

EVANGELIZATION AND RELIGIOSITY AMONG AFRICAN CHRISTIANS

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Introduction

In recent times many African countries have been celebrating the centenaries of the birth of christianity in their lands. Without ignoring the difficulties and the failures of the early missionary endeavours, the celebrations have been highlighting the achievements and successes of evangelization in the continent. Emphasis has been placed on the large number of converts to christianity. For example in Nigeria, detailed statistics have been recorded in recent publications.¹ Motivated by the same apostolic zeal to advance the work of evangelization, the Nigerian Church has practically accepted the challenge posed by Pope John Paul II when he proclaimed the "New Era of evangelization"². A lot of effort is also being concentrated on the various areas of missionary activity. Also christians in different parts of the world, with particular reference to Africa, talk about "Evangelization 2000." As they look forward to the year 2000 for the celebration of the birth of christianity, they work relentlessly "to win as many territories as possible for Christ". The Church must indeed continue to *extend* the kingdom of God in Christ throughout the length and breadth of the whole wide world.

While appreciating the noble apostolic zeal of the christian missionaries, this paper focuses its attention on a specific aspect of evangelization. It is not satisfied with just the numerical strength of African converts. It is more concerned with the *quality of their christian life*. The people's crisis of faith and the dichotomy in the various facets of their life attract the attention of this paper. For example certain questions such as the following are posed: How deeply committed is the African christian to his christian faith? Is the manner of expressing this faith authentically African? How does their traditional African attitude to christianity affect their commitment to Christ and to his Church? Are the people's religious attitude sufficiently evangelized that they can give an authentically christian response to the Gospel message as Africans? Such questions become urgent and relevant as one daily discovers *crisis of faith resulting from certain dichotomies in the life of African christians*. For instance there is a dichotomy between their christian faith and their faith in the African

Traditional Religion. The dichotomy between the christian attitudes and modes of expressing the christian faith and that of African Traditional Religion is quite clear in the liturgical, social and moral life of the people. This type of dichotomy reveals one main fact, among many others. That "Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently deep in the African Religiosity."³

It is therefore the contention of this paper that evangelization in Africa would ever remain incomplete and might continue to produce half-baked Christians unless African Traditional Religiosity is fully evangelized. It is in the light of such an insight that Pope Paul VI urges the faithful to *always* consider evangelization within the context of man's personal, concrete and socio-cultural life. He remarks:

*But evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the increasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social. This is why Evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations, constantly being realized, about the rights of every human being, about family life without which growth, development, is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development, a message especially energetic today about liberation.*⁴

The main aim of this paper is therefore to accentuate the urgent need to evangelize the African Traditional Religiosity. The realization of this goal calls for a critical attention to the different types of religiosity, and the African religiosity in particular. Some proposals will then be made as regard, the education of the African towards Christian maturity.

The Concept of Religiosity in General

An attempt to explain the notion 'religiosity' calls for a recognition of the difference between it and 'Religion'. Without negating many other definitions given for religion, I will like to consider Religion here as a human phenomenon that deals with the totality of man's relationship with God and spirits. For the African Traditional Worshipers, such a relationship includes ancestral spirits. It is something that results from a relationship which God established from the beginning of (human)life. It is a relationship in which God reveals Himself to man and man in turn responds by accepting Him. That is why the end of every true religion is

to achieve this communion with God in the complete love of God.⁵ Thus man's highest activity is to love God. His faith-commitment to God urges him to experience and express dynamically this communion with God and his fellow human beings. Here the emphasis is on God who is the object of religion and who progressively reveals Himself and provokes corresponding response in man.

The term 'Religiosity' is not exactly the same as "Religion." It is a psychological concept which deals with the *interaction* between the spiritual factor (God or the Spirit) and human dynamism. It is a *subjective* aspect of Religion. It has to do with the *individual subjective attitude*⁶ to the *objective Truth of Religion (God or Spirits)*. In studying religiosity, psychology of religion tries to observe the phenomenon of religion without concerning itself with making judgment as to the truth of its proposition or trying to appraise its value. It is a *dispassionate* study of the individual *subjective attitude* in the face of God or the object of his belief. The study of religiosity does not negate the content of religious truth, but it takes it for granted. In short, religiosity deals with *how* the individual reacts, accepts and expresses the truth of religion. This also includes the motive and the various subjective manners in which these religious attitudes are expressed in different cultures.

Types of Religiosity

The different classifications of religiosity is based on the various levels of religious attitude. These levels have to do with the three distinctive phases of the genetic structure in which individuals conceive or understand God. God could be conceived just as provider of all good things or as impersonal super human. He could also be perceived as a personal friend to whom one is called to be totally committed. Each of these various ways of looking at God has its own corresponding religiosity or religious attitudes. On the basis of this religiosity could be said to be of three kinds: the Extrinsic, the Pseudo-Intrinsic and the intrinsic.

- (a) *Extrinsic Religiosity*: This is a religious attitude which is centred on *human needs* and the means of satisfying them. These human needs include social needs, the need for security, the need for autonomy and freedom, the need for self-esteem, the need to love and be loved, the ultimate need to adjust to the fact of death. These and other human needs become the preoccupation of a person who possesses extrinsic religiosity. The primary motive for their worship of God and for continuing any relationship with God is the satisfaction of these

human needs. They tend to instrumentalize God to achieve their ends. This is why this type of religiosity could be regarded as *utilitarian and ego-centric*. Even such a selfish attitude goes beyond the desire for material benefits. It includes man's quest for spiritual reward. In an individualistic manner, a person with such an attitude pursues spiritual goals like 'living a holy life' and 'gaining his individual salvation' almost at the expense of God himself. At times he or she seeks these gains almost at the expense of their communal and communitarian salvation. In such a case, God becomes a means to achieving his or her material or spiritual benefits, instead of God being the "end in itself". This is an immature type of religiosity which is normally found among children and adolescents but which we must admit, among some adults who have not outgrown that level. Since children at this stage have a strong need of protection, security and dependence, they look upon their parents and in this context on God to satisfy all their biological, physical, psychological and spiritual needs. With this religious attitude they even try to make a deal with God "If you can satisfy this need of mine, I will be this way or that way." This type of religiosity is good enough for children but not for adult christians. This is because a christian with such a religiosity tends to *instrumentalize or manipulate* God to achieve his or her 'selfish' desired goals or aspirations. Although this attitude could help to promote love, fidelity, faith in divine providence and a sense of security in the religious life of youths, it will always remain an *immature* and retarded religiosity if it serves as an end in itself. The kind of prayers that flow from this type of religiosity is generally the prayer of petition - There are seldom prayers of praise, thanksgiving and resignation to God's will.

- (b) *Pseudo-Intrinsic Religiosity*: This is a religious attitude which grows from a kind of impersonal concept of God. Such a knowledge of God is superficial, intellectual and theoretical. It originates from a kind of religio-moral education that concentrates on the intellectual aspect of formation. Here people are meant to try to understand God-in-Himself and to memorize all the attributes of God and the abstract commandment of God dictating how to model their religio-moral life. Christians with this type of religiosity are *not trained to relate their faith in God to the daily experiences of their lives*. In other words, such christians are not able to relate the *facts of religion* to their concrete daily experiences. Consequently their practice of religion is only

abstract or impersonal and is done as a mere routine. Following a legal system in their religious observations people with such a religiosity try to conform to whatever they are asked to do by the Church. They do so not out of conviction but because it is just a duty. This is why the basic characteristics of this type of religiosity are *legalism, ritualism and conformism*. Those who possess this kind of religious attitude try to follow the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law. Their life is static, rigid hence it is a "pseudo" kind of religiosity. This kind of religiosity is generally found among the intellectuals and the elites of the society. They feel satisfied with the *social practices* that religion offers.

- (c) *Intrinsic Religiosity*: This type of religiosity deals with a personalized interiorization of the fact of religion. It is not selfish or self-centred. It is rather oriented towards God and other human beings. In other words, a person with this type of religiosity pursues values that are found *outside and beyond man*. He discovers the objective values of religious truth and then goes further to personalize them. This is why it is called a '*personalized religiosity*'. Such a person gains an *experiential knowledge of God*. Thus he believes and commits himself totally to God, not just because others have told him to do so, rather, because he is personally convinced of the objective and intrinsic value of doing so. An example from the Bible might help to illustrate this point. Recalling the story of Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of St. John Chapter four, it is important to reflect on the reaction of many samaritans who first believed in Jesus on the testimony of the woman. When many of them who later heard Jesus speak, came to believe in Him, they said to the woman: "Now we no longer believe what you told us; *we have heard him ourselves and we know* that he is really the saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42). This refers not to the speculative or theoretical knowledge of pseudo-religiosity but to the *experiential knowledge* which stems from personal conviction. It is this kind of faith-knowledge that led St. Paul to make a definite option for Christ. He affirms this when he says:

.... I believe that nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For Him I have accepted the loss of everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him⁷

So for a christian who has intrinsic religiosity, faith means that because he has heard, he responds, believes and trusts in the person of Christ and thus, commits his whole life and interest to Him. This religiosity expresses a type of faith-knowledge which is a form of religious love. It is a knowledge borne of love.⁸ It is a knowledge based on the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love. By experiencing God's love in Christ, the believer comes to accept Him in faith and hope. It is in this context that one can understand what St. John means by faith in Jesus Christ; "And eternal life is this; to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3) This faith-knowledge which attains the level of intrinsic religiosity is possible through religious education that tries to relate the message of the Gospel to the daily life experiences of the individuals.

Such a *faith-knowledge* of intrinsic religiosity requires the psychic maturity of an adult, called to make a personal psychic response to God in Christ. It is in this context that the "*Gospel sees faith as free adult surrender to the meaning of human life discovered in the person of Christ*. This surrender habitually modifies the life of a follower of Christ by turning him into a disciple"⁹

(A) A critical Analysis of African Religiosity

African Religiosity has to do with the subjective attitude of the people towards the objective truth of Religion. Such an attitude is very much influenced and conditioned by their religion(s) which is deeply rooted in their faith in one God, in the spirits and in the ancestors. This traditional religion forms: their religiosity such that their *faith is expressed in all spheres of their daily life and activities*. Commenting on this UNIQUE expression of their religiosity, Leonard observes:

*They [Africans] are in the strict and natural sense of the word, a truly and deeply religious people, of whom it can be said;... "they eat religiously, drink religiously, bath religiously." In new words, the religion of these natives, as I have all along endeavored to point out, is their existence, and their religion.*¹⁰

This is why traditionally speaking, it is almost impossible to speak of the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people without reference to religion. This type of religiosity suggests, therefore, that the Africans generally have a form of intrinsic or personalistic religiosity. Out

of their personal conviction, their subjective attitude towards God, the spirit and their ancestors generally affect all areas of their lives.

Nevertheless, a more critical examination of their religiosity reveals that there exists certain religious attitudes which are not quite healthy and which could fall under the category of extrinsic religiosity or pseudo-religiosity. A few of them deserve to be mentioned here.

There is a type of 'magical' or manipulative attitude towards God and the spirits. Their attitude towards the traditional law are more or less negative. Although they have some positive motives for the observance of their laws,¹¹ their motives are predominated by fear of punishment from God and the ancestors. So most of their ritual sacrifices are aimed at appeasing the anger of God and the spirit rather than out of pure love. That is why their rituals are somehow manipulative. Kalu observes this when he remarks:

Worship is an elaborate series of manipulative ritual, designed to harness the resources of the good spirit in order to ward off the machinations of the evil spirits and control space-time events. It becomes clear in various studies that notwithstanding the attribute of the supreme Being, communities appeal to spirits, patron spirits, nature and ancestors, individuals resort to divination, magic, witchcraft, veneration of ancestors and the aid of extended family circle¹².

There is therefore an element of magical and manipulative attitude which at times leads to a kind of utilitarian religion and even to idolatry. The people try to command or control God and the spiritual powers to answer their needs and save them from any danger that threatens the individual or the community. No wonder then many people continue to jump from one religious body to another in search for spiritual powers that would liberate them from threatening dangers. It is on record that every year over 400,000 christians desert the 'Big mission churches'¹³ to join the small ones that promise them spiritual powers to control and manipulate God to answer their prayers and save them from pain and suffering. Such African christians who inherited this attitude from their African Traditional Religion, have so far failed to see the significance and the place of the Cross of Christ and other forms of suffering in the salvific plan of God for the salvation of the world.

This utilization and manipulative attitude towards religion, which produces a type of extrinsic or pseudo-intrinsic religiosity, throws a big

challenge to 'Evangelization 2000'. It reveals the conditionality and the superficiality involved in some African Christians' commitment to Christ and His Church. They seem to challenge God by giving Him some conditions under which they will continue to be faithful to him. Their motives and attitudes need to be evangelized in such a way that they are able to say with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "... even if he [our God] does not save us, you must know, O king that we will not serve your God or worship the statues you have erected" (Daniel 3:18-19). This is a statement of unconditional surrender which evangelization in Africa today must aim at. It is a statement of total commitment borne of intrinsic or personalized religiosity.

Another African religious attitude which evangelization must confront is what I might call a *spiritualistic attitude*. Because of the people's strong faith in the spiritual world and in the constant interaction between the physical and the spiritual worlds, they have the tendency to interpret their illness and misfortunes only in the context of the evil influence of spirits. For example certain illness which could have physical or psychological cause are generally attributed to the devil or to the evil spirit. Commenting on this, Kalu again has the following remarks to make:

Sensibility to psychological problems insanity and schizophrenia is lacking. Unusual phenomenon like earthquake and disease such as epilepsy are easily attributed to the spiritual approaches with awe. A bustle of propitiatory activities assuage the alleged anger of the Spirit.¹⁴

This error of spiritualism — the error attributing every happening to the spirits — creates an unhealthy religious attitude of fear and superstition. It has sometimes resulted into *serious guilt feeling and anxiety* that have pathological consequences. Fear has to do with punishment, but "there is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear. For fear brings with it pains of judgment and anyone who is afraid has not attained love in its perfection (cf. 1Jn 4:18, 2 Tim 1:7). So, as long as these fears and anxiety exist in the life of the African Christians their spiritual growth will be retarded. They will continue to find it difficult to strive after perfection based on pure love of God, the good news of Christ as the Lord of lords cannot easily penetrate their religiosity as long as they live in fear and superstition. Again this is a serious challenge to evangelization

today.

There is yet another religious attitude that is prevalent among some African Christians. This has to do with a type of *conformistic attitude to the Church*. Such an attitude again is the *child of pseudo-intrinsic religiosity*. Christians with this kind of attitude are not *truly* and *really* committed to the Church. They *conform* to the norms and regulations of the Church, not necessarily out of conviction but because of what they can gain by so doing. Some of them do so because they want places of honour, and prestige in the Church. They want to become *papal knights*, *papal medalists* and *chairmen of parish councils*. This dangerous religious attitude is even present among the clergy. Some of them blindly conform to certain regulations in the Church so that they could become *bishops* and *monsignors* or to be 'promoted' to be pastors of bigger parishes. They try to build up a selfish type of solidarity. Thus their prophetic role of being critical voices in the society including the Church is relegated to the background. If 'Evangelization 2000' does not confront these problems, our Churches may be filled with hypocrites and conformists who cannot build a creative and liberating solidarity in Christ.

Another obstacle that deserves mentioning here is what might be called the 'error of sacramentalism'. Africans are traditionally symbolic in their religious expression. Unlike in the Western world and among the Greeks where beliefs are expressed in abstract concepts and categories, Africans express their religious beliefs and values in a symbolic manner, in other words, the African cultural values, the sacred and the supernatural are given expression in concrete symbols. It is not surprising therefore that sacraments and sacramentals are particularly meaningful to the people.

Before considering the abuse of this great value in the African Christian religiosity, it is important to remark on a positive note, that African symbols should be used in Christian religious education. A part of the evangelical, theological and catechetical task of the African Church today is to re-discover and utilize those symbols in expressing Christian sacraments and sacramentals. There is need to open up some liturgical and catechetical centres for experiments in this area. Theological and catechetical formation in seminaries should also reflect this.

On a negative note, effort should be made to correct the already existing 'error of sacramentalism'. This has unfortunately affected and weakened the religiosity of some Africans. The error stems from the mistake of thinking that the sacraments *have the monopoly of all graces*. In other

words, that those who for one reason or the other do not enjoy the privilege of the sacraments are condemned.

Without denying the indispensable role of the sacraments in the life of the Church, it will be wrong to hold that God cannot communicate his graces without the sacraments and sacramentals. Evangelization today has the grave responsibility of correcting this error and promoting the sacramental life of the Church by using African symbolism to express the sacramental life of the Church provided there is no danger of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

The final aspect of African religiosity which evangelization must tackle is the area of charisms. Since African traditional religiosity put great premium on charismatic leadership, the understanding of charisms and their attitude to charismatic gifts must be examined. Africa is a fertile soil for pentecostal churches because of her people's emphasis on charism. In the present age, a lot of charismatic leaders are springing up in the churches including the Catholic Church. The African should therefore be educated to appreciate the variety of gifts as expressed by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapters twelve and thirteen. These gifts should be encouraged. But the wrong attitude to these gifts which are reflected in the 'error of charismaticism' must be avoided if African Christian religiosity is to be authentic.

This error manifests itself in a fourfold manner:

- (a) It could reveal itself when the individual prefers the charismatic gifts (created grace in 1 Cor. 12) to the giver who is the Holy Spirit.
- (b) A person could also desire or seek the gifts for their own sake instead of seeking them for building up the Body of Christ.
- (c) Such an error can manifest itself when the individual uses the gifts for self-aggrandizement or commercial purpose rather than for God's glory and the sanctification of the world. Such an attitude could be at least attributed partially to African traditional attitude of seeking for spiritual powers, like charms — toward evil power and manipulate all evil spiritual forces.¹⁵
- (d) Finally, a person could fall into this error when she proudly uses these gifts to provoke or stir up envy and jealousy in others who are less gifted than himself or herself instead of using them to complement the deficiencies of others. These errors are the results of extrinsic religiosity which could find their origin and root in the African

religious attitudes.

(C) Towards Authentic Education to Christian Maturity in Africa

The aim of this last section is to recapitulate the essential aim of evangelization within the context of christian education. This is because christian education, which has to do with catechesis, is one of the essential aspect of evangelization. The focal point of this section will therefore be to examine and highlight the task of catechesis which is an indispensable part of evangelization. With particular reference to this paper the duty of catechesis is to demonstrate how to assist the African christian in the spiritual journey of moving from extrinsic religiosity or pseudo-intrinsic religiosity to an intrinsic and personalistic one with the African cultural milieu. Such a task would involve the formation of an authentic African personality that is capable of giving full response to the Gospel message of salvation. This involves the formation of the African Conscience which includes the training of the African intellect, will and affectivity in such a way that it can give a total and integrated response to the call of God in Christ.¹⁶ For the effective accomplishment of this task it is necessary to briefly recapitulate, the basic aims of christian religious education that can lead the African to maturity in faith.

(1) Aims of Christian Education to Maturity

- (i) The first aim of Christian education to achieve maturity should be to *plant the word*.¹⁷ This means that Christ (the Word made flesh) must be incarnated in the heart of every Christian. The faithful must be able to personally and experientially give an authentic answer to Christ's question: "But who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15; Mk. 8:27-30; Lk. 9:18-21).
- (ii) The second aim of education is to direct the word to the *whole person*. This means that the Word of God must penetrate every aspect of one's personality in all psychosomatic dimensions.¹⁸
- (iii) The next aim is to ensure that the context of the good news is so adopted that it will aim at the redemption and the elevation of man through his sharing in the divine life within the context of his experience with others. In other words, Christ who is Himself the main content of the good news must be so presented to the christian that he is able to freely accept the salvation He brought. Having been redeemed he should be taught that his faith commitment has a

missionary implication. He must share with others.

- (iv) The catechist must aim at helping the faithful or catechumens to *appreciate and promote the saving solidarity* brought by Christ. Human experience can be used to reach the christian objective goal of building up ecclesial, sacramental and liturgical community in the Church. Active participation at these various levels of the church's life must be encouraged and promoted as the Church moves towards its final union with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.
- (v) The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity should be progressively and dynamically exercised according to the socio-political and moral situation of any given individual or group. In summarizing these points Pope John Paul II says:

*... The specific aim of catechesis is to develop with God's help an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the levels of knowledge and life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by baptism. Catechesis aims, therefore, at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's word...*¹⁹

(2) The Christian Message and the African Experience

One of the goals of christian religious education is to try to relate the facts of religion to the experience of the individual or a community of believers. In this connection, the fact of the christian message must be brought to the concrete situation of the African Christian. In order to do this effectively it is necessary to answer the fundamental Christological question 'who do you say I am?' (Mt. 16:16). In other words who is Christ to the Africans? What is the *identity* and mission of Christ to the Africans who are faced with some serious dichotomies in their christian life and practice - some of the dichotomies are already enumerated in the earlier part of this work. One might go further to ask; How does the African Christian live or experience the basic mysteries of Christ in his or her daily life within the context of his socio-cultural, religio-political milieu? To be more precise, how do the life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ affect and influence the daily life of African christians?

In attempting to answer some of these questions it would be necessary to relate the mysteries to Christ — the core of the Christian faith — to some of the problems raised in the earlier part of this work. A few of these problems that affect the religiosity of the african Christian will be considered here.

Our first attention goes to the African utilitarian and manipulative *attitude to religion*. Perhaps the best way to correct this is to identify and affirm the nature and the value of a truly authentic religion. Religion is not a philosophical system which aims at explaining what can easily be explained humanly speaking. On the contrary, religion is true only when it deals with those values proposed by religion itself and are natural to man. Religion has the value of responding to natural needs. Through religious education, it develops a faith — relationship that creates and opens to a relationship with the divine. In fact religion is the totality of man's relationship with God and spirits, which aims at leading the believer to progressively experience and express a more intimate communion with God.

Therefore, religio-moral education is primarily concerned with training and integrating man's faculties — the intellect, the will and the affectivity in the loving service of God and neighbours. Thus religio-moral perfection deals with the capacity to integrate the human faculties in such a way that man is able to respond *fully and unconditionally* to God's call to be completely united to Him. The realization of such communion requires a life long process of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.

It is hoped that with such a relational and communal understanding of religion, African Christian will be gradually led to liberate themselves from this utilitarian and manipulative attitude to religion. They would thus be assisted to accept the covenantal communion with God in Christ *without any condition*. For the African Christian, Christ will be seen as *faithful friend* whose covenantal fidelity lasts forever. This will in turn lead them from an extrinsic religiosity to a personalistic one.

Another attitude that calls for liberation in the work of catechetical evangelization is the *spiritualistic attitude*. Every phenomenon especially the ones that involve misfortune should not always be attributed to the evil spirit. This is a betrayal of the lack of an integral anthropology — at least in practice.

The proposed solution to this is for the theologians and anthropologists to intensify their studies in African anthropology. This will help them to see other human causes of illness or disaster which are not really attributed

to the spirits. The African Christian would thus be freed from the *religious attitude of fear* which leads them to superstition. An alternative attitude will be that *creative faith* and trust in the saving power of Christ who is able and capable of liberating them from all dangers.

The prevalent error "Charismatism" is another danger which religious education has to face in Africa today. As has been alluded to earlier on, this error — like the many others already discussed — seems to have its root in the African Traditional Religious attitude. These attitudes originate as a result of the people's desperate attempt to overcome the spiritual forces that threaten their spiritual or physical well-being. This strong desire to overcome the spiritual forces has continued to lead many African Christians to a life of *scepticism*. While still regarding themselves as good Christians' some of them go to *fortune-tellers, diviners* and even *witch doctors* to seek remedy for their problems.²⁰ But with the arrival of different brands of Pentecostal churches and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Africa, some of them have resorted to a desperate and passionate desire for charism. Without denying the many positive values of these groups, one cannot but notice this serious error of charismatism.

A proposed solution to this problem is to deepen in the heart of the African Christians the theology of the identity and the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. It would be necessary to emphasise that Christianity should not be reduced to a mere possession of Charism, especially the charisms of healing and working miracles. the catechetical instructions should try to stress these points at different levels. The role of the official teachers of the Church in discerning the spiritual gifts²² must be emphasized. It is hoped that such suggestions will help many Christians to get rid of these erroneous religious attitudes. They would thus be able to continue along the right path in their spiritual journey to a personalized religiosity and christian maturity. In relation to Christ, charisms will be sought only in so far they assist the christian to collaborate with Christ and the Holy Spirit in building up the Christian community — a community of faith. Hope and love. Thus all the charisms would be used to manifest and *promote God's glory and to advance the salvation of the world*.

3. Application of African Traditional Methodology to Christian Education.

It is the conviction of the writer that certain African methodological approaches are necessary in christian religious education if the christian

message is to be communicated to the people in the manner and the language they can understand. For this reason this section will briefly discuss a few African traditional methodologies that will help in communicating the Christian message to the people. An attempt will be made to answer some basic questions like: In the African traditional set up, *who* is the teacher? Where are the religio-moral teachings imparted? *How are the traditional religious values and beliefs transmitted?*

In the traditional African set up, parents, adult members of the nuclear and the extended families and the family friends play the role of teachers.²² Everyone sees it as his duty to give moral and religious education to the children of the family. Using this as the point of departure, Christian families (which are regarded as the 'domestic church') and the parish communities should be seen as good places for imparting religious education. The members of the ecclesial communities at its various levels should see themselves as religious — moral educators of their children. In the urban areas in particular, the 'Small Christian communities' (SCC) which model the traditional African basic communities should be organised.²³ Thus the SCC could serve as a suitable place for organising and giving religious education. In this connection lay leaders should be trained to participate in this all important work of evangelization. This will guarantee the evangelical recommendation to make every Christian a Catechist.²⁴

Another important African anthropological approach to religious education is what could be called *education by participation*. Children learn to do by doing. The celebrations especially of the ceremonies of initiation, marriage and funerals, are very important occasions for transmitting moral and religious values from one generation to the other.²⁵ By actively participating in these celebrations children learn to appreciate and imbibe these traditional values. Similarly, it would be a good thing if the youth are trained to be more seriously involved in all the Church's liturgical celebrations. It would be very beneficial especially in some parts of Africa where the role and the activities of the youth are quite marginal or non-existent at all.

Reflecting on how the traditional religious values are transmitted to youths in the African cultural set up, it is important that note be taken of *names, proverbs* and folktales as indispensable vehicles for communication. For the African, names of persons are not considered merely as distinguishing one person from another; they are also expressions of the nature and the meaning of what they represent. Thus names generally

mark the occasion, or circumstances of birth, such as rainy season, famine or travelling by the members of the family. *The beliefs, mentality and historical circumstances* of the people are traditionally revealed by names. Many African names, represent the *most authentic* and *most ancient records of their beliefs and ways of life*. The same is true of proverbs and folktales. A lot of moral lessons are traditionally taught through names, proverbs and folktales.²⁶

In Christian religious education among the people, these three vehicles could easily be used for communicating the Christian message of salvation. This is why the use of African names for baptisms should generally be encouraged. But care should be taken to ensure that some of these names that do not have Christian meaning or Christian moral lessons be avoided or be given Christian interpretation. It is a very strong hope that instructions, homilies and the various liturgical celebrations will be more meaningful to the people if these three-fold vehicles of communication are used. The Christian message could thus find a stronger root among the people and their religiosity would be more personalistic and authentic. Their commitment to Christ will be deeper and more mature.

Conclusion

The crisis of faith resulting from this dichotomy between the Christian faith and the faiths of the African Traditional Religion has given birth to some unhealthy religiosity among many African Christians. The aim of this paper has been to identify and confront this problem and to suggest certain ways and means of resolving this crisis. Such a step is considered so important and urgent because of the crying need to liberate many Christians from the plague of false religiosity and to assist them to *deepen their commitment to Christ and His Church*. The goal has therefore been to propose ways and means of *informing* and *forming* African Christians in such a manner that they can have an authentic Christian maturity and still remain true to their Africanness.

Efforts have thus been made to discuss the meaning and the significance of religiosity in general. The different types of religiosity have been analysed. These are extrinsic religiosity, pseudo-intrinsic religiosity and intrinsic or personalized religiosity. Since the last best expresses a truly Christian maturity, the paper faced the challenge of gradually leading African Christians from the first two kinds of religiosity and directing them to the last. In order to achieve this goal, a critical analysis and

evaluation of African religiosity were identified as the problems which christian religious education has to face. Among them were traditional morbid fear or evil spirits and the utilitarian, manipulative and conformistic attitude of some African Christians. Certain errors such as the 'error of sacramentalism' and 'error of charismatism' were also pointed out.

However, it is still necessary here to emphasize the sacramental and the charismatic aspect of African religiosity. The warning against the danger of charismatism and sacramentalism should not make us lose sight of the rich African heritage, symbolism and charism. There is a need to strike a balance and to do this it is necessary to bear two things in mind: First of all that God's grace is not limited to the sacraments but goes beyond them. This will help the African Christian to appreciate better the ecumenical aspect of evangelization which cannot be ignored in this Evangelization 2000. Secondly, emphasis on the importance of the sacrament as means of grace is a must. This would go a long way in correcting the fundamentalist position that has the slogan "sacraments cannot save".

Considering the African traditional insight on charism, there is a need to appreciate and highlight the values of charism for an African religiosity. This is so important for building up African christian communities that are characterized by a type of unity- in-diversity and diversity-in-unity. This guarantees the spirit of participation, co-operation and co-responsibility according to one's talents. Any evangelical and catechetical instruction that does not emphasise the sacramental and charismatic life of the church is not likely to produce an authentic African religiosity.

Catechetical instructions which are an aspect of evangelization were proposed to deal with these problems. In order to give a *Christo-centric orientation* to this type of religious education, the aims of Christian education to maturity were outlined. Catechesis must *develop, advance and nourish* the Christian faith in such a way that the faithful would understand and grow daily in the knowledge of the mysteries of Christ. The faith-knowledge of Christ must be applied to the African Christian before he can give an authentic response to the message of Christ who calls him or her to a life of total commitment. The application of the various traditional African methodologies have been proposed here as a means of deepening this Christian faith- commitment within the African cultural milieu.

In concluding this paper it is necessary to remark that there is no

intention on the part of the writer to negate the positive qualities of the African religiosity which penetrates every aspect of their social, cultural and political life (as it has already been mentioned). It is in fact very much commended. These positive qualities can help to enhance the Christian's practice of his/her faith. They must be seen as an essential contribution which African culture can make to the universal world. However, because of the Church's evangelical mission to liberate people of all false religiosities, the emphasis was on the negative aspect of their religious attitude. It must also be noted that inspite of all the suggestions given to achieve the evangelical work of catechizing the people, it would be quite presumptuous to claim that all their problems of immature religiosity will be resolved. Nevertheless, this paper has a unique contribution to make. It is my strong belief that the proposals here would go a long way in helping the African Christian cultivate progressively an authentic personalized religiosity that is capable of dynamically deepening his commitment to Christ and His Church. He will thus be able to practice his Christian faith unconditionally as he joins St. Paul to say: "I believe that nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him, I have accepted the loss of everything and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him (Phil.3:8).

Notes and References

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14. O.U. Kalu *op.cit.*, p. 16 cf. M.I. Mozia *op.cit.* pp. 231-235.
15. cf. M.I. Mozia, *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, pp. 231-235.
16. Cf. M.I. Mozia, "Education of African Christian conscience" in *Bodija Journal* vol.1, No. 1 Rain 1989, Baptist Press, Ibadan Nigeria Ltd., 1989 p. 37.
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19. Pope John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae, The Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis* No. 20.
20. M.I. Mozia, *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, p. 234.
21. Cf. Lumen Gentium, No. 12 1 Thess.5:12, 19-21.
22. M.I. Mozia, *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, p. 212f.
23. *Ibid.* 293f, This had been extensively discussed in this book.
24. Pope John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, No 16.
25. M.I. Mozia, *Solidarity in the Church and Solidarity Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, p. 218.

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