing and cleansing. This is an essential ritual unit of the sacrament of baptism, which signifies and brings about death to sin, and entry into a new life of the Trinity through configuration to the paschal mystery of Christ.

Through the side-by-side comparison of the liturgical rites of baptism of the RCC and AC, it is clear that both churches practise the same sacrament, following the same pattern but in different ways, using different names. The sacramental practices of AC can be likened to a transitory sacramental style, whereby transitioning from one stage to another. This is visible in its approach to baptism and other rites of Christian initiation the RCC recognizes as sacraments. The AC does not call the Eucharist a sacrament of initiation, and neither do they see confirmation as a sacrament. For the AC, the second baptism in the Spirit, is for the
visible manifestations of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this may be likened to what the Catholic Charismatic Renewal calls the “life in the Spirit.” In the AC, the Holy Spirit is received prior to the reception of the Lord’s Supper, which is the ideal sequence of RCIA in the RCC.

The four implications of the study examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis (ecumenical dialogue, inculturation, community and pastoral aspects), offer to develop and strengthen bonds of unity between the RCC and the AC. Inordinate repetition of the sacrament of baptism and confirmation should be discontinued. The two churches should find a safe ground for mutual dialogue and acceptance of each other.

Judging from the many questions addressed in this thesis and the description of the areas of convergence and divergence in the ritual and theology of baptism of the AC and RCC, I affirm that baptism is not an end in itself, but is ordained toward a complete faith. Baptism is not just an individual’s act but a divine event, which should be celebrated in the community of believers. It is an expression of both the faith of the recipient, and the faith of the whole church.

The RCC sees the AC as having deviated from the mainstream Christianity through native influence (ATR), reconcile that their practice is in-line with the authentic tradition of the Apostles and that of the universal Church. At the same time, the AC sees the RCC as an interloper with sacraments that are not scripturally pure, since the only instituted ordinances by Jesus are baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Examination of the central Christian sacrament, baptism, shows that the many commonalities can be a basis for dealing with the variations.
This thesis has thus delineated the theology of baptism as the basis for the development of theological conversation among Christian churches in Nigeria, particularly the RCC and AC. The thesis has demonstrated that the baptism conferred by the AC is as scripturally valid as that of the RCC. Further, based on the teaching of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Code of Canon Law, the AC offers validly conferred baptism. Since the correct form and matter of the sacrament of baptism are present in both churches’ baptisms, in the spirit of Vatican II, the AC and RCC are encouraged to enter into dialogue with an openness to accepting and learning from each other and seeking to clarify cultural discrepancies and suspicion. A necessary first step is to establish a safe ground for mutual acceptance and understanding of each other.
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### Outline of the liturgical rite of baptism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>AC</th>
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</table>
| **i. Blessing of baptismal water** | The AC has no specific rite for the blessing of the water of baptism. However, the minister has to consecrate the water (stream, river, or sea), prior to the celebration of baptism, and a wooden cross must be planted in the place chosen for the occasion.  

304 The prayer for the blessing of water ends with an epiclesis, which is an invocation of the Holy Trinity, so that the baptism will be a true re-creation of the baptized in the image of God. The invocation of the Holy Spirit and proclamation of Christ’s death and resurrection reiterate the theology of baptism as sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, and receiving the holiness of God himself. |

The liturgical celebration of the baptism begins with the blessing of water, which recalls the dispensation of the paschal mystery and declares the religious meaning of water as God’s creation. This is preceded by the litany of the saints. If the sacraments are celebrated during the season of Easter but outside the Easter Vigil, the water blessed at the Vigil is used, and a prayer of thanksgiving is included, having the same themes as the blessing.  

304 The prayer for the blessing of water ends with an epiclesis, which is an invocation of the Holy Trinity, so that the baptism will be a true re-creation of the baptized in the image of God. The invocation of the Holy Spirit and proclamation of Christ’s death and resurrection reiterate the theology of baptism as sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, and receiving the holiness of God himself. |

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### Outline of the liturgical rite of baptism

<table>
<thead>
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| **ii. Renunciation of sin** | This takes place after the candidate mentions his/her name. The minister asks the one to be baptized, “In thy confession, dost thou promise to renounce the devil and his works, adultery, fornication, … medicine of all kinds for thy need and cure?”

This represents a rite of passage from a negative moment to a positive one. The catechumens are interrogated concerning whether they renounce Satan, all his works, seductions, and cults, to which they respond affirmatively. This profession is a commitment to giving up everything that is contrary to the gospel. |

This is absent in the rite of baptism of the AC. Rather, the AC pray for those who are to be baptized to be free from evil bondage. |

| **iii. Anointing** | Usually, the profession of faith follows the renunciation, but if the catechumens’ anointing with oil (oil of catechumens) was not yet done, it has a special place after the renunciation. The oil of catechumens is “…the ointment of those preparing for baptism. It wards off what is evil. It brings wisdom and strength. Think of it as Catholic bug spray, religious suntan lotion, or spiritual steroids.” |

This is absent in the rite of baptism of the AC. Rather, the AC pray for those who are to be baptized to be free from evil bondage. |

| **iv. Profession of faith** | Profession of faith and vows of trust and obedience are part of the baptismal rite of the |

Following the renunciation of sin is the profession of faith, which is an essential part. |

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### Outline of the liturgical rite of baptism

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<td>of baptism. James F. Puglisi describes it as “the other side of the medallion.” Having renounced sin and Satan so as to commit themselves for ever to the promise of the Savior and to the mystery of the Trinity, the elect profess their faith before the celebrant and the entire community. This is an expression of their intention to enter into a new covenant with Christ and be baptized in the faith of the Church. The dialogical structure of the profession of faith is symbolically important - a triple question asked by the celebrant on behalf of the Church and the triple response of each of those to be baptized.</td>
<td>AC. The candidate professes faith in the Trinity; in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as stated in the Apostles’ Creed (the profession of faith). The candidate also promises obedience to the rules and regulations of the AC and its founder Holy Oshitelu as the Harbinger of God (the forerunner of God), the last Elijah who is to prepare the way of the Lord.</td>
</tr>
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### v. Baptism

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<th>RCC</th>
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<tr>
<td>The actual baptism follows the profession of faith. The preferred method for an adult’s baptism is by immersion, so as to take into consideration its full importance as the sign of that mystical sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection through which those who believe</td>
<td></td>
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Baptism by immersion is only for believers who are 18 years of age and above. Through baptism by immersion, the believers share in the death and resurrection of Christ, their sins are forgiven, and they are overshadowed by the Holy Ghost to receive rebirth and new |

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311 Ibid. 191–192.
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<tr>
<td><strong>RCC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>in his name die to sin and rise to eternal life.(^{312}) Infusion and pouring of water (but not sprinkling or aspersion) are also acceptable. More important is the situation and condition of the individual. According to various traditions and circumstances, it may be understood that the washing is not merely a rite of purification but a sacrament of union with Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>life.(^{313}) The newly baptized believer is fully incorporated into the AC, the only true and last church that Jesus Christ will meet at His second advent,(^{314}) although there is another service in the church after the baptismal service for formal membership enrolment.(^{315})</td>
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<th><strong>vi. Post-baptismal anointing with Chrism</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ordinarily, the post-baptismal anointing with the oil of Chrism takes place only after baptism, if confirmation is deferred for some special reason (as is usually the case for infants). The anointing is a sign of the royal priesthood of the baptized and their enrolment in the fellowship of the people of God.(^{316})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The AC does not observe any anointing with oil of Chrism after baptism; rather, a cross and palm fronds are presented to the candidate, as a symbol of victory.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>vii. Investiture</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>The giving of the white robe takes place after the anointing. This signifies the neophyte’s</td>
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\(^{314}\) Ibid., 318.

\(^{315}\) Ibid., 198.

\(^{316}\) Ibid. no. 33.
### Outline of the liturgical rite of baptism

<table>
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<tr>
<th>RCC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>new dignity as a new creation, dressed in the clothes of salvation and a tunic of joy.</td>
<td>the official liturgical dress of most ministers and members of the AC. White gowns have been traditional in “Yoruba” priesthood, as a symbol of sacredness and purity.</td>
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**viii. Presentation of lighted candle**

The newly baptized is presented with a lighted candle, showing their new vocation of living as a child of light.  
Although a candle is the most common cultic object that accompanies prayer in the AC, surprisingly, it is not included in the rite of baptism. The reason is practical. Since the sacrament of baptism takes place in the open, away from the church building, a lighted candle may not withstand windy weather.

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**ix. Confirmation**

The sacrament of confirmation follows an adult’s baptism, but in the case of infant baptism it is postponed until a suitable time. The conjunction of confirmation and baptism “signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized.” If confirmation is celebrated, the AC does not have confirmation as a sacrament. The newly baptized is prayed for, so as to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which manifests in speaking tongue and other gifts. This is called the second baptism and it is an ongoing prayer service. According to Turner, “the more overt forms of Pentecostal phenomena do occur in the Church of the Lord (AC), and are respected as one of the signs of ‘spiritual or second baptism’, but not as the highest manifestation.

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Outline of the liturgical rite of baptism

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after baptism, the post-baptismal anointing is omitted. The rite of confirmation includes the imposition of hands and anointing with Chrism.</td>
<td>of the Spirit. <strong>319</strong> This prayer service has no formal ritual and there is no anointing with Chrism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### x. The paschal Eucharist

The Eucharist is the culminating point of the initiation. The newly baptized is received at the table of the Lord, the Eucharist.

Acceptance into the community follows the rite of baptism. The Lord’s Supper is not a public celebration and thus, becomes a matter of choice. This takes place at another time.

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