

## Conference paper abstract

Mika Vähäkangas, professor in Mission Studies and Ecumenics, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University

### Theology between Text and Orality: The Kimbanguist Doctrine of Incarnation

The aim of this research is to describe and analyse the Kimbanguist doctrine of incarnation. The sources of the research will be published and unpublished theological texts of the Kimbanguist church as well as Kimbanguist theologians as well as interviews with Kimbanguist leaders, theologians and all Nordic church members.

The theoretical starting point of this study is my theory of contextuality in theology.<sup>1</sup> This will lead me into a detailed analysis of the interchange between Congolese cultures and Kimbanguist theology.

This research has both practical and theoretical importance for ecumenics. Namely, as the World Council of Churches is in the process of considering the discontinuation of the church in the organization, the research results contribute to a deeper understanding of the Kimbanguist doctrinal position. Additional theoretical value for ecumenics will come from a deepened understanding of the contextual processes in theology which will, in turn, lead to a more profound view on the syncretistic nature of Christian theological enterprise. All this theoretical insight will, in turn, have practical consequences in the way heterodox Christianities and other religions are encountered by Christian denominations that consider themselves representatives of orthodoxy. This research will also open new vistas to the understanding of Kimbanguism in African studies, thus bridging the gap between cultural anthropology and theology/mission studies. Finally, this is also a study of encounter between hegemonic European cultures and subversive African responses to that challenge. By embracing Christianity and making it their own religion, the Kimbanguists are effectively claiming their voice in the religious and political scene.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mika Vähäkangas (2010) "Modelling Contextualization in Theology", *Swedish Missiological Themes* 98/3, 279-306.