

The International Journal of African Catholicism, Winter, 2021. Volume 11, Number 1



THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
AFRICAN CATHOLICISM

Editor Randall Woodard, Ph.D.

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## **RELIGION AND MORALITY: A SYNERGY FOR PUBLIC LIFE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY**

**John Obineche**

### **ABSTRACT**

Religion and morality are significantly trending words in every modern society. These two aspects of human nature deal, not only with the ultimate concern of human beings, but man's conduct in his relationship to the ultimate meaning in life for the total development of man to the society. This topic on "Religion and Morality: A Synergy for public Life in Nigerian Society" is against the backdrop of an attempt by modern societies to detach morality from the practice of religion. From the historical and ethical perspectives, the contemporary Nigerian society is highly saturated with religion in its varied forms and denominations as in every other part of the globe. However, while every religion contains positive moral codes of conduct for a harmonious society, good moral life has totally eluded almost all aspects of the Nigerian society. This work therefore further advocates a synergy in the inter-relationship that should exist between religion and morality as a practical application of religion for the overall development of Nigerian society.

**KEY WORDS: RELIGION, MORALITY, SOCIETY, NIGERIAN, ETHICS, RELIGIOUS ETHICS, SYNERGY.**

### **Introduction**

The terms religion and morality are two basic but controversial terms in definition because of their veracity or variegated explanations; while every religion contains moral codes of behavior, such codes are variously interpreted according to the tenets of the given religion. It is no longer a surprise in academic parlance that some words or terms may seem simple in their general or common use, but have different meanings in their technical usage. Here, religion and morality are considered among such complex terms, words and expressions. When we refer or consider someone as religious or moral, the definition of the terms religion and morality is far from being simple or unequivocal. This is especially true of religion, which embraces a varied but complex array of phenomena and systems with diverse trajectories (Ejizu 2008).

This paper is an attempt into a better understanding of religion and morality not only because of their relationship to life and existence, but also because of their contemporary and lucrative importance to humanity. Life and existence are indispensable without religion and morality, because the entire world order- peace, harmony, wars, individual and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships depend largely on the conception and interpretation of religion and morality. While ethics and morality are interchangeably used to refer to the same meaning in this work, the relationship or otherwise between religion and morality is the primary concern of this attempt beginning with their meaning and the precise sense in which they are used.

### **CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS:**

#### **Religion:**

The term religion is conventionally used to refer to a variety of systems and fields of human endeavour including the theistic, non-theistic, monotheistic as well as polytheistic systems of life and human existence. In this paper, the term religion covers the phenomena such as mysticism and other esoteric spheres. It is this wide diversity of reality that often explains the difficulty scholars encounter in attempting a universally acceptable definition. Ejizu (2008:6) compared scholars' attempts through the ages to have a widely acceptable definition of religion to that of the ancient fable of the blind men attempting to describe an elephant. This is to say that even the ancient scholars were divided among themselves in their attempt to assign a basic meaning via the etymology of the word *religion*. Among them were Cicero and Lactantius. While Cicero (106-43BC) traced the word

*religion* to the Latin verb, *re-ligio, ere*, meaning to execute painstakingly and by repeated efforts, Lactantius, on the other hand, traced the meaning to the verb *re-ligare*- “to tie back to that, which is taught to be the ultimate source”. In the same vein, different efforts were made by various scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to define religion as well. This includes Paul Tillich in James Livingstone (2005:5) who defined religion as “the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of life”. Others within the said century include but not limited to Rudolf Otto, Schleiermacher, Karl Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach and Sigmund Freud. The efforts have continued to the present day with the current list that includes such prominent names like Mircea Eliade, Ninan Smart and Cartwell Smith (Ejizu 2008:7).

To unravel the universal nature of the word religion and its importance to life, every religion has its own definitions that best express the content of her beliefs and practices. Also every field of human endeavour has its technical definition of religion tailored within its discipline that gives meaning and value to it. It is in this opinion that Carmody and Brink (2002:1) define religion as “a system of symbols, myths, doctrines, ethics and rituals for the expression of ultimate relevance.” They opined that any religion could only be understood within the context of the people who live it. So a study of religion must become a study of society, culture, history, science and ethics as well.

Nigeria is not left out of this all-human inclusive or universal phenomenon called religion. This is because the complex nature of religion allows adherents of every religion to define it from the prism of their culture. Ejizu (2008:7) used the term religion to refer to

*man’s experience of the holy and ultimate reality, as well as the expression of that awareness in concrete life as a world-view that provides a unified picture of the cosmos usually consisting of a web of interconnected beliefs, ideas and symbols that seek to explain rationally the order in the universe; an order that is believed to undergird human life and the universe as a whole.*

Here, he noted that to theists (including traditional African religion adherents, Christians as well as Muslims), the “holy” is generally identified as the divine which is God/gods/Spirit-beings, or Divinities. For Buddhists and adherents of other Asian religions, the holy (the divine) is represented as an impersonal empowering process, ultimate enlightenment, *Nirvana* which to them is the divine. It is the experience of the holy(divine) that evolves a feeling of reverence and awe (*mysterium et fascinatum*) in most known religious’ traditions of human kind. It is within the frame of this conscious experiential reality called religion that humans live and find meaning in the practice of their daily life and existence.

Iwe, citing Weisz (1970:243), sees religion as essentially a spiritual pilgrimage that is characterized by the search for and the recognition of some supra-human power (God).

This is to affirm that every religion is discerned in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious officiants within which the ethical contents of African life for instance is encoded (Mbiti, 1985ed:1). It is also in this light that Idowu succinctly define and express thus:

*Religion is very much always with us. It is with us at every moment of life- in our innermost beings and with regard to the great or minor events of life, it is discussed daily in the newspapers, through the radio and television and in our conversations. It is with all of us inevitably; whatever may be our individual avowed attitudes to it. That is why everyone is interested in “religion”; be he a believer to whom his faith is a matter of ultimate concern or a person who thinks that he does not believe and cannot believe in the divine rulership of the universe (Idowu 1991:1).*

However, apart from the unique and peculiar African commonalities that permeate in the definitional context of African religion, any universally acceptable definition of religion must contain

certain elements or features that transverse every culture and every field of human endeavour. Such features, includes: inclusiveness (to avoid narrowness, compartmentalization, prejudice and vagueness); whether the definition includes the whole of human life or it is restricted to one aspect of life such as thinking or feeling, old age, primitive or contemporary, personal or institutional. Does such definition embrace that which may be true, real, or false, helpful, or harmful, great and of social consequences? (Akama 2012:34-35)

The second feature is the issue of specificity, which bothers on the area of clarity and distinctiveness. In this, one should also “avoid both vagueness and over inclusiveness which would blur the differences between, religion” and other fields of life. In all, the major characteristics that distinguish religion from other disciplines should be put into consideration, such as; the sense of feeling, ritual activity, belief, monotheism (in most cases), the solitary personality, social valuation, illusion, ultimate reality and value, mental attitude, human need and recognition of duties. This author here subscribes to Akama’s brief on the common properties of every religion; such as: a system of belief, a community that shares the common beliefs and ideas, a central myth which expresses the beliefs of the group for continuity; sacred monuments and rituals through which the adherents express and manifest their convictions; a set of ethics and rules about human behaviours founded on the revelation of the supernatural; the characteristics of emotional experiences; material symbols and expressions and the idea of sacredness between the holy and the profane (Akama, 2012:49-50). The foregoing explains the inseparable nature of religion and morality as well as affirms the reason for the contemporary expectations from religion and morality to maximize the level of religiosity in Nigeria.

### CONCEPTUALIZING ETHICS AS MORALITY

Earlier in the introduction to this study, we averred that the words ethics and morality would be used simultaneously because of their similitude in meaning as applied to this topic under review. Consequently, it should be considered appropriate here to begin this topic by further explaining the reason they can be used to complement each other as synonymous. Ejizu (2008:4-6) succinctly observed that the term morality derives directly from the Latin, *MOs mores*, which means custom or way of life of a people. It has its equivalent in Greek- *ethos* from which the English word ethics is derived. The equivalent is from the Greek definition of *ethos* as the custom or way of life of a people. So the terms ethics and morality focus on the *oughtness* of human conduct – what one ought to do or ought not to do. Although the two terms in their origins are synonymous in meaning, but conventionally there is a slight difference in their usage; while *morality* is used ordinarily to emphasize on the rightness or wrongness of human conduct, ethics accentuates theories and principles of conduct (which is largely academic). The primary issue here is that both ethics and morality deal with human conduct in terms of its being right or wrong, good or bad, and it is on this note that ethics and morality is used to express the same meaning in this work.

Like religion, ethics has no universally acceptable definition due to its multi-dimensional meaning and relationship to other disciplines. However, some of these definitions can be considered relevant to the discussion in this study. Iroegbu and Echekwube (2005:29) define ethics as the branch of philosophy that studies the actions of the human person relative to right or wrong; a scientific study of the behavioural patterns of the human person with special reference to one’s nature as a rational being. To them, ethics attempts to device reasons for approving or disapproving human actions as right or wrong, good or bad, and as worthy or unworthy of a rational being. Fagothey (1976:1) attempted the definition of ethics through its origin; that prior to the establishment of scientific knowledge and subject to the errors and whimsies of non-scientific thinking, there existed primitive codes of behaviour, which provoked intelligence and fashioned a science of good life. This transition from non-scientific to scientific thinking by the Greeks led to the reduction of primitive speculations to some sort of order or system and their integration into the general body of knowledge called philosophy. As the discovery of sea routes and other parts of the world exposed the variety of customs, laws and institutions that prevailed; they undertook a study of these varied customs, laws

and institutions as part of philosophy called ethics. This is why ethics is called moral philosophy. It is from the Greek *ethos*, which originally denoted “a location” or “a place where people live together”, that Aristotle coined the adjective *ethicos* and the noun *ethica*. From this new discipline, Aristotle named ethics in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (400 BC), in which he argued that a human being has a capacity of a rational behaviour which is the basis of ethics (Nyoyoko, ed. (2012:2).

Dzurgba, (2000:1-3) observed that the Latin equivalent of Greek ethics is *mos*, with its plural form as *mores*. From this Roman version of the Greek, *mos* acquired the meanings of custom, character, behaviour, inner nature, law, regulations, fashion and even style of clothing. Cicero coined the adjective *moralis moral* from the same word *mos*, and later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Romans came up with the noun *moralittas*. He noted however that neither the Greek ethics nor the Roman *moralittas* originated from the people’s popular consciousness, rather, the two terms were artificial terms created to only give a name tag to a certain academic field called ethics. In summary, Webster sees ethics as the science of moral duty; the science of the ideal human character and the ideal ends of human action. He observed that the major problem with which ethics deals, concerns the nature of the highest good (*summum bonum*) which is the origin and validity of the sense of duty, character and authority of moral obligation. Ethics is the science of the phenomena of human character and conduct, and the art of directing the human will towards the ideal order of life (Hyslop, 1895:1). In view of the primary purpose of this study on “religion and morality” and in our attempt to examine the relationship that exists or should exist between them; it is of utmost importance to examine what constitutes religious morality.

### CONCEPTUALIZING RELIGIOUS ETHICS

Religious ethics is the science of human conduct directed by revelation and faith in the divine towards the attainment of man’s final end (Awajiusuk in Ekwealo, C.J. ed 2012:146). Religious ethics presupposes a whole set of faith propositions. It believes, and then understands and presumes the concept of man’s freedom; it is based purely on revelation and centers around religious beliefs and ideas, backed up by the sacred and divine authority. In religious ethics, an action is morally right because the divine commands it, and it is morally wrong because the divine forbids it. However, religious ethical principles differ from religion to religion. While some actions are viewed as virtuous such as honesty, truth telling, sincerity, uprightness, transparency, accountability; other actions such as dishonesty, corruption, immorality, lying and stealing are viewed as vicious in all religions. Therefore, religious ethics depends on revealed sources for its judgment of the morality of human conduct.

Every religion has its ethics and ethical standards for morality. Just as we have Christian ethics as a branch of religious ethics, there is Islamic ethics, which is based on the prescriptions of the holy Quran and the Sunna (the tradition of Mohammed’s life that gives a pattern for living). Buddhist ethics is based on four noble truths- sufferings, cause and effect, cessation of suffering and the eightfold path. Hindu ethics has her basic concepts in *Karma*, rebirth and liberation. Zoroastrian ethics is based on human perfectibility (salvation based on good works). Shinto ethics appeals to the example of the gods and to the laws of the gods. As regards conduct, human beings, having been produced by the spirit of two creative deities, are naturally endowed with knowledge of what they ought and ought not to do (Smith, 1993:16-20). This confirms that religious ethic varies from religion to religion. Therefore, religious ethics can as well be seen as comparative religious ethics which is an expression used to refer to the study of religious ethics when the study is not confined to a single religious tradition (Nyoyoko, 2012:69). Religious ethics as a branch of ethics therefore hampers on morality as part of man’s religious activity.

## Why Religion and Morality?

Having traced the history of the inquiry into the relationship of religion and morality/ethics to the early centuries of the western world, it is a clear indication that this inquiry has remained an age-long topic. Today, one had expected that such a topic of inquiry should not be recurrent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Why religion and morality?” is the underlying question as to the reason why this enquiry is deemed relevant in the contemporary situation.

The obvious reason and answer to this question is not far-fetched because of the world-wide trend in the multiplicity of religions with its attendant branches and denominations and the noticeable features of moral decadence in every society of the world. One may not be totally wrong to affirm that it seems, the more religious some societies become, the worse their level of morality degenerates. Take Nigeria as an instance, where splinting into multiple new religious affiliations is clearly a prominent feature of the three major religions (Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion) in the contemporary dispensation. It is obvious that each of these religions is dynamic and moving along the tide of time with the manifestations of their impulse to form new religious movements or groups, even the non-missionary among them (Obineche 2020:9-15). So the proliferation of new religious movements has remained visible in Nigeria from past colonial policies that divided Nigeria along religious and ethnic lines; by excluding one religion from some areas of the society and establishing the other in other parts of the same society. Christianity as an example has ever since, had different varieties of proliferation of splinter groups in Nigeria, ranging from the Aladura-type, the Zionist, Hebraic, the evangelical and Pentecostal-types. Churches have continued to multiply uncontrollably in amoeba-like manner in Nigeria (Ejizu, 2008:18-19). Islam is not left out in this proliferation for its dominance in the northern part of Nigeria.

The sad and unanswered question in the mind of every well-meaning individual or nation, particularly in Nigeria is “where were these religions and their code of moral behaviours when Nigeria immersed herself into this alarming rate of moral and spiritual quagmire of no return?” In a headline titled “Religion, religion everywhere, nor a modicum of morality”, Ejizu described the ills of Nigerian morality in the midst of religions, thus:

*Surely, the dominant feeling of frustration among the majority of Nigerians over the paradoxical religious and moral situation in the country very much resembles the bewilderment of those sailors in the **Rime of the Ancient marina** vividly captured by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in the verse; “water, water everywhere, nor a drop to drink”. Much like those desperate sailors in the poem, Nigerians find themselves struck in the sea of religions, but the country’s moral tenor is about the lowest the world currently knows (Ejizu, 2008 :19).*

The current practice of religion far away from morality especially in modern Nigeria stands to negate the age-long theological and traditional believe that religion and morality are inseparable concomitants. This work therefore advocates that a synergy between religion and morality in Nigeria will create a peaceful and harmonious society and make the profession of every religion in Nigeria a meaningful reality.

## RELIGION AND MORALITY: A CONFLUENCE OF DAILY LIVING

The issue of the inter-connection between religion and ethics (otherwise morality) is at the heart of this study. It is true that the study of inter-relationship between religion and morality is not new to the western mind, or the western cultural studies as in Africa of today. As a developing nation especially Nigerian, the contemporary practice of religion seems to be at wide variance with daily moral life. In the western world, Ejizu (2012:22) observed that the outstanding material achievement and the success of modern, liberal and progressive societies had given the impression that the



separation of the sacred from the secular was permanent and unarguable as a natural issue. This enquiry into the relationship of religion and morality looks germane with the history of western thoughts when Socrates, the acclaimed founding father of Greco-Western philosophy, was said to have initiated the discussion in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as credited to him in Plato's five dialogue; "is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it because it is loved by the gods?" (G.M.A. Grube (trans.) 1981:14, five Dialogues).

It is observed that this same question or inquiry is beginning to resurface in Europe and North America due to the unprecedented turn of globalization in all aspects of human life and concerns. These have triggered violent reactions and faith-based terror allegedly perpetrated in response to the perceived injustices in different societies the world over (Ejizu, 2012 :22-23). The western world is now more perplexed than ever on the place and value of religion which they once thought and used as instrument of world peace and morality. Every world religion preaches peace, love, unity, justice and equity, yet the contemporary world is so devastated with hatred, violence, injustice, terror and man's inhumanity to man, which have rendered the world a fearful and almost an inhabitable planet. In Africa as a developing continent with Nigeria as its giant, the issue of the inter-relationship between religion and morality or the relevance of the former to the practical daily living and human relationship has remained on the front burner as a recurring decimal on every national discourse agenda.

However, one's formed opinion in this work is to join forces with the progressive religious scholars and theologians in showcasing the relationship of religion to morality as it is with religion and other fields of human endeavour. With one of our earlier definitions of religion as a system of symbols, myths, doctrines, ethics, and rituals for the expression of ultimate relevance, it is within the context of the people who live in it can any religion be understood (Carmody & Brink, 2012:1). In this light, morality is clearly seen as tied to both myths and rituals in that myths often justifies certain ethical positions by telling powerful stories that demonstrate virtuous or evil behaviours. For instance, while the Roman Catholics may go to confession and perform a penance, the ancient Hebrews dealt with collective sin by animal sacrifices (Carmody & Brink,2012:5-8). As a complex phenomenon, religion plays a diversity of roles in the society (social morality), and it is composed of an intricate interplay of symbols, myths, rituals, mystical experiences and social interactions; hence, sociologists use two macro perspectives – the "functional" and "conflict theories" in making sense of social moral behavior. Owete, et. al. (2012:5) further illustrates this point with sexual impulse or drive of a man who may have sexual feelings for a woman other than his own wife. If such a man has internalized the values of the society, he may not allow himself to act on those impulse or desire. This sense of fidelity which is religious, may preserve the stability of marriage and bring stability to the larger society as well. Christopher Ejizu is one of the learned scholars of religion and morality who, from his research among several indigenous groups in Nigeria, affirmed in strong terms that religion and morality are intricately connected and inter-dependent to one another. He submits that ancestors, powerful deities and spirit-beings are definitely sources of morality in Traditional African Religion, who prescribe moral norms for their respective communities or jurisdictions and show that the gods also serve as policemen in the enforcement of prescribed laws (Ejizu (2012:27). This may be the reason why oat taking forms part of African religion that enforces morality for harmonious communal life that is devoid of suspicion within the kindred spirit.

From the broad and inclusive definitions of Religion and morality with their varied types, practices and nature, it should be understood that every human being is religious and every religion, even the secular religion, contains its moral codes of behaviour. Today, as the world has become a global village where no one lives or dies in isolation but a globe that hides no one; no individual, nation or people can do their thing again all alone as they wish or thought, without the interfering of others (Iroegbu & Echekwube, 2005:22). If everyone should therefore internalize the practical knowledge of their religious moral codes and retain the inseparable tie between religion and moral behaviour, the world will be a better place for all. In such a case, no one can grievously or ignorantly



misbehave; no one or religious culture can instigate or promote conflicts and acts of hate and destruction; no individual or nation can indulge in unbridled socio-political and economic misconduct or sabotage etc. (Iroegbu & Echekwube, 2005).

In Nigeria for instance, with her homogeneous religio-ethical and socio-cultural background, the intricate connection between religion and morality is generally discernible in the traditional life-experience of the different ethno-linguistic communities. It is the sacred (divine) power and authority which such presiding elders are believed to re-present and invoke when they prescribe and interpret norms, or promulgate specific laws that invest such prescriptions with the necessary binding force. This in turn, forms the basis of the activities of the human agents who physically intervene to enforce the dictates of the gods (Ejizu, 2008:27).

Today, it is unfortunate that this desired synergy between religion and morality in public life in Nigeria has remained elusive. Rather, the opposite is clearly in practice. It is clear that every Nigerian is religious by his believe system and every religion in Nigeria preaches morality; why then has Nigeria and Nigerians remained morally corrupt, inhuman and ungodly in all his relationship to his fellow man, to the nation and to God or to the gods. Translating or practicing the moral aspects of the three major religions to which the mortality of Nigerians is in affiliation into the daily public life in politics, economic and social life, will transform Nigeria haven among the league of better nations of the world and make her proudly answer “the giant of Africa”.

## CONCLUSION

Thus far, we have tried to address the stated objectives of this paper in attempting a better understanding of religion and morality. This paper has made clear the reasons and the sense for which it used the word ethics as synonymous to morality in the context of this work. An extensive definition of the two words that constitute the topic of this essay on religion and morality were clearly presented as it is discovered that religion and morality are not only broad in definition, but are multi-faceted in meaning and application. However, the aspect of religious ethic is preferred as a safe landing option in relation to the chosen topic.

It is also discovered that why the issue of poor moral standard in the midst of various religious professions and traditions is a world-wide phenomenon, Nigeria is distinguished in this work as a nation that is worldly acclaimed to be highly religious, but one of the world’s known countries with the lowest moral tenor. The presence of the three major Religions- Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion seems to have contributed to the low moral ebb in the society by the level of religious violence, intolerance and bigotry in contemporary Nigerian state. At the international level, why should the immoral acts of terrorism, violence, colour-bar or social discrimination, hate, nepotism, economic and political sabotage, injustice, modern colonialism and war to be all associated to religions against its moral codes that should encourage harmonious living and world peace? It is therefore advocated that a practical religion which to us is morality, should be the opium that should bring healing to the seeming total decay in the Nigerian society rather than the overblown empty and theoretical parade of religion and religiosity in Nigeria.

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## Christianity and Colonialism: Makers of Modern Africa

Joseph Eneji

### Abstract

The two phenomena constitute a key aspect of the external influences on Africa. Christianity with a religious outlook found its way into the African continent at two different periods; for North Africa, early contacts with Christianity could be traced to the first century, while for the sub-Saharan Africa, early formal contacts with Christianity could be traced to the fifteenth century, when systematic attempts began to introduce Christianity to the sub-continent. Put differently, colonialism which connotes formal annexation of colonies by European nations beyond Europe into other parts of the World, in the context Africa gained currency in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This trend became formalized at the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885. There is a school of thought that sees these two phenomena as mutually reinforcing, i.e. one giving rise to the other. That is to say Christianity prepared the way for effective colonial structures to be raised; hence, Christianity and colonialism are viewed as two sides of the same coin. It is in view of this, that this study restricts the analysis to three questions: To what extent were the missionary's instrumental in bringing about colonialism? To what extent were their nuances influenced by the colonial intricacies of their mother nations? Finally, are there any positive effects of colonial occupation on Christianity in Africa? This study hopes to demonstrate that Christianity aided and promoted colonial enterprise of participating European nations. The methodology used for this study is qualitative dwelling on thematic analysis of pertinent aspects of mutual engagements between the phenomena of Christianity and colonialism with regards to Africa.

**Key words:** Christianity, Colonialism, Religion, Missionaries, Africa, Sub-Saharan, European, Europe.

### Introduction

Colonialism may be called a concomitant rather than an initiating factor, for the missionary enterprise was well on the way when the colonial occupation of Africa began. However, it too generated missionary interest, especially in countries which acquired their first overseas possessions at that time, such as Germany and Belgium. The all-important factor was that the colonial empires with their infrastructures of communications, health-care, law and order transcending the tribal community though regrettably enforced by military power provided the framework in which most of the Christian churches were established. This paper argues that both had a melting pot at some time which culminated in the making of modern Africa in many ramifications.

### **Christian-Missionary and Colonialist Cooperation in the Occupation of Africa**

The famous dictum “First the explorer, then the missionary, then the soldier”, is attributed to various African rulers, but originally it was made by Emperor Minelli II after the Italian attempt at conquering his country in 1896 in the famous battle of Adwa.<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that, there were explorers who invited missionaries, they came but again expelled for religious reasons as evidenced in Ethiopia when Minelli himself kept Massage at his court till he had to give in the Abun.<sup>2</sup>

There was a sequence of explorer-missionary-soldier, how this sequence came about still remains a puzzle among social scientists, but it is difficult to conclude that it was without collusion. And generally speaking there was collusion. Sometimes it took the form of a direct invitation from the missionaries as was the case in Uganda and Malawi in 1887.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, there was the universal conviction that considered European occupation of Africa as the only means to suppress the slave trade and colonization would greatly further mission work and bring to Africa the blessings of European civilization. The colonial occupation being accepted as inevitable and beneficial to Africa, some missionaries also cooperated with their colonial compatriots in order to secure the occupation of “their” territory with their mother country.<sup>4</sup> This could be seen as a consolidation of their catchment areas which to a very large extent require both the financial, economic, political and logistic support of their governments back in Europe. Thus, the Presbyterians in Malawi for instance, called for the British in order that “Livingstone’s heritage” should not fall into the hands of the “Ramesh” Portuguese but should prosper under “Pax Britannica”,<sup>5</sup> and again, the Holy Ghost Father Augouard worked along the River Congo for the Catholic France in order that “his” Africans should not fall into the hands of heretic Protestants.<sup>6</sup>

The Cambridge history of Africa considers missionary influence in the colonial annexation an exceptional phenomenon, as clearly established in Malawi, in which case the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury gave in for “the fear of losing Presbyterian votes in Scotland if he permitted a Catholic Portuguese takeover.”<sup>7</sup> The basic motives would have been the hope of economic gain in Africa and most decisively, politics in Europe.<sup>8</sup> It could be asserted that, this was clearly borne out or triggered by the following events both in Europe and in Africa.

First, the Historical events: the decisive years for regroupment of powers in Africa as well as in Europe happened in the 1870s. During this decade the last famous European

exploration of Africa took place and what was hitherto considered blank space in Africa's interior was filled by cartographers with rivers and lakes and peoples. The explorers exported possibilities of rich raw materials and markets for

European products. Thus, a new and last continent was opened to colonial enterprise. Initially only trading companies showed interest and then King Leopold of Belgium, in his endeavour to establish a colony, was attracted by the vast lands along the River Congo.<sup>9</sup>

Second, in contrast to the above, the 1870s saw also a new regrouping of powers in Europe: Germany and Italy, formerly divided in various principalities, both became federated states. Consequently, both were keenly interested in restoring their ancient glory by building an empire, thus competing with Britain and France, which had well-established empires overseas. Regarding Africa, Britain had so far been able to build up an "informal empire" by controlling the coast of the whole continent.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the superiority of the British Navy everywhere had given the British Merchants Protection over their interests and thus hindered the expansion of other European powers notably France and Portugal. It was only, in 1879 that France dared to undertake its conquest of the western Sudan, after England requested its help against the Russians who had defeated the Turks and were advancing towards the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, Germany, Italy and Belgium followed suit.

Third, the double coincidence of empire building and the peak of nationalism in Europe: nationalism had grown out of 19th century European liberalism that proclaimed the right of all ethnic groups to self-determination; but this conviction stopped at the shores of Europe, it never went overseas. For instance, in 1884 when chancellor Bismarck of Germany called for the well-known Berlin Conference, its most important decision that only factual occupation of a territory would entitle a power to political sovereignty over it. In all, the dealings at the conference of Berlin, nobody asked the opinion of the Africans themselves.<sup>11</sup> It was all a matter of European imperialism. Regrettably nobody in Europe realized that this was flagrant injustice, and this leads us to the underlying cause of both colonial occupation and colonial mentality as a subterfuge of the white man's complex of racial superiority.<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, in the eyes of colonizing Europe, the Africans were "savages" to be civilized, "cursed sons of Ham" to be saved, "big children" to be educated.<sup>13</sup> For the Europeans,

there existed no African culture, only tribal customs, no religion, only foolish superstitions and devilish cults. The Africans became stigmatised with an inferiority complex, confronted with his European master, servility was his greatest virtue. It is from this point of view that African writers say colonialism was for Africa a greater evil than slavery, for “the slavery of the mind is far worse than the slavery of the body.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Colonial Influence on the Missionaries**

It has to be admitted though unfortunately that, the missionaries by and large succumbed to colonial mentality or influences. It should be noted that, there was an undeclared solidarity among the white men; it was stronger where more settlers lived in the country and especially where these settlers were of the missionary’s own nationality. This solidarity generated a common outlook. There was “a lack of tact and respect” rarely noticed at that time. Little wonder that a Bishop in East Africa is reputed to have said that “the iron bars in the offices hindered the missionary from beating his Christians.”<sup>15</sup> Again, he asked, “were not new-comers to the mission field south of the Zambezi informed that here we do not shake hands with Africans?”<sup>16</sup> The individual missionary who did not comply with the common code of behaviour was soon looked at as a black sheep and derided as “Afrophile.”<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, Wellborn, writing in his book “Colonialism” summarizes thus; there was, in Africa[n] eyes, a near identity of missionaries and other white men, and a close similarity of fundamental attitudes that made this confusion objectively possible.<sup>18</sup> They all assumed the superiority of white civilization. There were two streams of dealing with Africans; a positive idealism of trust, exemplified in Bishop Crowther’s election and even in Lugard’s principle of indirect rule; beside this, a ‘realistic’ approach of mistrust which dominated all colonial dealings with Africa. This statement fits tacitly with what an experienced Zairean Roman Catholic priest answered when asked about the shortcomings of the missionaries in his country, he answered: “they had not enough trust in us.” The lack of trust to some extent is seen as the reason why the missionaries did so much “for the people” and so little “with the people.”<sup>19</sup> Finally, we may agree with Groves that the European’s “self-satisfaction with his civilizing mission tended to rest on his ideas rather than on his practice”<sup>20</sup>

In as much as we admit the shortcomings of the missionaries with regards to allowing colonial gimmicks to influence their activities, we must not deny their great merits, their religious motivation in coming to Africa, their heroism especially in the early times, their renouncement to many commodities of their home country even in the later years that came.

Even if we admit a general colonial mentality among missionaries, we do not deny that they exercised a mitigating influence among colonialists. There are quite a number of missionaries who protested against colonial abuses and succeeding in their suppression. This could be seen in Dr Phillips defending African rights in South Africa, Lutherans in Tanzania, Anglicans and Presbyterians in Kenya, Baptists in the Congo, and quite generally protests against injustices and harshness during the Pacification time. Even missionaries who had advocated for a protectorate as could be seen in Malawi, became very critical of the way it was introduced. It is worthy to note that, these examples are from the early time, when the missionaries were more independent and the colonial abuses more flagrant. However, there was a turn in events; the substantial government subsidies after the 1920s, made the missions more dependent on the government. Being part and parcel of the colonial school system they became more convinced of the blessings of colonialism and less critical of the evils associated with colonialism, thus even if criticism had to be made, they were made diplomatically without offending the colonial authority. On the African front, the common man in the countryside still felt attached to the priest of his church and the sister in the hospital and a clear distinction between the missionary and the other white man.

Conversely, the more politically minded African felt that the missionaries were not sensitive enough to colonial exploitation and they tended not to make any difference between the two, as clearly reflected particularly in post-World War II African writing.<sup>21</sup> The deplorable situation was that while Africans became progressively more critical and rebellious over colonial rule, missions became less critical and more comfortable in it. This was informed by the strong synergy that had developed between the two institutions in the face of the demand for ownership and control of their destinies in every ramification of society. While the politically conscious African demanded for political freedom as a leeway to freedom in other realms, the African Christian convert sought for a control of the Church leadership.

### **Positive Effects of Colonial Occupation on the Missions**



The undeniable fact that the implantation of modern Christianity mainly took place during the colonial period can easily lead to the too hasty conclusion that it was just a by-product of colonialism. Christian evangelization has always been in its essence the execution of Christ's Great Commission as enshrined in Matthew 28:19. Similarly, the new inspiration by religious revival in the Christian homelands and a special motivation as atonement for slave-trade in Africa; were considered the reasons for the massive drive to evangelize in Africa. To this effect, the missionary movement in Africa preceded colonialism by almost three centuries. Interestingly, it enjoyed a strong African initiative, specifically at the beginning in West Africa and later on in hundreds of independent churches in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet those beginnings were extremely hard for climatic and other reasons.<sup>22</sup>

The colonial occupation provided Sub-Sahara Africa with a similar opportunity as the Roman Empire had done for the Mediterranean world (North Africa-Asia-Europe) in the early centuries, a situation in which the church Fathers had called "preparation evangeliū (a preparation for and facilitation of the spread of the Gospel).<sup>23</sup> Thus, for the missionaries in Africa, under European rule the innumerable ethnicities became easily accessible as tribal frontiers were broken down; the economic infrastructure, political administration, and especially the improved means of travelling and communications facilitated the work of evangelization tremendously. For instance, steamboat and train, cars and aero planes were all the invention of the colonial age. In Nigeria, the construction of railways by the British colonial government beginning in 1896 in Lagos greatly facilitated the spread of Christianity into the interior parts of the country.<sup>24</sup>

The evangelizers profited as well as the evangelized from colonial health services and medical research. In the race for souls between Catholics and Protestants in the 1920s among the Dii in Northern Cameroon, the Catholic missionaries built dispensaries to help cater for the urgent challenges in the mission field.<sup>25</sup> This was made possible with the support from the French colonial administration. The introduction of monetary economy with salaried work was often the decisive reason for parents to send their children to the mission schools where they learned the Christian faith (e.g. Cameroon).<sup>26</sup>

The fact that the colonizers were all Christians, at least nominally, influenced Africans in various ways. For instance, those who had resisted colonial rule and were

defeated became inclined to believe in a more powerful God of the Europeans. We see this happened in Ijebu in Nigeria, the Abagusii in Kenya, Wangoni in Tanzania, Herero in Namibia, etc.<sup>27</sup> In the same vein, others who went into the service of the Europeans felt it expedient to join their religion too. Some colonial administrators would even positively recommend the missions to the people as seen in the Niger Delta and in Bukoba, or insist that they frequent the mission school.<sup>28</sup>

In all, the colonial administrators insisted on religious neutrality, the French were often anti-colonial and therefore rather hindered than promoted missionary work; the British tried to be fair and positive, even to the Catholics; they only prohibited missions in territories that were under Islamic influence with good examples in northern Nigeria and northern Kenya. The greatest direct profit the work of the evangelization probably drew from the colonial powers was their support of the mission schools, at least in British territories and the Belgian Congo.

Finally, colonialism in Africa also aroused more missionary interest in the home countries and in turn this increased the missionary personnel and the support given to them.<sup>29</sup> This was anti to the early stereotypic presentations made by foremost explorers who had contact with the continent. Their gory reports created a sort of phobia for the Europeans who had not visited Africa and basking on such reports declined attempting to have anything to do with Africa. Colonial exploits alongside the major breakthrough with the discovery of Quinine as an anti-dote to malaria dramatically changed the tide.

To strike a fair balance between the positive and negative effects of colonialism, we should be very careful when sorting the causes of all the problems connected with the colonial era. One area we need to deplore is the missions' lack of adaptation to the African culture, which had its root not simply in the colonial occupation but in the spiritual captivity of the western missionaries within their own culture; it was not the colonial administrators but their own narrow concept of orthodoxy- canon law for the Catholics and conformity with their home churches for the Protestants-that prohibited them from a true enculturation of Christianity. Again, it was the European paternalism based chiefly on the same fear of deviating from the true faith that hesitated to entrust Africans with the tasks of responsibility; thus, colonialism hardened those shortcomings and tended to perpetuate them.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, it could be asserted that, there was between colonialism and Christianity a mutual interaction difficult to disentangle. If it is true that at the beginning of the process “every mission station was an essay in colonization” as the empire-builder Johnston wrote; then at the end it is also true “that every mission school was a step to independence” as Kwame Nkrumah once said.<sup>31</sup> The cooperation of Christianity and colonialism was the milieu in which our African leaders were formed who soon put both in question. Thus, colonialism gave way to independence and out of the mission there grew the church. This scenario reminds us to ponder over the words of Archbishop Maranta of Dar-es-salaam, at the congress of Lay Apostolate in Uganda in 1954. After having expressed his joy that the colonial era was coming to an end, he asked; “could an African, who sees in his Christian faith his greatest treasure, not also come to the conclusion that the colonization was an instrument in the hand of the divine providence to win Africa to the kingdom of Christ? Even if the colonialist may have had very different objectives in spreading the gospel they were instruments in the hand of God.”<sup>32</sup> Also for another school of thought, the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles convince us more: “with those who love God everything works for good” (Romans 8:28).<sup>33</sup> This goes to tell that neither Christianity nor colonialism was indispensable at the time they occurred to bring Africa to its present position. Both phenomena provided the spring boards that were used to question the validity of their presence and the future of the continent. It was at this point that the all-embracing ideology of Africanization emerged. First the question for Africanization reared its head in the church, and secondly, crept into the political sphere of the African society.

### **Christianity and the Movement for Independence**

The missionaries’ involvement in colonialism made it difficult for them to find a positive attitude towards the movement of independence. African nationalism had its origin in the disappointment of the African elite, who had adopted the white man’s God and his ways of living but still were not accepted in his society. The Francophone went hopefully to France but was rejected by the society of Paris. Anglophones sought admission in British clubs and were turned away. Even with equal education and the same religion no equality was to be found. There was no future in being “a Black European.” Hence, to assert their own dignity the French intelligentsia discovered “la negritude” while the English-speaking the “the African personality” was invented. This

movement of African self-assertion had three facets: cultural, political and religious implications.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Religious Aspect**

In the religious-ecclesial sphere the movement chiefly fought against the lack of trust evident in the slow pace of promotion of the African clergy; against preferential treatment of white church members; against the wholesale rejection of African customs; and against any kind of missionary paternalism, whether authoritarian or benignant. In its strongest form the protest turned into open secession.<sup>35</sup> It was the reason for the formation of the earliest independent churches. Even though the missionaries had a vision of a full Africanized church from the beginning, it was a vision of the future; one began with the lower positions and insisted that nothing should be rushed; even though it was in the interest of the creative CMS Secretary Henry Venn for instance, that a church hierarchy that is African in outlook be put in place.<sup>36</sup> However with the attainment of flag independence by some African countries particularly in West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria for instance) there was a change in the narrative. Thus, political independence accelerated the process of an African leadership in the church.

### **The Cultural Aspect**

With regards to the question of African culture, it is fascinating how many studies in African customs, languages and histories were made by missionaries particularly with the notable exception of African religion. Thus, the conviction prevailed that this culture has to be replaced by a European Christian civilization. For instance, the headmaster of young Leopold Sedar Senghor bluntly declared “Africans do not have a civilization at all.”<sup>37</sup> Later, Senghor recorded that he was very grateful to his headmaster, for that provocative statement which led him to search for the values hidden in African culture. Thus, he became a poet of la negritude or African beauty and goodness. In 1947, together with Alioune Diop, he founded the magazine presence Africaine, which by publishing a large range of works became the first forum to vindicate African civilization. Together with Felix Houphouet-Boigny he achieved a respected place in the society of Paris. Both became members of the French parliament in 1946.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, there was a call back to the gospel as a meeting place with African culture.<sup>39</sup> This was as old as what Edward Blyden and Samuel Johnson in Nigeria of

the 1870s had advocated but did not much appeal to the missionaries. Both catholic doctrines and protestant teachings ignored an African cultural approach. Thus, Africans during this period revived the call that evangelization should start by accepting African spiritual values and should not consist in the implantation of a compact Christian civilization imported from Europe. In all, we can well understand Alioune Diop when he asked whether the West had not confused the Christian mission with the assumed “civilizing mission.”<sup>40</sup>

### **The Political Aspect**

The political aspect of African nationalism was the most critical one. In the earlier days, colonial administrations had tried to suppress political parties but in the 1940s up to the 1950s the movement became irresistible as could be seen in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent. The shocking defeats of the French by their Vietnamese rebels at Dien-Bien-Phou in 1954 precipitated a change in the overseas policy of France. Consequently, France offered to its African colonies independence within a French community in 1958.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the Mau-Mau war in Kenya taught Great Britain that another colonial war would be colossal and Prime Minister Macmillan adopted De Gaulle’s policy.<sup>42</sup>

Following this development, the Catholic Church was at once ready to support the movement at the level of Episcopal conferences. Most of them issued episcopal letters sympathetic to the Africans aspirations for independence. For instance, the Bishops of Madagascar in 1953 called political freedom one of “fundamental human freedoms and responsibilities.”<sup>43</sup> The Bishops of French West Africa declared in 1955, thus: “The aspiration is legitimate” while those in Cameroon in the same year said that “they encourage the Sons of this land to take progressively into their hands the direction of their country.”<sup>44</sup> The pope followed suit in his 1955 Christmas message and again in the encyclical *Fidei donum* telling the colonial powers that they could not refuse “the progressive emancipation of their colonies.”<sup>45</sup> The transition according to the pope message should be “a work of constructive cooperation, detached from prejudices and mutual susceptible.”<sup>46</sup>

On the Protestant side there was similar picture but understandably a less united front of church authorities. Faith missions strictly kept off politics. While a former Anglican bishop from South Africa thought that at least 200 years of Christian education would

be needed to prepare Africans for independence. But a strong minority represented by the famous Michael Scott and Bishop Huddleston, both missionaries in South Africa, advocated a quick and peaceful advance to independence. John V. Taylor popularized their view in “Christianity and Politics in Africa”, which influenced the government in London in a similar way a Catholic intervention did in Paris and Brussels.<sup>47</sup>

For the Africans who led their countries to independence, religion played hardly any role. Religious-minded leaders often were more moderate and oriented towards the west. The majority of politicians were Protestant, except for French West Africa where Protestantism was a small minority. In Nigeria, and Ghana Catholic leadership was almost non-existent, though with Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Catholic politicians came to the fore. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, a number of politicians were also protestant church leaders like Ndabiningi Sithole and Bishop Muzorewa, while Kenneth Kaunda was the son of a pastor and himself a convinced Christian.<sup>48</sup> For many missions it might have been true that the Protestants have been educated to initiative and responsibility, Catholics on the other hand had to obedience and service. Be that as it may, the western education that these foremost nationalist acquired through the instrumentality of the missionaries aided by colonial policies and infrastructures largely influenced their attitudes towards the two institutions in the years that were to come. The doctrinal teachings of the church could not have alone provided the trajectories that were to be needed to interrogate the Whiteman’s hegemonic relationship with the African.

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it could be asserted that, the Christian missionaries were much part of colonizing forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers. There may be room for arguing whether in a given colony the missionaries brought other colonialists forces or vice versa, this study has argued that missionaries were agents of colonialism in practical sense whether or not they saw themselves in that light. The missionaries played manifold roles in colonial Africa and stimulated forms of cultural, political and religious changes. It should be noted that the missionaries did great good in Africa, providing crucial modern social services such as modern education and health care that would have otherwise not have been available. Thus, to a very large extent Christianity and colonialism were mutually reinforcing phenomena that were

expedient to each other in their respective mandate on the continent. Today, undoubtedly the legacies of these twin external influences have shaped the character and outlook of the continent in all ramifications.

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INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A NON-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO THE  
NEW EVANGELISATION IN GHANA

Cosmas Ebo Sarbah and Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church's call for New Evangelization for an effective transmission of the Christian faith is expected to lead to a renewed missionary activity, in not only far-off countries but also those already evangelized. This paper details the contemporary challenges to adoption of institutional approaches in the New Evangelisation posed by the secular and modern environment *vis-a-vis* the biblical mandate for the proclamation of the gospel. Through the analysis of ecclesial documents, the paper discusses evangelization, proclamation and interreligious dialogue in the light of their supporting biblical texts and seeks to indicate how the Ghanaian situation and experience reflect the non-institutional approach to inter-religious dialogue. It argues that the Catholic Church cannot ignore inter-religious dialogue, as a non-institutional approach, as she looks for new ways of transmitting the Christian faith in the contemporary society, using the case of Ghana as an example.

Keywords: inter-religious dialogue, evangelization, proclamation, non-institutional approach, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Exactly fifty-five years ago, in order to foster the work of dialogue in the Catholic Church, Pope Paul VI set up the Secretariat for Non-Christians, later renamed the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. The Pope, on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1964, also issued an Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam (ES)*, which played a role in shaping the Church's positioning of itself in today's world. Following its Plenary Assembly of 1984, the Secretariat issued a document entitled "The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission."

Since then, the practice of dialogue has raised problems in the minds of many Catholics. There are those who would seem to think, erroneously, that in the Church's mission today, dialogue should simply replace proclamation. At the other extreme, there are some who fail to recognize the

importance of inter-religious dialogue at all. Yet others are perplexed and confused and they ask: if inter-religious dialogue has become so central, has the proclamation of the Gospel message lost its urgency? Has the effort to bring people into the community of the Church become secondary or even superfluous? (John Paul II 1984: No 3)

It must be noted that the evangelizing mission of the Church is a single but complex reality. The complexity of the evangelizing mission of the Church is underscored by Pope John Paul II, in his address to the members of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue in 1984, when he declared: “Just as interreligious dialogue is one element in the mission of the Church, the proclamation of God's saving work in Our Lord Jesus Christ is another... There can be no question of choosing one and ignoring or rejecting the other.”

In this statement, the Pope identifies the two main elements of the evangelizing mission of the church: Proclamation and Dialogue, describing them as two sides of the same coin. Consequently, in the transmission of the Christian faith, sincere attention must always be paid to the critical bond between dialogue and proclamation. Proclamation and inter-religious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support, complement, and nourish one another in evangelization.

#### PROCLAMATION AS AN INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT OF EVANGELISATION

Proclamation, as institutional approach, evolves from the narrow notion of “evangelization”. Here, evangelization specifically means “...the clear and unambiguous proclamation of the Lord Jesus” (Paul VI 1975) in response to the great commission to the apostle to go out into the world to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20). Proclamation has the sense of *kerygma*, proclamation, preaching or catechesis (teaching). It is the communication of the Gospel message, which could be solemn and public, as for instance on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-41), or a simple private conversation (Acts 8:30-38). It is considered institutional approach to evangelization because it usually has institutional objective in the sense that it involves an invitation to a commitment of faith in Jesus Christ and to entry through baptism into an institution, community of believers, which

is the Church. It aims, ultimately, at institutional change and leads naturally to catechesis in the new institution for a deepening of this faith.

In the light of this, proclamation is an institutional approach to evangelization, as it is usually accompanied by conversion into the Christian or Catholic fold, which though generally involves a movement towards God and “the humble and penitent return of the heart to God in the desire to submit one’s life more generously to him” in the Christian community. In other words, proclamation specifically targets a change of religious adherence, and particularly to embracing the Christian faith or institution. In essence, proclamation, which constitutes an institutional model of evangelization, is considered the foundation, center, and summit of evangelization (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 27). It occupies such an important place in evangelization that over time, it has almost become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22). The institutional aspect of evangelization is not the focus of this paper.

#### INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A NON-INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT OF EVANGELISATION

According to the Encyclical *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP), in the context of religious plurality, inter-religious dialogue means:

“all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment in obedience to truth and respect for freedom.” (John Paul II 1984: No 22)

From the above description, inter-religious dialogue could be construed as a relationship between two or more religions. “Relationship” actually points to a certain acknowledgement or admission of the other’s right to exist. It also demonstrates that inter-religious dialogue, unlike proclamation, does not have an institutional objective, i.e., bringing people into the Christian fold. It is essentially a non-institutional paradigm which seeks simply to engage people of other religions for mutual benefits as

well as the discovery in the knowledge of the other new spiritual depths and possibilities in oneself (WCC, *Ecumenical Affirmation: Mission and Evangelism*, 43).

The dialogue aspect of evangelization is derived from the broad understanding of “evangelization” of bringing of the Good News into all areas and cultures of humanity. In this case, evangelization seeks ultimately to impact the society and individuals; it seeks to transform humanity from within into a new reality, which is not necessarily an institution (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18). Thus, the ultimate goal of evangelization as dialogue is not to ensure a change of institution. It actually looks beyond the Christian institution and seeks to convert or improve rather both the personal and collective consciences of people and every activity they engage in; their ways of life, and the actual culture in which they live irrespective of their religious affiliations (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18). Inter-religious dialogue is based on the notion that institutional barriers cannot or should not be a blockage to evangelization.

#### THE NEED FOR NON-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH IN THE NEW EVANGELISATION IN THE MODERN WORLD

The new evangelization does not mean a “new Gospel”, because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever” as attested in the letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13:8.). In this case, the proclamation that Jesus enjoined on the apostles in the great commission already cited from the Gospels in the New Testament continue to be the same. When Pope John Paul II uses the term “a new evangelization” he does not mean a new message for both proclamation and dialogue. “Evangelization cannot be new in its content since its very theme is always the one gospel given in Jesus Christ.” The modifier “new” here, to our understanding, means new ways of evangelization; new methods of proclamation and also new ardour, method and expression of dialogue or relationship or engagement (John Paul II 1990: Nos 33, 37). It also means renewed vigor, zeal, enthusiasm for evangelizing mission. The New Evangelization, then, seeks appropriate approaches

for effective Christian responses to the signs of the times, to the needs of individuals and people of today and to the new areas with their cultures.

*The Problem of Institutional Approach*

In the past, and also to date, prioritized missionary undertakings sent Dominicans and Franciscans to faraway places such as the Arab world to evangelize, to proclaim and “win” Muslims to Christ. The same urgency not only necessitated the formation of the Society of African Missions, the White Fathers, the Combonis and the Society for the Divine Word but also sent them to other territories. Thanks to the efforts of these missionaries, Christianity has become a world (universal) religion today. We, however, must not forget that the same urgency for evangelization also necessitated Christian militancy such as the crusades of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in Palestine (Gaudeul 2000, 111). It is also the reason for Islamic military *jihāds* in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, which saw Christian territories in Northern Africa and Syria, won for Islam and contemporary militant groups (Ye’or 1985, 51).

Despite the huge successes of proclamation in the past, it is not so effective in today’s world. In Ghana today, as elsewhere in the world, Christian evangelizing endeavours, based largely on the traditional/institutional models, eventually “win” Christians and hardly members of other religious traditions. According to research conducted in 2010 by Cosmas Ebo Sarbah, almost 95% of new converts to any Christian Church in Ghana were already Christians (Sarbah 2010, 109). They are converts from other Christian Churches. The Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian churches, which are supposed to be growing in numbers, are converting members of the mission churches (Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians etc.) into their fold. Almost all members of Shia, a branch of Islam recently introduced into Ghana, are converts from Mainstream Muslim groups of the various *Sufi* traditions, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement, and the rather strict *Ahlus Sunna* sect (Al-Faruqi 1982, 33-42). Three reasons probably account for this phenomenon: (1) The approach of evangelization, essentially institutional, with its unaccommodating attitude and posture renders the



message unacceptable to members of other traditions and appeals only to members of that tradition (2) It is difficult for members of any of the highly organized religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism to abandon their religion and so their religious institutions. This difficulty stems from the fact that abandonment of one's religious tradition also has to translate into abandonment of one's community, family and sometimes close friends. This is too costly for many. (3) Many do not see the need to convert to other religious institutions because they can always appropriate positive spiritual elements from the others while sticking to the old one. Thus, despite their enormous strengths, the traditional/institutional models of the evangelizing mission of the church are loud in their weakness in contemporary Ghana and so are necessary but insufficient for the new evangelization. This critique is not, in any way, meant to denigrate the institutional, classical models of evangelization. It is meant, merely, to demonstrate their inadequacy in the contemporary times and also in the new evangelization.

#### *Secularisation and Modernity Factor*

Furthermore, secularization and modernity also pose a major setback to the adoption of solely institutional strategies in the new evangelization. Secularization, which started as a political project and religion-critical attitudes, has come to imply a general social process that makes religion less visible in public places, with a corresponding decline in religious practice (Leirvik 2014, 36). Though Peter L. Berger acknowledges that secularization has not led to irreligiosity as thought (Berger 1999, 2) a casual glance at religion or religiosity of the secular world today reveals that religion has taken a new nature which is gradually defining it. Religion has been privatized or individualized to the extent that more and more people are having a certain aversion to organized or institutional religion. This dislike for organized religion is displayed in two main ways:

(1) There are significant numbers of people who overtly refuse to be associated with institutional religion. Such people are religious and they believe in the Supreme Deity (God) yet they

do not attend church services or the mosque. They are simply not attached to any religious tradition or institution.

(2) There are also those who are multi-institutional, i.e., they demonstrate their dislike for institutional religion, indirectly or covertly, by engaging with two or more religious traditions; such people are often attached to and remain in one religious tradition or institution but they engage in the activities of other institutions as and when it is necessary for them. Consequently, a growing number of people pick and choose their belief systems from the available religious institutions of the world. In the West and also in the developing world, it is very common these days to come across Christians who attend the Catholic Mass weekly, but prefer a Hindu marriage ceremony and practice *Yoga* of the Buddhist. Some Christians have adopted at least the material culture of Islam such as eating, dressing and speaking while at the same time keeping the Buddha's statue in their homes to seek the assistance of the celestial beings (*devas*). In other words, in this "privatised" religion of the secular and modern world, as is becoming apparent in Europe and the United States, and also in Ghana, belief in the supernatural (God) largely remains, but religious, denominational, confessional, and so institutional attachments appear to be weakening, if not weakened. It is in view of this phenomenon that Charles Taylor concludes that a growing proportion of people seek a spirituality or have religious preferences divorced from conventional or institutional religion and even denomination (Taylor 2007, 506).

### *Is Mission Wholly Non-Institutional?*

In the view of the inadequacy of institutional approaches, secularization and modernity factors have virtually rendered spirituality and religious preferences a personal affair. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder argue that evangelizing mission of the church today should be characterized solely as an exercise of dialogue, understanding clearly evangelization as a participation in the mission of the triune God (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 349). They explain that mission is the church's witness to some constants—the person and work of Jesus Christ, ecclesial existence in

eschatological hope of a salvation that embraces the whole of humanity and of human culture. These constants always have to be proclaimed in a particular and ever-changing context.

Mission is prophetic in the sense that the church is obligated to witness always and everywhere, "...in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2) the fullness of the gospel. Mission has to be dialogical to manifest the imperative-rooted in the gospel itself—to preach the one faith in a particular *context*. To buttress their position, Bevans and Schroeder further posit that evangelization can "...only proceed in dialogue and humility" in contemporary times (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 348). In view of this line of thought, they argue further that it is only mission rooted in the Trinity's unity in diversity that will be capable of maintaining the validity of the goals of all religions as well as testify the overwhelming wealth found in Christian goal of intimate communion with God" (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 349). However, by concluding that dialogue is today the "...norm and necessary manner" of actually every form of Christian mission in accordance with the dialogical nature of the being, action, and mission of God, they seem to equate dialogue to mission and, thereby describe mission solely in non-institutional terms (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 378). To us, dialogue and evangelization are not to be considered as synonymous. Dialogue ought to remain an important aspect of evangelical mission of the church. Dialogue could only be a non-institutional aspect of mission, which also needs the continual presence of the institution to actualize itself in the contemporary world.

#### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DIALOGUE AS A NON-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

Pope Francis declares, in his address at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in August 2008 to all African people to deal with the ethnic, linguistic, religious and tribal divisions in Africa by promoting unity in diversity on the continent. In view of the Pope' statement the Church in Africa, through the commitment of its members, have to strive to be the seed of unity among her peoples. The church in Africa needs to find a way of dealing with or evangelizing all people, in particular, the secular 'man'. To address the concerns of the non-institutional or trans-institutional secular 'man', the Catholic Church cannot ignore non-institutional approaches in the New Evangelization. By "non-

institutional approaches”, we mean approaches that look beyond the institution, the Catholic fold, the Christian fold to reach and bring out the best in people who for obvious reasons will be outside it. Thus, as a non-institutional approach to evangelization, inter-religious dialogue particularly has a target—pasturing those non-Christians (Muslims, Buddhists, secularists, Hindus, devotees of African Indigenous Religion) who for various and obvious reasons cannot or will not accept Jesus and join the Christian or Catholic faith. Such non-Christians, include the imams, the sheikhs, people of strong Muslim families for whom Islam is not only an inherited tradition and a source of pride but also a means of livelihood. Mention could also be made of the Tuuba Muslims of Ghana who comprise of the southern ethnic groups such as the Asante Nkramos, the Fante Nkramos, The Ga Nkramos, and the Ewe Nkramos. Notable families of these southern Ghana ethnic groups are important members of both Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement and the mainstream Muslim groups. They include the huge majority of people whose ethnic groups (the Fulani, the Hausa, the Kotokoli), are traditionally linked with Islam in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa and who have been successfully socialized to reject essential Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, as human innovations and the Bible as a fabricated document (Waardenburg 1999, 56). For such large number of people (Muslims, Buddhist, secularists, Hindus, devotees of African Indigenous Religion) who refuse to convert, Christians have two options: (1) either they shake off the dust of their sandals as a sign of rejection (Cf. Matthew 10:14) when they refuse to convert and join the Christian fold, and have nothing to do with them, considering them stiff-necked and treat them as we would tax-collectors and sinners (2) or look beyond the Christian institution to get such non-Christians to practice the message of the Gospel, the message of love wherever they are. Moreover, institutional presentation of the Gospel or evangelization will put non-Christians off on the assumption that “they have come to convert us to their Christian fold,” but non-institutional presentation (dialogue) removes such mindset.

#### *A Ray of Light of Indigenous Akan Values*

The Akan ethnic group of Ghana put every societal or communal values into two main categories:

core and periphery values. With this categorization of the Akan in mind it is almost impossible to contemplate considering the Christian doctrine of Incarnation as a major hindrance to inter-faith dialogue and effective Christian-Muslim encounters. Faced with the matter of Incarnation and Christology, John Hick sought to deny entirely the doctrine of Incarnation in his book, *God and the Universe of Faiths* to pay way for his theory of Religious Pluralism (Hick 1973, 45). However, the renunciation of Christology to make room for dialogue of religions and cultures is problematic and raises further questions. For the denial of Christology stratagem gives credence to the wrong elucidations of the incarnation and the Christ-event in history that Jesus cannot be central in all religions.

As the Word (*Logos*) of Almighty God which took flesh in human form (John 1:1-14), Jesus is the embodiment of the essential values of societies and communities. Thus, Jesus personifies in Himself the core virtues of all societies of the world (Poku, 2016, 90-91). These core values which, according to the Akan of Ghana, Jesus embodies are essential values for the promotion of communal interests and for the well-being of the individuals. The essential values include love, truth, mercy, humility, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, cooperation, restraint, and patience etc. These core values are the foundation and the heart of every community, and so are considered divine and eternal. Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, affirms and considers core values as “true and holy” in all religions and which point to a “...a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). These critical societal values are contrasted with periphery values of societies, which constitutes human customs and traditions. The periphery values include: forms of dressing, eating habits, family values, and communal values which are often the less significant aspects of culture in the societies. They usually are temporary and susceptible to change.

Thus, the Akan religious and moral worldview put Jesus’ statement: “When I am lifted up I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32) in its right perspective and comprehension. This statement of Jesus indicates that through his crucifixion, Jesus would draw humanity to himself (Maloney 1998, 260-361). This text has a universal dimension which ultimately makes salvation

available to all human things. Mention could also be made of the statement of Jesus in the Gospel of John 14:6 which reads, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". To Kenneth Cracknell, a distinguished British expert in inter-religious dialogue and theology of religions, instead of reading Christian exclusivism into the verse (John 14:6) we should rather understand it with the element of "...mystery, of redemptive suffering of life through death" which are essential elements of all cultures (Cracknell 2005, 60). In the view of scholars, like Cracknell, Jesus by his declaration in John 14:6 inviting all humanity to focus on Him, the Word (*Logos*) of God. Another proof text to buttress this inclusivism of all humanity in the Christ-event is John 10:16 in which Jesus refers to others outside his sheepfold as belonging to him. It is by upholding the core values of society that human beings submit to the will of the Supreme Deity.

The redemptive suffering of Jesus, in Cracknell's view, could be likened to what he calls "the anguish of God" for all creation, his "tender forgiveness" for the poor and the marginalized, as well as his "ready pardon" for all sinners of cultures and religions (Cracknell, 2005: 60). Thus, Cracknell and so many others, render Christology an all-inclusive, all-embracing, and true universal character, which rightly encompasses the core virtues of societies. Christ Jesus, as the pre-existent reality, fills all creation. Ultimately, the denunciation, perfidy (John 18: 1-11), anguish and death (John 18:28-30; Luke 23: 44-48) as well as the entombment (John 19: 42; Luke 23: 50-56) of Jesus are the most important aspects of the doctrine of Christology. They really depict the rejection of core values of society; it is the rejection of selfless love, truth, trust and friendship (Luke 22:54-61; John 18:15-18, 25-27) and everything that enhance social cohesion and continual survival. The suffering (Luke 23:26-38) and disgrace of Jesus (Luke 22:63-65; John 19:17-24) represent the humiliation, the denial of the values of justice, mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation of societies, and communities of the world. Just as the rejection of Jesus by the chief priests and the leaders in Luke 23:13-25 meant the acceptance of Barabbas, the criminal (John 19:39-40), so the rejection of the mainstay values of society has always meant the adoption of the periphery values which underlie religious extremism and fanatical behaviors. When these peripheral, non-essential values are adopted and made to

function as core, essential values, and as such cultural universals often communities eventually plunge into chaos. Wiredu contends that whenever “fallible conceptions of universals” are couched in both philosophical, ethical forms and principles, and transposed upon other peoples as infallible and eternal universals the new society eventually rejects them (Wiredu 1996, 2). In that case, cultural particulars or peripheral values (non-essentials of cultures) are presented as core and universals. Not unnaturally, the practice of projecting and presenting cultural particulars to other societies as essential values has earned cultural universals and essentials a bad name.

Thus, Sarbah expounds that the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10) is the clear demonstration of the permanence of the mainstay values whose rejection, betrayal and even utter destruction are only temporal. The resurrection of Jesus is meant to demonstrate the eventual triumph of the core values of societies, which are indestructible and eternal. In this way, the Christian would come to the realization that Jesus Christ is already present in all cultures and society, though in mere “rays of the Truth” and “seeds of the word”. Sarbah reiterates that societies and religious traditions need to find ways of assisting each other to concentrate on upholding the core values of their cultures.

#### *Meaningful Appropriation of Unique Values*

The first option non-engagement with non-Christians, as mentioned above, is no longer tenable. Christians cannot afford to treat non-Christians as they would “tax collectors” by continuously denying their presence or ignoring their significance to society. The second option, as mentioned above, involves inter-religious dialogue; it is also evangelization. The real encounter that inter-religious dialogue proposes in the New Evangelization would ultimately call on Christians to significantly consider meaningful appropriation of positive elements of other religions. In this non-institutional model, Christians would see each of the differing religions in the world as having something good to offer humanity (Amoah 1998, 24). Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), a renowned theologian, argues that the non-institutional approaches offer all believers the opportunity to really encounter each other and to disregard the “inherited forms” of their own religion as “being sufficient

in themselves” and to strive and seek people with open hearts, likeminded people even from other religious institutions or traditions to engage in a deeper search together. Ratzinger contends further that canonizing what already exists renders people incapable of any deeper searching and participating fully in dialogue (Ratzinger 2004, 54).

For, it is “inexhaustible quest” or yearning for the divine in every human being irrespective of religious background which is leading religions to one another in proper inter-religious encounters and communications. The search must continue and it is this deep search in faith, which every religious institution cannot afford to ignore. Thus, a true religious tradition, according to Ratzinger, has to concern itself with inculcating in the faithful not simply a network of institutions and ideas but “...a seeking ever in faith for faith’s inmost depth, for the real encounter” not only with the divine but also with each other (Ratzinger 2004, 54). In the light of this, inter-religious dialogue as non-institutional model for evangelization will instill in Christians and adherents of other religions the need for meaningful borrowing for mutual enrichment.

#### *Actively Engaging Non-Christians*

Inter-religious dialogue involves not only the acknowledgement and appropriation of spiritual and moral values in Islam, Hinduism and even African Indigenous Religion but also in the New Evangelization strategically engaging and influencing non-Christian religious practitioners to concentrate their activities on the promotion of the core values of their religion, focusing on that “...ray of that truth” which enlightens all and which all religions share in common (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). This presence of core values as ray of light in other religious traditions, bears witness to the presence of God’s saving grace in them too and which makes dialogue between religions a possibility (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004, 379). The Akan people of Ghana, for instance, put societal values into two categories: Core and peripheral values. Kwesi Wiredu, a prominent scholar in Akan Philosophies and Contemporary Culture at University of Ghana contends that the core and peripheral values of the Akan are akin to “cultural universals” and “cultural particulars” of all societies. In Wiredu’s view, cultural universals are core, intransient, common norms and moral imperatives, which render



intercultural communication and dialogue feasible (Wiredu 1996, 1). Cultural universals are predicated on common biological identity of human beings as a “species of bipeds” (Wiredu 1996, 1) and also as social animals. The core values of society are believed to be supernatural and are the revealed aspects of the belief systems. They are unalterable and universal. The ephemeral aspects of religious and moral principles relate to the peripheral values, which are temporary, of human origin and so are subjective. The Akan understanding of core and peripheral virtues of society and indeed every society on earth offers implications for Christian-Muslim encounters and exchanges in Ghana. In Ghana, the Christian beliefs and indigenous customs have had significant role to play in non-institutional approach to the New Evangelization.

That the Christian majority in Ghana plays significant role in the general attitude of Muslims cannot be downplayed nor completely discounted in inter-religious encounters. A majority religious tradition always has significant influence on the minority in most countries. For instance, a tolerant or puritan majority almost certainly produces a tolerant or puritan minority. Christians would have to uphold their highest and cherished ideals of love in the New Evangelization as they engage non-Christians if they are to evoke the spirit of love among them. Upholding cherished values of love is a work of grace, which for Christians is grounded in the liturgy, prayer and contemplation (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 361). As Christians love non-Christians and open the doors of their hospitals to them, admit and train their children in their schools, and pray with them at public gatherings for common good without insisting on immediate institutional change they would be evangelizing in a non-institutional way.

#### *School Apostolate*

In Ghana, just like other countries of the world, Catholic education is very well patronized by non-Christians. Catholic and the other Christian Churches have the best educational institutions —Pre-tertiary and Tertiary levels. The catholic mission basic and High schools in Ghana (private and public) admit a significant number of non-Christians every year. The school records of some catholic schools in Muslim majority areas such as St. Martha’s Catholic (Kasoa) and Abura Roman Catholic

Basic schools, Muslims constitute 50% of the population. The prestigious Catholic High schools such as Holy Child College, St Rose's Senior High as well as St. Augustine College are open to non-Christians. These schools admit non-Christians; some of them have majority Muslims. Muslims bring their children to Christian schools not only because of high academic performance but also because of their discipline, which is grounded, on Christian principles. In these Catholic schools, students are mandated, in addition to their chosen courses, to study Catholic and Christian doctrines and attend Christian Services and the Mass. They say the "Angelus" and the "Lord's Prayer" at the morning assembly. The Catholic teacher-training colleges such as OLA Training College (Cape Coast) and Holy Child Training College (Takoradi) admit Muslim students.

The ultimate purpose for the introduction of these catholic undertakings is not conversion; most of the students remain non-Christian even upon completion. The students are introduced to these doctrines for the knowledge and the discipline. Some religious rights issues are raised at times with regard to the introduction of non-Christians and Muslims, in particular, to these doctrines and compulsory Church activities. On the basis of concerns raised of religious rights abuse, many are those who have argued in favour of reserving Catholic schools for Catholics and Christians. Suffice it to say that Christians train the non-Christian students in their schools not only for the good of Muslims and Ghana but also for their own good.

Apart from helping to reduce significantly suspicion, prejudices and stereotypes, the Muslim students, for instance, are trained in Catholic schools such as Catholic University College (Fiapre) with Christian principles based on Christian values and professional ethics. Many may not turn out to be Christians but they certainly may be imbued with core Christian values, which they will continue to practice as Muslims in their future careers and professions. More schools have to be built and must be open to all, irrespective of their religious backgrounds in the New Evangelization. The mission statements of these schools ought to be underpinned by Christian principles and cherished core values.

*Hospital and Clinic Apostolate*

The National Catholic Health Service (NCHS), which has branches across the various Archdioceses and Dioceses of Ghana, was established as a continuation of the healing ministry of Jesus Christ (Matthew 14:14; Mark 16:18; Luke 10:9; Acts 5:15). Our goal is to provide and sustain health care services for the poor, neglected and the marginalized segments of the society. The office seeks to empower the people it serves to take ownership of their own individual and collective health needs. The vision of the Health Offices is to continue Christ's healing ministry in bringing healing and the provision of total quality patient care through healers with good ethical and moral standards; who are conscientious, professionally competent, well-motivated and united in their common respect for fundamental human values. Among the policy objectives is to strengthen the application of Catholic ethics and morals in health care delivery service.

Consequently, the Catholic Mission Hospitals and Clinics abound in Ghana. St Dominic Catholic Hospital (Akwatia), Obseteric Fistulae Centre (Mankessim), Eikwe Catholic Hospital provide various health services to all irrespective of religious persuasions. The Mankessim Catholic Hospital provides essential specialized help (fistula) to women in addition to regular services. St. Dominic Catholic Hospital-Akwatia, which was established in 1960 by the Dominican Sisters of Speyer (Germany), has a special facility (clinic) for Out Patient Department (OPD) cases, which are eye related. The personnel of the Eye Clinic also undertake intensive outreach program to the surrounding villages and schools to enhance accessibility of eye care services to people. Some of these Hospitals like the St. Francis Xavier Hospital (Assin Fosu) and St. Luke Catholic Hospital (Apam) are the only hospitals in the respective districts. Workers (Doctors, Nurses, ancillary staff), irrespective of their religious traditions, do promise to abide by Christian principles of catholic hospitals all over the world.

*Regular Support and Services*

In the same way as pastors, priests, the religious, and Catholics in general see non-Christians as friends, brothers and sisters rather than enemies, and offer unconditional service and support to them

in open arms, as well as offer hospitality to them as refugees with warmth and generosity in their countries without demanding a sudden break with the religious past. In this case, they are practicing inter-religious dialogue and fulfilling evangelizing mission of the church in the New Evangelization. As Christians learn the tenets of non-Christian faiths, speak about them truthfully, and live with them peacefully they are engaging in non-institutional approach in the New Evangelization. As Christians eschew excessive competition and acrimony but cooperate with non-Christians for development of their communities, the New Evangelization is in progress. Actively engaging in the existing plurality, in this manner mentioned above, is in line with the teachings of the fathers of Vatican II, which recognize, despite the social and cultural impediments of other traditions, the positive values and contributions of such traditions to human development.

Thus, the Christian response, in the non-institutional ways, is not only acknowledgment of the presence of “seeds of the word” in these religions and pointing non-Christians to “...the riches which a generous God has distributed among them too (*Ad Gentes*, 11) but also aiding, assisting, and positively influencing them in love to live for these invaluable riches that are readily available to them. Muslims, for instance, would be reminded consistently and aided in various ways in inter-religious dialogue to the realization that they cannot be defined by extremism and terrorism, by referring to the good which is “found sown” not only “in their minds and hearts”, but also “in the riches and customs of their people” that are possible to make them significant partners of the international community (Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, 17).

## CONCLUSION

Inter-religious dialogue, as a non-institutional approach, is urgently needed in the New Evangelization. The New Evangelization, as succinctly presented by Diana Eck in her award-winning Pluralism Project, calls for real encounters and dissemination of Christian message of love that combines all the essential aspects of communication such as speaking, listening and learning. Institutional models such as proclamation are basically and essentially a monologue, a one sided

approach. In the light of monologue mentality, Christians present themselves or appear to others as ‘know it all’ agents of the questions as well as the problems and who have all the right or ready-made answers and solutions to the problems. Thus, Christians do all the talking to the world, telling the world what to do. However, inter-religious dialogue, a non-institutional model calls on Christians to engage also in real encounters, true communication with members of other religious traditions which also significantly involves listening to the world and learning from the world in the New Evangelization. Hence, inter-religious dialogue would be “give and take” at a common space. Muslims and Christians speak and tell their stories and beliefs. It would also involve criticism and self-criticism from both ends.

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue as a non-institutional approach in the new evangelization is based on the ideal that missionary work should not be on solely “winning” members or increasing membership, and extending the frontier of Christian or Catholic control. In the New Evangelization, the church cannot ignore the large number of people who have refused to accept Jesus or be members of the church. Thus, the success of missions is not determined by the quantity rather than the quality of life of converts and humanity at large. In other words, a viable mission should be something more than merely competing for numbers and expanding the frontiers of ecclesiastical control. It could also mean enriching the other for a better society, thus making the Church a seed of unity among the people of Ghana and a sign of hope for the entire African continent which is home to 17.6 % of the world’s Catholics (2018 Pontifical Yearbook). We welcome the yet to be signed Vatican document, *Praedicate Evangelium*, which intends to create a dicastery for evangelization in line with Pope Francis’ underlining belief that the Church is missionary. The document will not only put evangelization ahead of doctrine but also will discuss evangelization from a much broader perspective.

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**Review of Benedict XVI and Robert Cardinal Sarah, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy, and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020, ISBN 978-1-62164-414-9, 148 pages.  
By: Fr. Michael Ufok Udoekpo**

In late January 2020, soon after the media-friendly Amazonian synod but before the explosion of the COVID-19 pandemic, I joined many other priests, religious, and lay faithful to pre-order this long anticipated work, *From the Depths of Our Hearts*. It is brilliantly co-authored and written in simple, clear, and readable language by two experienced and faith-filled bishops, theologians, and pastors: pope emeritus Benedict XVI and Robert Cardinal Sarah.

The book opens with an editorial note by Nicholas Diat, and the remainder consists of a joint introduction, two sections, and a conclusion. In their work, the authors set out to systematically and pastorally address the theology of the Catholic priesthood, its gifts, and the challenges around priestly celibacy today. In doing so, they touch on the relationship between celibacy and the Church's worship—particularly the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and matrimony. In their joint introduction “What Do You Fear?” and in filial obedience to Pope Francis, Benedict and Sarah offer this timely reflection to the people of God who are currently plagued by waves of doubt and error concerning some aspects of the Church's teachings, especially priestly celibacy. They conclude that the Church embraces priestly celibacy as a martyrdom, a witness, and a proclamation of faith (p. 21). In Section One, Benedict proves once again that, in spite of his age, he remains one of the greatest theologians of our times. He masterfully discusses the theology of the “Catholic Priesthood.” He begins by historically tracing the foundational challenges around priestly celibacy today. One challenge he identifies is found in the “methodological flaw in the reception of the Scripture as the Word of God.” He also identifies as problematic “the abandonment of the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament which has led many contemporary exegetes to a deficiency of theology of worship” (p. 25). For Benedict, Christ did not come to abolish the worship and adoration owed to God. Rather, he came in order that he may accomplish them in the loving act of his sacrifice and self-emptying on the cross.

In explaining further such self-emptying, Benedict traces the priesthood of the NT to the early movement of laymen that formed around the Jesus of Nazareth—at least during the pre-Paschal era. This movement countered the movement of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, resulting in their jealousy and their eventual execution of Jesus, whom they saw as not originally belonging to the OT's priestly family, which was hereditarily driven.

Benedict lists the essential ministerial structures of the early community of Jesus to include the “apostle” (*apostolos*), the bishop (*episkopos*), and the elder (*presbyteros*). He explains that while the term *presbyteros* is characteristic of the Judeo-Christian milieu, the term *episkopos* is often used among Christians of Gentile origin to refer to ministers.

Reflecting further on these structures, Benedict argues that it was in Jerusalem that the Jewish tradition of “elder” as an institutional role gradually matured into an initial form of Christian ministry. This led to the development of the threefold form of ministry: bishops, priests and deacons in the Jewish-Gentile Church (p. 28). While examining in detail the relationship between the priesthood of the OT and of the NT, Jesus, and the temple, Benedict reminds us that “the Christian ministries (*episkopos, presbyteros, diakonos*) and those that were regulated by the Mosaic law (high priests, priests, Levites) can now be identified in relation to the other in a new clarity” (p. 34).

He reminds everyone that in OT worship, the Israelites offered bulls and other animals in sacrifice to God; while in the NT, the cross of Jesus Christ—though not a cultic type—is the act of radical love in which reconciliation really is accomplished between God and the world marred by sin. This is the supreme adoration to God. Benedict writes that “in the cross the ‘*katabatic*’ line of descent from God and the ‘*anabatic*’ line of humanity's offering to God become a single act” (p. 36).

OT priests, he opines, were strictly obliged to observe sexual abstinence during worship (functional celibacy/abstinence; 1 Sam 21:4–5), while the NT priests were to observe ontological abstinence,

renouncing marriage (as celibacy was the state of priestly life), thereby immersing in the very nature of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist that requires total self-giving.

Citing three Scriptural passages (Ps 16:5–6; Deut 10:8; 18:5–8; John 17:17), Benedict sheds additional light on the meaning of the Christian priesthood, reemphasizing the relationship between the OT and the NT priesthood as well as the difference between the temple of stone and the temple that is the body of Christ (pp. 43–60).

The first passage, Psalm 16:5–6, reads: “the LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.” Using this passage, Benedict reminds us that every tribe of Israel except the Levites inherited parts of the land promised Abraham (1 Kings 21:1–29). This foreshadows the fact that priests of the Church must live only by God and for him in a new and deeper way as celibates.

The second passage, “that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless in his name” (Deut 10:8; 18:5–8), mentions the essential cultic role of the tribe of Levi. Benedict stresses that this text, particularly the phrase “*astere coram te et tibi ministrare* (“to be in your presence and minister to you”), is also prayed during the Eucharistic Prayer II. This prayer does not necessarily envisage an exterior attitude, but presents a profound point of unity between the OT and the NT. It describes the very nature of the priesthood, which involves standing before God and living in his presence. It implies total abandonment of earthly and material things—including land—in order to serve others and God.

In the third passage, John 17:17–18, we read: “consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” In this passage we are reminded that only God is holy. Man becomes holy insofar as he begins with God and he is set apart for him. It also means that “the Lord is asking the Father to include the Twelve in the mission, to ordain them as priests” (p. 60). Benedict argues that, for the priests, this is the foundation of the necessity of celibacy to the end.

In Section Two, Cardinal Sarah takes over the reflection. Rooted in scriptures and in the teachings of successive popes, Cardinal Sarah—who is of African origin and participated in the Amazonian synod—offers his counselling and reflection. His reflection is based on his pastoral experiences in seminary formation and missionary challenges of priestly celibacy similar to those of the Amazon people. His arguments are very simple, convincing, and persuasive. He invites all of us to embrace the breath of the Holy Spirit and be reminded of the words of Saint John Mary Vianney, a French priest and patron of parish priests, that the priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus.

Priestly celibacy, Sarah points out, is not a subject of political, regional, and ideological maneuvering nor a minimalistic “question of discipline or pastoral organization” (p. 63). In support of his arguments, he cites Benedict’s teaching that “the priest is a gift of the Heart of Christ; a gift for the Church and for the world...after the example of the Good Shepherd.” Its sacramental continuation is as important as the ecclesiological and pastoral consequences of priestly celibacy. Ordaining married men to the Catholic priesthood, Sarah argues, would lead to three problems: (1) it would lead to a pastoral catastrophe, (2) it would bring about ecclesiological confusion, and (3) it would obscure our understanding of the priesthood.

Analyzing the first problem, Sarah affirms Benedict’s theology of the Catholic priesthood as an ontological entrance into the “yes” of Christ the priest. It is a transition from the OT functional celibacy to the NT ontological abstinence (p. 67). It is the “yes” of Jesus to God his Father: “into your hands I commit my Spirit” (Luke 23:36). Based on his experience, he argues against attempting to politicize, relativize, and reduce priestly celibacy to a mere question of discipline, custom, or culture. Doing this will isolate the Catholic priesthood from its foundation, which is nothing but making oneself fully available to the Lord and to the people of God, men and women. It is *kenosis*, self-emptying (Phil 2:6–7), and letting the “lands” and the “material things” go. It is a “standing before the Lord,” (Deut 18:5–8).

Sarah recalls that, as a young priest in the late 70s, he would travel to villages in Guinea to celebrate masses for African communities who had not had the sacrament for a long time due to the lack of

priests. In these villages, he had the privilege of meeting his fellow Africans who kept the faith, prayed the Rosary, and taught themselves the catechism through African catechists. They expressed profound joy when they had a priest and respected them, seeing in those visiting priests another Christ due to their celibacy and self-giving. Sarah believes this would not have been the case if married men were randomly ordained in these African communities. It “would lead to an impoverishment of evangelization” (p. 71). Like African peoples, the Amazonians have the right to fully “experience Christ the Bridegroom.” Sarah says “we cannot offer them ’second-class “priests” (p. 72). He himself was inspired to the priesthood by the radical character of the missionaries’ life, which represented in his early African community the “solicitude of the Universal Church...an image of the Word visiting humanity” (p. 74). Ordaining married men in the midst of the community would express the opposite and suggest that each community was left on their own to find the means of their salvation. Sarah draws extensively from Saint Paul to defend the missionary character of priestly celibacy. Celibacy makes priests free, radical, and ready to go on mission anywhere. Through celibacy, Catholic priests risk everything. They are no longer enslaved by land, material things, or places.

Sarah points extensively to the Church’s tradition to convince some who might think that his reflection is mistaken or who might falsely see celibacy as a late discipline imposed by the Latin Church on clerics. Clerical celibacy was practiced as far back as the fourth century. Even though many married men were ordained as priests in the first millennium, they were obliged to abstain from sexual relations with their wives from the day of their ordination. On this basis, Sarah warns against historical and intellectual dishonesty; he sees it as problematic that some people are comfortable stressing that in the past “there were married priests” without qualifying the idea with the truth that they were all obliged to practice continence. The cardinal rhetorically asks if we want to go back to this state of life. If we did so, what would happen to the sacrament of matrimony and its dignity? Is priesthood no longer a response to a personal vocation? Is priesthood no longer the fruit of an intimate call from God (1 Sam 3)? With these questions, Sarah communicates his belief that a man does not become a priest because he wants to fill a gap or an empty “position” in the community. Priesthood, Sarah teaches, is a state of life. It is the fruit of an intimate dialogue between God, who calls, and the soul who responds: “Behold, I have come to do your will” (Heb 10:7;). Ordaining married people as priests would minimize the dignity of marriage and reduce the priesthood to a mere job or a function. As in the Eastern Church, it would create tension between the priesthood and the married state of life (pp. 77–78).

In explaining the second problem, Sarah uses the teachings of the Vatican II, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis to illustrate types of ecclesiological confusion that ordaining married men as priests would create in the Church. First of all, it would throw the theology of ecclesial communion (the priestly state, the conjugal state of life, and the religious state of life) into jeopardy. He explains that if we remove the presence of celibate priests, the Church would no longer be aware that she is the Bride of Christ. Priestly celibacy, far from being merely an ascetical discipline, is necessary to the identity of the Church being the Bride that is to be loved by Christ the Bridegroom, represented sacramentally by celibate priests (p. 83). If priestly celibacy is not fully practiced, how would the priest teach holiness of married life as a vocation and total gift of self, or the mystery of Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5? In addition, debates about priestly celibacy also give rise to questions about the ordination of women. It could generate unhealthy confusion about every other person in the Church (men, women, spouses, and priests).

Based on his personal experiences in Africa, Sarah stresses that various sacraments—especially Holy Orders and Baptism—were supposed to complement each other, not oppose each other. He points to various dynamic potentialities contained in other sacraments. All baptized and confirmed persons, he observes, are invited by Pope Francis to become “missionary disciples” by promoting the Catholic faith in their communities, as took place in his African communities before the blossoming of priests in the southern hemisphere. Pushing ordination on baptized married people or attempting to clericalize the lay faithful would diminish their roles, especially the role of the catechists who are

called to proclaim the Gospel as laypeople. It would make the laypeople think mission work was reserved for clerics alone (pp. 98–99). Sarah acknowledges that the shortage of priests in some regions is a real issue, but he cautions against approaching the problem from merely human, sociological perspectives. Rather, we should allow God to lead the way. Sarah recommends prayer for vocations and recommends that we “learn to make room for the Holy Spirit in our government and pastoral plans” (p. 99).

In discussing the third and final problem that ordaining married men might cause the Church, Sarah advises that we should not confuse some exceptions with the main issue. He gives an example of Protestant pastors entering into full communion with the Catholic Church, which may be regarded as normal. They are not, but only “transitory,” which is nothing but “an incidental occurrence in the normal and natural state of affairs.” This seems not to be the case in Amazonia and other remote regions that lack priests. This brings him to the important notion of Eucharistic celibacy earlier emphasized by Pope Benedict XVI.

Sarah, like Benedict, details and calls on priests and seminarians as well as those agitating for married Catholic priests to understand the ontological bond between celibacy and the priesthood, as well as the overall theological motivation of the Church’s law on celibacy from which pastoral consequences are drawn. Priestly celibacy, he emphasizes, has a necessary Eucharistic nuptial character (Phil 3:12; Eph 5:25–27). A priest is a man who takes the place of God. He is not only an *alter Christus* (another Christ), but he is *ipse Christus* (Christ himself).

At Mass, Jesus is present in the person of the priest (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 28). A priest celebrates Mass in *persona Christi* and learns in the logic of the Holy Eucharistic sacrifice what the total giving of self means, with a mark of a holocaust. It is the Eucharist that gives a sacrificial meaning to the life of a priest, and no priest can remain faithful to celibacy without the daily celebration of the Mass (p. 116). Sarah argues that inculturation should not be a source of misunderstanding priestly celibacy. Everyone—including the Amazonian people—is capable of understanding the faith and understanding the Eucharistic logic of priestly celibacy. To hear people argue otherwise shocks the Cardinal as “contemptuous, neo-colonialist, and infantilizing mentality” (p. 117). Even though the Catholic priesthood is going through a crisis today, this crisis cannot be solved by weakening celibacy. Sarah believes the solution lies in Gospel radicalism as well as in the living out of priestly vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, since the priesthood is a state of life and a vocation to prayer (pp. 126–137).

Finally, Benedict XVI and Cardinal Sarah appeal to Pope Francis to protect the teachings of the Magisterium on priestly celibacy. Both men exhort everyone to endure today’s challenges in light of the Cross of Christ by embracing the faith to the end (p. 148).

As an African Catholic priest and theologian who has spent the past decade teaching and forming future celibate priests both in the United States and in Africa, I strongly recommend this work to all Christ’s faithful, bishops, priests, clerics, religious, lay faithful, and seminarians.

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**Review of NEPAD AND THE AFRICAN CRISIS: THE MYTHS, REALITIES AND POSSIBILITIES. Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh, Jr. Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, Benue State, 2005. 5 – 24 (19). ISBN 978-8098-10-X**

**By: Eneji, Joseph Eneji**

In his monograph on NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development), Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh Jr. writes under the aegis of “NEPAD and the African crisis: The Myths, Realities, and Possibilities”. He views NEPAD as a consummation of several views that were expressed with regards to the prospects of the African continent and those of her peoples on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as they anticipate promising 21st century. These views are embodied in the need for a drastic shift from earlier of such programmes to something entirely new which would engender development in all ramifications of the African society. Okpeh details these views by collapsing them into two conflicting points of view for better identification and analysis: the Afro-optimists, those who believe that the 21st century unlike other centuries holds much hope for Africa thus a century of abundance are proponents of this view. In other words, it is this group that is more sympathetic towards NEPAD because it is perceived to be a genuinely African initiative. While the second view is held by the Afro-pessimist who see no difference between 21st century and the preceding centuries as better days for Africa, and as such is critical of the neo-liberal foundations of NEPAD. Okpeh contends that for the Afro-optimists, despite her many daunting development problems in the last century, Africa has the opportunity again to rise up and claim her lost glory in the new millennium which coincides with the 21st century. It is in line with this view that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been transformed into African Union (AU), the adoption of NEPAD a home grown development programme and other similar reforms which aim at giving Africa a new face-lift. Conversely, the Afro-pessimists as the name suggest about any meaningful development taking place on the African continent given the past experiences and the milieu the society finds itself today. He claims the upheavals that characterize the continent today are responsible for this scenario.

The monograph is made up of five segments. Segment 1 which is the introduction offers an assessment of the NEPAD document in terms of the two perspectives that dominate the debate within Africa: the Afro-pessimist and the Afro optimist. Segment 2 is a cursory background to the emergence of NEPAD, alluding to the fact that NEPAD's formation is partly in response to the new world order; hence a brief historical interpretation of the new world order itself, in terms of its nature and character with the forces responsible for its emergence in the first instance is expedient. Okpeh argues that "a critical feature of this prevailing order is what scholars have described as uni-polarity" (p.7). The new world order has been detrimental to Africa's development strides as could be seen in the "deepening hiatus between the developed countries of the world predominantly in the Northern Hemisphere and their underdeveloped counterparts in the Southern Hemisphere" (p.8). With regards to the far evident and obvious dichotomy between the North/South divide in all ramifications, Okpeh like others thinks "Africa can only hope to find her feet in the 21st century if she, as much as possible, tries to shield herself from the octopus of the new world order associated with global imperialism" (p.9). Segment three is where Okpeh addresses the African condition and makes a diagnosis of the root causes of the African crisis. Even though a plethora of views abound, Okpeh categorizes them into three broad perspectives: Africa's contact with Europe which began in the 15th century as trans-Atlantic slave trade but later snowballed into colonialism, the phenomenon of neo-colonialism, and the absence of an enabling environment for meaningful development. The fourth segment of this discourse examines what NEPAD sets out to achieve and how possible is this giving the sectoral challenges to Africa's quest for sustained development.

Nonetheless, Okpeh dwells on the two contending premises to make an exposition of his thesis as he examines Africa's latest development initiative – NEPAD. In the end, he avers like the Afro-pessimist that, giving the magnitude of the African crises together with the nature of development it sets out to generate in the continent in the 21st century, he contends NEPAD is inadequate and is likely to achieve little or nothing. Okpeh appears to be critical of NEPAD particularly the type of partnership it advocates for the continent and its peoples which he finds synonymous with what exist between the horse and the horse rider, a master/servant relationship. Hence, NEPAD mentions nothing critical areas like the HIV/AIDS scourge and its implications on Africa's development. Okpeh believes that no serious development agenda that intends to ameliorate the current African condition can be done without critical analysis of the threat posed by HIV/AIDS. Instead, he advocates for a Pan-African partnership which anchors on the mobilization of largely impoverished peoples, empowering them at all levels and serving as a platform for a new resistance against imperialism and its African collaborators as a way forward. Little wonder that Okpeh like the Afro-pessimists is skeptical about NEPAD's success. The concluding segment is apt and succinct, as he bares his mind on NEPAD as inadequate and likely to achieve little or nothing.

This is a fine discourse. Though one must admire the skepticism of Okpeh on NEPAD, the narrative approach more than compensates for the analytical hesitancy. In page 8, paragraph 1 on lines three and four; there is a misplacement of the Northern hemisphere and Southern hemisphere in their respective context by the sentence arrangement. This discourse on NEPAD is microcosmic in many ways and perhaps the author has thrown a long overdue challenge to all Africans to join in the discussion for an alternative programme to NEPAD.

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