

The reader would pardon me if I appear to have put the cart before the horse, but I prefer to touch the meaning of the theology in the conclusion of the paper rather than in its introduction because of its peculiar system as a science, it proceeds from the unknown to the known. Being a systematic inquiry, theology has its own body of knowledge and never under the control of any other discipline.

This science of God made man is our means of liberating men from all forms of domination and of bringing the findings of the other human sciences into the service of that liberation. The relevance of the theologian therefore is not uni-dimensional nor for one sector of human life; it permeates all facets of human life. To maintain the social relevance of theologians in the modern world, to avoid the danger of becoming obsolete and irrelevant in the same world, theologians must be willing to listen and learn from other disciplines.

# THE QUEST FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY AND THE CASE FOR THEOLOGICAL METHOD

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The ecumenical initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church in matters of doctrine have, until now, taken the form of a tri-directional dialogue: dialogue with the Greek Orthodox Churches, dialogue with Anglicans, and dialogue with Protestants. On the international scene, a lot has been accomplished in this regard, as the second part of this paper shall attempt to demonstrate. But the case is different when we look at Nigeria.

It is my contention in this paper that the emergence of a new expression of Protestantism in the form of Pentecostalism, as well as its manifestation by certain members of the Charismatic Renewal within Catholicism, apart from being a set back for the initiative for Christian unity, compel Nigerian theologians in general, and Nigerian Catholic theologians in particular, to include a reinvigorated ecumenical initiative on the agenda for theology in the 21st century. This ecumenical initiative can only be undertaken when Nigerian Catholic theologians avoid the reduction of theological discourse to socio-political commentary, ethnology, or cultural anthropology and return to what Bernard Lonergan would describe in his discussion of functional specialties as theology's dialectical, doctrinal and systematic functions.<sup>1</sup> The battle for the mind of the Nigerian Christian, which Pentecostalism has provoked, will be fought, won, and lost, not in the theatre of singing, clapping and dancing, nor at the rostrum of political discourse, nor in a museographic complex, but in the arena of dialectic, doctrines and systematics.

The discussion in this paper goes on in four moments: the first moment recalls the doctrinal bases of Christian disunity, the second

<sup>1</sup> My emphasis on dialectic, doctrines and systematics presupposes the dynamic unity and interdependence of the eight functional specialties as enunciated by Lonergan. See his *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) ch. 5, especially pages 138-144.

acknowledges some doctrinal indices of the desire for unity, the third cites Pentecostalism and its irruption within Catholicism in Nigeria as a set back for ecumenical initiative, and the fourth advocates that theologians undertake the functions of dialectic, doctrines and systematics.

### Doctrinal Bases of Christian Disunity

In order to avoid a false and facile ecumenism it is necessary to trace the doctrinal bases of disunity among Christians. The Lord Jesus expressed a fervent desire for the unity of his followers when he prayed: "May they all be one, just as Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn 17:21). The prayer itself shows that the unity of Christians is crucial to the credibility and authenticity of the mission of Christ. The unity of Christians will make the world believe that it was the Father who sent Christ.

Apart from the minor disagreements recorded in the Acts of the Apostles like the one concerning the distribution of food to the Hellenists which led to the institution of Stephen and others (Acts 6:1-7), and the dispute in Antioch on whether or not non-Jewish converts to Christianity should be circumcised (Acts 15), the early Church was relatively free of internal disputes until the controversy between Cyprian and the Novatianist broke out in 251 AD. What led to the controversy was the election of Cornelius as Bishop of Rome. This election was hotly disputed resulting in the election of a rival bishop, Novatian. Despite Novatian's right doctrine, Cyprian considered his consecration as rival bishop to be a schism. Having broken from the one true Church, Cyprian declared that any baptism administered by Novatian and his followers was inefficacious. In the words of Cyprian in his *Letter 69, 4*:

since the Church alone has the living water and the power of baptism and cleansing men, anyone who asserts that a man can be baptized and sanctified with Novatian, will first have to demonstrate that Novatian is in the Church or presides over the Church. Now the Church is one, and what is one cannot be both

inside and outside. If it is with Novatian, it was not with Cornelius. If it was with Cornelius, who was made Bishop Fabian's successor by lawful ordination and to whom the Lord gave not only the honor of priesthood but also the glory of martyrdom, then Novatian is not in the Church; nor can he be reckoned to be a bishop, seeing that his office originated with himself and that in defiance of evangelical and apostolic tradition he was not in succession to anyone else. One who was not ordained in the Church cannot conceivably have or maintain any authority over the Church.

As far as Cyprian was concerned, Novatian and his followers, having separated themselves from the Church, had excluded themselves from any possibility of salvation. This was the context in which he made the famous and often misunderstood, misused and abused declaration: "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus".<sup>2</sup> Using Rabab as a type of the Church, Cyprian argued that just as she was commanded to gather her father's household into her house for safety, "those who are to live and to escape the destruction of the world must be gathered into one house, namely the Church" (*Letter 69, 4*). One must be in the Church in order to be saved.

Without dwelling on the Donatist controversy, whose terms were somewhat similar to the controversy between Cyprian and Novatian, it was the Arian controversy that shook the whole Church to its very foundations. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, had denied the divinity of Christ. The attempt to resolve this doctrinal dispute led to the convocation of the first ecumenical council in Nicea in 325 AD. I shall not go into the aftermath of that council. Suffice it to mention in passing that the fact that the issue was not entirely resolved would lead to the running battle between the pro-Arian faction and the anti-Arian faction. At the heart of this controversy following the council was Athanasius who spent most of his years as Bishop of Alexandria in exile fleeing from the Arians.

<sup>2</sup>For a serious study of the history of Christian theological thought on "salvation outside the Church" read F. A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

Given the three partners in ecumenical dialogue I had mentioned earlier—the Orthodox, the Protestants and the Anglicans—what is of greater relevance at this juncture in my discussion is the history and doctrine of the separation or schism between the Roman Catholic Church and these Churches.

The schism between the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church is usually traced back to 1054. I shall briefly review the doctrinal differences which led to this separation. The first point of disagreement concerns what is said in the creed about the relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Whereas Roman Catholicism professes faith in the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son" (*qui ex Patri filioque procedit*), the Orthodox Church believes the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and accuses the Roman Church of adding to the creed that came from the councils of Niceae and Constantinople. Secondly, there was and there still is disagreement over the teaching of the Church of Rome on the primacy of jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome. These two issues remained unresolved when, at the first council of Vatican (1869-70), the teaching on papal infallibility was formulated by the Roman Church. As a result of these differences—the *filioque* controversy, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, and the formulation of the dogma of infallibility at Vatican I—the Orthodox Church believes the Roman Catholic Church is at best in schism, at worst in heresy.

As a result of the controversy of 1054, the Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other. This mutual excommunication remained until it was jointly lifted in 1965 by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. But the two Churches are yet to restore full communion in as much as doctrinal differences remain.

The division between the Church of England and the Church of Rome was not the work of theologians or clerics but of politicians. King Henry VIII used the occasion of his disagreement with the Pope over the latter's refusal to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon to subject the Church to the authority of the state. The passing into law of the "Act of Supremacy" in 1533 deprived the Pope of his jurisdiction over the Church of England. The king met with very little opposition. Those like the Chancellor Thomas More and Bishop Fisher who manifested their

opposition were put to death. In spite of this situation, the theology of the Anglican Church remained very much Catholic, except on the issue of the Petrine ministry, until Henry VIII successors elaborated an Anglican theology that was close to Protestantism. This was the case until the ordination of women took place in the Anglican Church.

But even as the Catholic tradition of Anglicanism is acknowledged, mention must be made of the introduction of Protestant reforms into Anglicanism by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1555) by his adoption of a Protestant theology of justification by faith alone which had greater affinity with Calvin's than with Luther's, and had implications for his theology of the sacraments, particularly his theology of the Eucharist and his theology of Holy Order. It will be manifested in the rite of ordination contained in the Ordinal he introduced which later generated the theological problem of Anglican ministries and Leo XIII's apostolic letter, *Apostolicae curae*, in which the later declared the said ministries as invalid.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the Protestant Reformation is better known than the history of the schism between the west and the east. Yves Congar has rightfully located its doctrinal bases at the level of Christology and theological anthropology.<sup>4</sup> The negative theological anthropology implicit in Calvin and Luther's theology of justification has as its corollary a certain de-emphasis or outright denial of the humanity of Christ. This is a way of saying Protestantism succumbed to the monophysite temptation. The vigorous one-sidedness of the negative theological anthropology of classical Calvinism and Lutheranism manifests itself in the consequent inability of classical Protestantism to relate the humanity of Christ to the work of redemption. For to deny or to de-emphasize the humanity of Christ is to deny or de-emphasize the instrumentality the humanity of Christ in the work of redemption.

<sup>3</sup>For a thorough study of the history of the problem of Anglican orders and for some solutions read the beautiful study of George H. Tavadar, *A Review of Anglican Orders: The Problem and the Solution* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier/Liturgical Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>See his *Christ, Our Lady and the Church: A Study in Eirenic Theology*, Westminster, MD, The Newman Press, 1957.

The distinguishing characteristic of this negative theological anthropology is the ascription of total corruption to human nature and of exclusive transcendence to God. The total corruption is a consequence of original sin which inflicted an unmitigated disaster on human nature. Given the total destruction wrecked on human nature by sin, it cannot be said that there is anything good in human nature. This marks a substantial divergence from the theological anthropology of Roman Catholicism which views human nature not as totally destroyed but wounded by original sin, and still capable of some good in spite of sin. According to Congar,

Owing to their persuasion of the total corruption of human nature on the one hand, and of the exclusive transcendence of God on the other, these extreme interpretations of the gospel of redemption have always, at their maximum, so weighted the emphasis on the divine initiative as virtually to exclude the possibility of effective human co-operation in the work of salvation.

Thus human nature is totally corrupt and cannot co-operate with God in his redemptive work. One Protestant principle that depicts this is *sola gratia*. The human nature is fatally wounded, God is utterly transcendent, therefore, only grace, no good works can save us. This has consequences for Mariology, Ecclesiology and even Christology.

If, according to the theological anthropology of classical Protestantism, human nature is totally corrupt because of original sin, and if this total corruption makes any human co-operation with the work of salvation impossible, it is obvious that a human being like Mary cannot co-operate in the work of salvation.<sup>5</sup> If, as one who had human nature like ourselves, she cannot co-operate with God in his work of salvation, then it

<sup>5</sup>Christ, *Our Lady and the Church*, x.

<sup>6</sup>The dogma of the Immaculate Conception, according to which, by the merits of her Son, Mary was preserved from original sin from the moment of her conception, would nullify the attribution of corrupt human nature to Mary. But again, this is a major point of disagreement between us and our separated brethren.

makes no theological sense to engage in any cult of Mary. Her inability to co-operate with God means, for the Protestant, that she cannot intercede for us. Her inability to play a part in the plan of salvation extends also to the Church. Being an assembly of flawed human beings, the Church, says Protestantism, cannot mediate salvation to us.

Congar therefore wonders: "if neither the human race as such, nor the Church nor our Lady has any active part in the work of salvation the question cannot but occur what of the co-operation of Christ's human nature?"<sup>7</sup> The answer to this question inevitably leads to the second factor underlying the Protestant attitude to Mary, that is, the Christology consequent and correspondent to the negative theological anthropology that has just been highlighted.

In presenting the answer of Protestantism to the question, Congar was able to bring to focus the fact that the differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism "are rooted in divergent views of the nature and purpose of the Incarnation itself, those views being themselves in their turn rooted in a distorted idea of the relation of the humanity Christ assumed for our sakes to the fallen nature of mankind and the resultant methods of God's power for saving us."<sup>8</sup>

Congar was of the opinion that this divergence of Christologies between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is exemplified in those words of Luther which his biographers consider as characteristic. In the words of Luther:

Christ has two natures. What does it mean to me? If it brings with it this name, Christ, glorious and consoling, it is on account of the service and the hard task he undertook for me; this it is that gives him his name. That he should be by nature God and Man is his concern. But that he should have consecrated his service, that he should have poured out his love in becoming my Savior and my Redeemer, in this do I find my consolation and my good. To believe in Christ is not to know that he is a Person who is both man

<sup>7</sup>Christ, *Our Lady and the Church*, 19.

<sup>8</sup>Christ, *Our Lady and the Church*, xii.

and God; that avails nothing to anyone. It is to believe in that Person as Christ; that he came from God and came into the world. This is the service from which his name derives.<sup>9</sup>

The implication of these words have been succinctly put by Congar. It meant little to Luther that Christ had two natures. That his human nature took part in the work of our redemption was of no importance to Luther. We were not saved by the human co-operation of Christ. In fact, what took place at the redemption was not mutual co-operation between God and man but a transposition of situation whereby God substituted for man. Salvation came about through the exclusive agency of the Godhead without any instrumental role of Christ's humanity as Aquinas contended.

The consequence of such a Christology for Mariology is not difficult to identify. If the humanity of Christ played no role in our redemption, then there is no theological sense in speaking of the role of Mary his Mother, a human being, in the work of redemption. That also applies to the Church. To deny the importance of the humanity of Christ is to deny the importance of the mediatory role of the Church and its clergy. In fact, for Luther, only the Bible is infallible. One does not need a Pope or Bishop to interpret it. The Pope had kept the Church in Babylonian captivity by arrogating to himself the final word in the interpretation of the Bible. Each Christian has direct and immediate access to God.

But the story of Christianity is not just a story of doctrinal disagreements. It is also a story of profound desire for communion and reunion, a desire that has attained greater intensity in recent times. Some doctrinal indices of this desire ought to be noted.

### Doctrinal Indices of *Votum Unitatis*

Almost a quarter of a century ago, Dominican theologian, Jean Marie Roger Tillard celebrated the emergence of a new doctrinal climate

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, 25.

in the relationship between the Churches.<sup>10</sup> A shift is perceptible from the belligerence and suspicion that characterized previous doctrinal statements to the new perception of the papacy among Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran theologians. If indeed opposition to the papacy remained, because of what was and is still perceived as unconvincing Catholic apologetic of the 1870 Vatican I definition of Papal Infallibility, it was no longer a categorical but qualified opposition. As Tillard pointed out, thanks to doctrinal dialogue between illustrious leaders of Churches like Paul VI, Ramsey and Athenagoras, there is a willingness to regard the exercise of primacy of Rome as desirable. There are indices of this qualified acceptance that we ought to note.

From the Greek Orthodox side, the remarks of Skylines Harkianakis provide a useful description of this new attitude. After stating the incompatibility between Orthodox ecclesiology and the formulation of the Roman primacy at Vatican I and at Vatican II, he went on to assert:

This does not, however, mean rejecting the idea of a primacy within Orthodoxy. On the contrary, recognizing the ideas of synodality and collegiality leads directly towards recognizing one bishop as the first among the bishops, that is, to attribute the primacy to him; never, however, in the sense of 'supreme pontiff' but always as 'first among equals'.<sup>11</sup>

This new tone echoed what transpired in the *Tomas Agapes*, the exchange of letters between Athenagoras and Paul VI. On February 16, 1965, Athenagoras' envoy to Paul VI addressed the latter in the following words:

In due ecclesiastical form we first present ourselves to Your Holiness, the sovereign Bishop of the Old Rome, and we greet you

<sup>10</sup>See his *The Bishop of Rome* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982).

<sup>11</sup>Stylianos Harkianakis, "Un ministère pétrinien dans l'Eglise peut-il avoir un sens? Une réponse grecque orthodoxe" in *Concilium* 64 (1971) 103; quoted in Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 5-6.

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with a kiss in the Lord from your Eastern brother, Bishop of Constantinople, the New Rome. We have the honor to give you his patriarchal and fraternal letters, of which by the spoken word we have already become the interpreter. Your most blessed Holiness is the object of the most heartfelt brotherly sentiments from our most holy Patriarch, who prays for you fervently to the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

As for Athenagoras, he would describe Paul VI as

the bearer of apostolic grace and the successor to a shining company of holy and wise men who have shed lustre on this see which, by honor and rank, stands first in the living body of Christian churches dispersed throughout the world; and whose holiness, wisdom and valiant fight for the common faith of the undivided Church are a permanent asset and treasure for the entire Christian world.<sup>13</sup>

We note here with Tillard, that despite Greek Orthodox misgivings about Vatican I and Vatican II's doctrine on the primacy of Rome, "Things are being said and done to show that, in spite of the rupture, the see of ancient Rome is still held to be 'the first by honor and rank in the living body of Christian churches dispersed throughout the world.'"<sup>14</sup>

On the Protestant side, there is a recognition of a common ground with Catholicism on the same issue of the papacy. This context of a common ground explains the opening statement of the Lutheran-Catholic declaration of March 5, 1974 in which it is said:

There is a growing awareness among Lutherans of the necessity of a specific Ministry to serve the church's unity and universal

<sup>12</sup>*Tomos Agapes*, 173, quoted in Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 6-7.

<sup>13</sup>*Tomos Agapes*, 413, quoted in Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 7.

<sup>14</sup>Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 7-8.

mission, while Catholics increasingly see the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of the papacy within the universal church. Lutherans and Catholics can now begin to envision possibilities of concord, and to hope for solutions to problems that have previously seemed insoluble.

... the contemporary understanding of the New Testament and our knowledge of the processes at work in the history of the Church make possible a fresh approach to the structure and operations of the papacy. There is increasing agreement that the centralization of the Petrine function in a single person or office results from a long process of development. Reflecting the many pressures of the centuries and the complexities of a worldwide church, the papal office can be seen both as a response to the guidance of the Spirit in the Christian community, and also as an institution which, in its human dimensions, is tarnished by frailty and even unfaithfulness. . . . Lutheran theologians, although in the past chiefly critical of the structure and functioning of the papacy, can now recognize many of its positive contributions to the life of the church.<sup>15</sup>

In 1980, the same Commission came up with a joint declaration on papal infallibility in which it stated:

The ministry of the bishop of Rome should be seen as a service under the authority of the Word of God. The doctrine of infallibility is an expression of the confidence that the Spirit of God abides in the Church and guides it in the truth. This understanding should allay Lutheran fears that papal infallibility is a usurpation of the sovereign authority of Christ, and make it clear that this dogma is not the central doctrine of the Catholic Church

<sup>15</sup>*Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V* (Minneapolis, 1974), Introduction and n. 21, quoted in Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 8-9.

and that it does not displace Christ from his redemptive and mediatorial role.<sup>16</sup>

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, in its declaration of September 1981, recognized the different emphases as well as substantial agreement between Roman Catholics and Anglicans on the interpretation of Petrine passages, primacy and infallibility. This primacy was explained in terms of a ministry of unity in the Church.<sup>17</sup> The desire for unity is eloquently expressed in the great efforts of the same commission to resolve the problem of Anglican orders.<sup>18</sup>

This brief enumeration of doctrinal indices of the desire for Christian unity will not be complete without any mention of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification of October 1999. It is remarked that while opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were a principal cause of the division occasioned by the Protestant Reformation, the theological conversations of recent years between Lutherans and Roman Catholics have led to a common understanding of the doctrine of justification. By virtue of this common understanding, the Declaration says:

In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to

<sup>16</sup>*Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church, LCD VI* (1980): "Lutheran Reflections" 18, quoted in Jean Marie Tillard, *Bishop of Rome*, 10.

<sup>17</sup>See a summary of this position as well as its theological implications in Jean Marie Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 12-13.

<sup>18</sup>In this respect, cf. George Tavard, *A Review of Anglican Orders*, 134-148 [136-141]. This work is itself an expression of this desire for unity. The solutions he proposed at the conclusion of his study: presumption of validity of Anglican orders, recognition of validity of Anglican orders based on the recognition of the ecclesial status of the Anglican communion, the application of the principle of *ecclesia supplet* which will provide a basis for the Bishop of Rome's application of *sanctio in radice*, and allowing the ecumenical urgency of fulfilling Christ's will for unity to dictate Roman Catholic recognition of the validity of Anglican orders, these will not be discussed in this essay. I believe they deserve a careful study which is outside the scope of this essay.

save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.<sup>19</sup>

Given the indices presented in this part of the essay, one can say with little fear of contradiction that the ecumenical movement has come a long way. The belligerence and suspicion that characterized doctrinal statements issuing from the churches has given way to a great deal of doctrinal consensus in a new ecumenical climate. This should be seen as a sign of the work of the Spirit guiding the dialogue of experts in matters of doctrine representing the different Churches. But where does Pentecostalism stand in all these?

### Pentecostalism: A Setback for Christian Unity

While these efforts at forging Christian unity, which are efforts at arriving at common or at least reconcilable understanding of Christian doctrines, are being undertaken in Europe and North America, ecumenical initiatives in the area of doctrine remain largely unexplored here in Nigeria. The vacuum that is thus created has facilitated the proliferation of Churches in our land. It is my contention in this paper that the strong emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria represents an obstacle and a major setback for ecumenism in Nigeria because it represents a Protestantism of stunted growth. Whereas the desire for unity manifested by Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutherans and Methodist Churches are a result of doctrinal development, Pentecostalism in Nigeria remains where the Protestant Reformation was at the time of Luther and Calvin. This

<sup>19</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 15.

evaluation finds its attestation in the implicit Christology of Pentecostalism, in its attitude to the use of reason in matters of faith, and in the literal interpretation of the Bible by its preachers and adherents.

Concerning the first, that is the use of reason, Pentecostalism in Nigeria, in spite of its Pelagian emphasis on prosperity and success, holds on doggedly to the negative attitude to reason found in classical Protestantism. This is consistent with the negative theological anthropology of classical Protestantism which considers reason as fatally flawed, and, for that reason, incapable of attaining divine truths. The principle of *sola fides* of Luther dichotomizes faith and reason, and this dichotomy finds an echo in the Pentecostal resort to emotionalism in matters of religion.

Concerning its literal biblicism, Pentecostal use of the Bible is consistent with Luther's reticence to the authority of ecclesial leadership in the interpretation of the Bible exemplified in his principle of *sola scriptura*. In the absence of any recognition of Vatican II's doctrine on divine revelation, according to which the Magisterium is the authentic interpreter of divine revelation (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 10), the Bible is at the mercy of selective citation of subjectively interpreted texts. In the absence of any sense of the history of doctrines, of the distinction between literal, allegorical and spiritual interpretation of Scripture, and of the dynamic relationship between Scripture and Tradition, theologically embarrassing interpretation of Scripture become the order of the day, and the attainment of a comprehensive vision of Christianity is put beyond the reach of Christians.

As for matters of Christology, Pentecostalism, in its songs and doctrines, remains at the level of the monophysite doctrine that Cotgar presented as an implication of the negative theological anthropology of classical Protestantism.<sup>20</sup> In other words, while classical Protestantism has

<sup>20</sup> An example is the famous chorus: "Me I no go suffer, I no go beg for bread. God of miracle na my papa." What does one make of this song while reading about the temptation of Christ or about his agony in the garden and the rest of the passion narrative? It should be a matter of concern that this chorus has found its way into our Catholic liturgy, especially during the liturgical aberration of "thanksgiving" after communion.

undergone some development, and by this I mean the explication of its doctrines in the interaction of ideas that ecumenical initiatives occasioned and facilitated, Pentecostalism, especially in Nigeria, carries on as if there were no ecumenism. The Christ of the Pentecostal "Gospel of prosperity" is one whose person is reduced to one nature, that is, the divine nature. Such a monophysite Christ would do nothing but perform miracles, always turning stones into bread, want into abundance, adversity into prosperity. Since his human nature is rarely or never alluded to, he does not share in our weakness. This is quite unlike the Christ of the New Testament and of the ecumenical councils who is human like us in all things but sin. He is God who became human to share in our human weakness, including the weakness of the human intellect. He came to show us that it is alright to be human, and that to desire to be otherwise would mean taking the fatal step that Adam took. In the humanity of Christ, God was showing human beings how to be human.

It is to be noted in this regard, that in spite of the label of "high Christology" often given to the Church fathers by a certain misreading of Patristic Christology, Athanasius insisted against Docetism, and the Council of Constantinople would re-affirm him in 381 against Apollinarianism, that we would not have been saved from the ignorance of worshipping false gods and its attendant corruption if Christ had not become human like us:

What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.

In order to effect this re-creation, however, He had first to do away with death and corruption. Therefore He assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once for all de

evaluation finds its attestation in the implicit Christology of Pentecostalism, in its attitude to the use of reason in matters of faith, and in the literal interpretation of the Bible by its preachers and adherents.

Concerning the first, that is the use of reason, Pentecostalism in Nigeria, in spite of its Pelagian emphasis on prosperity and success, holds on doggedly to the negative attitude to reason found in classical Protestantism. This is consistent with the negative theological anthropology of classical Protestantism which considers reason as fatally flawed, and, for that reason, incapable of attaining divine truths. The principle of *sola fides* of Luther dichotomizes faith and reason, and this dichotomy finds an echo in the Pentecostal resort to emotionalism in matters of religion.

Concerning its literal biblicism, Pentecostal use of the Bible is consistent with Luther's reticence to the authority of ecclesial leadership in the interpretation of the Bible exemplified in his principle of *sola scriptura*. In the absence of any recognition of Vatican II's doctrine on divine revelation, according to which the Magisterium is the authentic interpreter of divine revelation (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 10), the Bible is at the mercy of selective citation of subjectively interpreted texts. In the absence of any sense of the history of doctrines, of the distinction between literal, allegorical and spiritual interpretation of Scripture, and of the dynamic relationship between Scripture and Tradition, theologically embarrassing interpretation of Scripture become the order of the day, and the attainment of a comprehensive vision of Christianity is put beyond the reach of Christians.

As for matters of Christology, Pentecostalism, in its songs and doctrines, remains at the level of the monophysite doctrine that Congar presented as an implication of the negative theological anthropology of classical Protestantism.<sup>20</sup> In other words, while classical Protestantism has

<sup>20</sup> An example is the famous chorus: "Me I no go suffer, I no go beg for bread. God of miracle na my papa." What does one make of this song while reading about the temptation of Christ or about his agony in the garden and the rest of the passion narrative? It should be a matter of concern that this chorus has found its way into our Catholic liturgy, especially during the liturgical aberration of "thanksgiving" after communion.

undergone some development, and by this I mean the explication of its doctrines in the interaction of ideas that ecumenical initiatives occasioned and facilitated, Pentecostalism, especially in Nigeria, carries on as if there were no ecumenism. The Christ of the Pentecostal "Gospel of prosperity" is one whose person is reduced to one nature, that is, the divine nature. Such a monophysite Christ would do nothing but perform miracles, always turning stones into bread, want into abundance, adversity into prosperity. Since his human nature is rarely or never alluded to, he does not share in our weakness. This is quite unlike the Christ of the New Testament and of the ecumenical councils who is human like us in all things but sin. He is God who became human to share in our human weakness, including the weakness of the human intellect. He came to show us that it is alright to be human, and that to desire to be otherwise would mean taking the fatal step that Adam took. In the humanity of Christ, God was showing human beings how to be human.

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In order to effect this re-creation, however, He had first to do away with death and corruption. Therefore He assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once for all de

destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.<sup>21</sup>

To explicitly affirm the humanity of Christ is to adopt a theological stance with profound implications. A Christ who was human underwent every experience that pertains to human nature. It will probably be a scandal to some today if one were to speak of a Christ who, because of the weaknesses of the human intellect he assumed, had to acquire knowledge. That is the Christ Pentecostalism does not want to accept. But such is the Christ we meet in the New Testament, a Christ who, because he did not know everything, learnt "obedience" through suffering. In the weakness of his human intellect, he faced uncertainties in his humanity. The episode in the Agony in the Garden paints the picture of a Christ who, in the agony of his humanity, shows us that to be human is to face uncertainties of life and death with faith in God and submission to his will. It is precisely by assuming and undergoing this anguish that pertains to humanity that he saved humanity from the agony of facing the unknown.

### Conclusion: The Case for Theological Method

The opinion in certain quarters that Pentecostalism is an instance of the inculturation that Catholicism has failed to embark upon glosses over the more profound issues involved. While we are of the opinion that the imperatives of inculturation must not be neglected, it would be simplistic to simply remain at this level of explication. What we are dealing with here is a direct consequence of the theological and technological under-development of Nigeria.

The absence of medical technology has helped to perpetuate the African way of looking at every problem as having a metaphysical cause and demanding a corresponding metaphysical solution. When common ailments like malaria and typhoid fever defy solutions, it is easy to see them as machinations of evil spirits. The victim needs to be "delivered" in

<sup>21</sup> St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 13.

a Church of miracles. And where religion obeys the economic laws of supply and demand, as is the case with Nigeria, the demand for miracles is met with the supply of Churches that perform miracles. But that is not the only cause.

There is also the theological under-development of our country. When theologians abdicate the role of doctrinal explication, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to respond to the challenges of Pentecostalism. The shift from the "Church of dogmas" advocated and celebrated by some is in fact lending a helping hand to Pentecostalism. For a serious examination of this phenomenon shows that the issue here is not simply whether or not to sing, clap, beat drums and dance, and perform deliverance, in the name of a badly defined and largely uncomprehended inculturation, the issue here is doctrinal, and dogma is another name for doctrine. To reiterate what was said at the beginning of this paper, the battle with Pentecostalism will be fought, won and lost in the arena of doctrinal explication. But the task of addressing the issue of doctrine challenges us to go beyond the reduction of theological discourse to socio-political commentary, ethno-theology or cultural anthropology which does not necessarily require the services of a theologian, since such a function belongs primarily to scholars of human, social and political sciences in the academia.<sup>22</sup>

What we are advocating here is not a de-contextualized theology. While it is indisputable that every theology is elaborated within a given social, political, economic, and cultural context, the importance of the context does not provide any excuse for abdicating the main function of theology. This main function of Christian theology is the scientific investigation into, and the explicative communication of the conceptual possibilities of Christian doctrines. This task necessitates a rediscovery of the nature, scope, method, and language of theology in general, and, in particular, a rediscovery of what Bernard Lonergan described as functional specialties, especially of systematics, whose principal function is the promotion of the understanding of the mysteries of our Christian faith.

<sup>22</sup> Intellectual honesty requires of us to acknowledge that much of what is paraded as Catholic theology today, in the name of inculturation, would be better described as African Traditional Religion.

For the desire for Christian unity remains where there is neither common nor reconcilable understanding of the mysteries of our faith.<sup>23</sup> In order to move closer to the goal of ecumenical initiatives, which is the eventual reunion and communion of the disunited disciples of Christ, which is in its turn, a necessary requirement for the coming together of the children of God who are dispersed, the task of theology is to be embarked upon in dialogue with theologians of other ecclesial communities.

Contemporary Roman Catholic theology in Nigeria cannot afford to overlook the function of theology as faith seeking understanding. For the key issue facing Catholic theology in the present situation of proliferation of Churches in Nigeria is what has been the key issue for Catholic theology from time immemorial. In this particular context, it is the task of explaining the mystery of our Christian faith within the fused horizon furnished by our Roman Catholic tradition as well pre and post colonial African culture. The Nigerian Catholic theologian must assimilate and transmit Catholic tradition within the context of his or her African tradition. I find the words of Lonergan pertinent in this regard:

If one is to hearken to the word, one must also bear witness to it. If one engages in *lectio divina*, there come to mind *quaestiones*. If one assimilates tradition, one learns that one should pass it on. If one encounters the past, one also has to take one's stand toward the future. In brief, there is a theology in *oratione obliqua* that tells what Paul and John, Augustine and Aquinas, and anyone else had to say about God and the economy of salvation. But there is also a theology in *oratione recta* in which the theologian, enlightened by the past, confronts the problem of his own day.<sup>24</sup>

According to Lonergan, the task of forging understanding of doctrines takes place in the first phase of theological operations (theology in *oratione obliqua*) as *interpretation* of what exegetical research has

<sup>23</sup>For his description of the functional specialty of systematics, see his *Method in Theology*, 132; 335-353.

<sup>24</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 133.

established as deposit of faith in Scripture and Tradition. The same task takes place in the second phase of theological operations (theology in *oratione recta*) as *systematics*.<sup>25</sup>

But theology cannot limit itself to systematics. Given the dynamic unity and interdependence of functional specialties, Roman Catholic theology will be immensely aided in its ecumenical initiatives in general, and in meeting the challenges of Pentecostalism in particular, by the functional specialty of *history* whose "substantial concern is the doctrinal history of Christian theology with its antecedents and consequents in the cultural and institutional histories of the Christian religion and the Christian churches and sects."<sup>26</sup> It will be aided by the functional specialty of *dialectic* which facilitates the study of viewpoints that lead to the fact and the reasons beneath the doctrinal conflict. Dialectic is understood as "a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive viewpoint, and proceeding towards that goal by acknowledging differences, seeking their grounds real and apparent, and eliminating superfluous oppositions."<sup>27</sup>

According to a teaching of the second Vatican Council, "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way" (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 7). Conversion, which is a pre-requisite for Christian unity, finds its objectification in theological operations in the functional specialty of *foundations*. It opens the eyes of the theologian to a new self-understanding because it involves the transformation of the theologizing subject and his or her world. When it is objectified in the functional

<sup>25</sup>See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 133-136 [134-135]. See also page 126. For a detailed description of the functional specialties of research and understanding see pages 149-151 and 153-173 respectively.

<sup>26</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 128.

<sup>27</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 128-130. For a detailed description of the functional specialty of dialectic see pages 235-266.

specialty of foundations, the theologian is furnished with a horizon that is required to grasp the meaning of doctrines.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, there is the functional specialty of *communications*. With it, doctrines that have been understood by the theologian manifest themselves in his or her external relations with art, language, literature, other religions, the natural and human sciences, philosophy, history, and men and women of all cultures, classes, through the use of diverse media of communication.<sup>29</sup> The functional specialty of communications facilitates the relationship of the Churches by helping them to express their agreement in matters of constitutive and effective meaning of doctrine while they await common cognitive agreement.

## GOD'S GRACE AND HUMAN COOPERATION IN THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Engelbert Beyer, M. Afr

### Introduction

In Germany, October 31, Reformation Day, is a public holiday in the predominantly Protestant areas, while November 1, All Saints Day, is a public holiday in the predominantly Catholic areas. In the year 2004 both Protestants and Catholics commemorated the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Augsburg by which they express their common faith and removed condemnations that had separated them before.<sup>1</sup>

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther published 95 theses in which he attacked abuses in the Church and in other writings he insisted very much that we are justified and saved by God's grace alone and not by fasting, vigils, gaining indulgences or other human work. He did not "nail" the theses at the door of the Church, but sent them to the competent bishops, hoping they would react against the abuses. As they did not, his friends had the theses printed and they spread like a bush fire.<sup>2</sup>

Since the first centuries of the Christian era, Catholics have admired the good works of the saints as example for their lives and they have venerated the saints as helpers on their way to salvation. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the 1st of November has been celebrated, as the feast day of all the saints.

<sup>1</sup>Informationsdienst, (Bonn:Kathol. Nachrichten Agentur, 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 2004), p. 2, Oekumene, Standortbestimmung am Jubiläumstag.

<sup>2</sup>Erwin Iserloh in Hubert Jedin, ed., *History of the Church*, vol.V, (London:Burns & Oates, 1980), pp. 47-48.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130-132; 267-293.

<sup>29</sup>See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 132-133.