The Challenge Of African Traditional Religion And Culture To Christianity And Islam In Their Quest For Mutual Diaogue: Its Problems And Prospects

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Abstract

Dialogue in all its ramifications has become a challenge for the entire world. The rapid growth of Christianity and Islam in the African continent, especially in the sub-Saharan Africa has made this challenge much more demanding than ever from the point of view of Religion and Theology. The trio must discuss and collaborate in the question of faith and belief because there is something that holds them together, belief in a Supreme Creator, though expressed differently. But, we have to recognise the fact that it is the issue of arguing as partners that raises the eye-brow. African Traditional Religion seems to be the underdog in this exercise. It is the position of this paper that ATR should be recognised in this debate-cum-dialogue because it has a lot to offer to humanity, irrespective of its greatest century-long hinderance as an oral religion; the century-long misrepresentation by biased ethnologists and anthropologists, and colonialists. It is rich, not only in ethical values, but also in theological and moral standards. It is a great honour to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) for the attention it gave to dialogue between the Catholic Church and other non-Christian religions. In Africa, Christianity and Islam are challenged by *Nostra Aetate* and other post-Vatican II documents to enter into profound dialogue with African Traditional Religions and cultures. This paper views the various stages of this challenge, and provides a post-Vatican II theological solution to some of these problems. There is an acknowledgement of difficulties, but with a belief in a positive result, especially with a consistent effort to sustain dialogue by all the partners involved.

Introduction

In the epilogue to his book, "Africa Explored" (1982)[1] Christopher Hibbert gives a sharp summary of what any interested and curious reader of the continent should know about the people of Africa in general. It is both natural and artificial, awe-inspiring and sometimes discouraging. It is natural because of the truth of the state of the people before the contact with Arabian, European commercial and religious influences on them; and artificial, because

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of the several identities, which were imposed on the life of the people, most of which facilitated division and conflict. It is also awe-inspiring because of the rapid turn of events and the civilization; and discouraging because of the unfolding damages caused on the psyche of the people, which might remain for centuries to come.

Thus, an ethnological, anthropological, sociological, theological, or even a religious study of Africa in general raises problems of unusual challenge, as well as engendering enormous enthusiasm. Underlying such an enthusiasm is a curiosity that eventually questions the presence of Islam and Christianity in Africa, especially in their encounter with African traditional religion, as well as their relevance - general and particular - for these varied and multicultural people. This special interest and perplexity about Africa is because "in contrast to regions which man has occupied for only a few thousand years, Africa offers the fascination of a continent inhabited, in all probability, from the very dawn of culture history, a continent in which diverse races have interacted in complex ways for millennia and in which survivals of extremely archaic cultural adjustments still emerge here and there only slightly masked by subsequent developments" (Murdock, G.P. 1959:vii; Hamilton et al 1993; Lincoln, B. 1987:132-156; Malan, J. 1993:205-208)[2].

That is why our fascination in this article will be mainly interdisciplinary in order to survey the various challenges facing interreligious relationships between the three main religions that pervade the continent of Africa today. This is because their presence has not only helped to shape the history of this extraordinary continent in the last few centuries, but also still questions the reason for their continued co-existence, especially from the point of view of mutual dialogue.

Since many scholars have already dwelt on some obvious discussions of the relationship, the author is poised to provide a *food-for-thought* that would help us re-explore the map of Africa in the context of the challenge of mutual dialogue between Christianity, African traditional religion, and Islam. In the end, it is argued that increased education and literacy in the whole of Africa is a major step towards enhancing dialogue between the trio of Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions.

The Challenge of Paleontological evidence and misconceptions

Before one can speak of dialogue between Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) – sometimes presented in a way that portrays ATR like a newcomer into the world map of religions - it is proper to ask some paleontological questions regarding Africa. This is because from the moment a particular people started their own history, there is always some thing of a religious history associated with them as well. Thus, any talk about dialoguing with them must have to put into consideration such a religious starting point, otherwise the story would not be complete. This is what one observes in a few presentation of ATR in dialogue with other religions, especially Christianity and Islam. It is therefore proper to correct the ordinary misconception attached to the word, 'traditional' in relation to African Traditional Religions – as something confined to the past and outdated. On the contrary, African religion is still current and dynamic. It is also not pagan, idolatrous, fetish, heathen, and simply juju. It is neither concerned with a God who is both *deus remotus* and

deus absconditus[3]. Even Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), the great Pontiff who promoted and encouraged the values of African Traditional Religions and cultures emphasised that it is not just an archaic religion of primitive people, but a religion of a living people. In his address to followers of African Traditional Religion on February 4, 1993 in Benin Republic, Pope John Paul II said, "…You have a strong attachment to the traditions handed on by your ancestors. It is legitimate to be grateful to your fore-bearers who passed on this sense of the sacred, belief in a single God who is good, a sense of celebration, esteem for the moral life and for harmony in society"[4]. He even encouraged that "suitable course in African traditional religion should be given in houses of formation of priests and religious"[5]. One, therefore, notices the apparent benefits that could come to the Church and whole human race by engaging in a prudent and respectful dialogue with African traditional religion.

Recoursing to paleontological searches and discoveries again for some evidence, we realise that the earliest signs of human existence could be traced to Africa since 25 million years ago. Limestone deposits have proved to be the greatest and ideal sites for the preservation of this material. A further evidence is the presence of a primate in the *hominid* line of descent, popularly called the *Ramapithecus* traceable to Eastern Africa 14 million years ago (See Hertslet, 1896; Fage, J.D., 1978:3; Murdock, G.P., 1959; Middleton, J. & Rassam, A. (eds.) 1995, etc). Earlier proves of human existence have also been traced to Ethiopia – perhaps, earlier than the evidence found in East Africa. J.D. Fage supports this position by stating that the earliest known evidence anywhere in the world for the existence of man and the emergence of human society comes from East and North-East Africa, from a series of discoveries that stem from Dr. Louis Leakey's pioneer excavations at Olduvai Gorge in Northern Tanzania, and the later findings by Lake Rudolf in Kenya and the River Omo in Ethiopia have taken the story of human evolution in Africa even further into the past[6]. There are, however, complexities in these studies, which are manifested variously – from difficulties encountered in acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the peoples and cultures involved to the awareness of the virtual absence of reliable guides to a preliminary and necessary orientation to their religious history. In fact, George P. Murdock notes that with rare exceptions, general works are incomplete in geographic scope, naïve in theoretical perspective, and inaccurate in factual detail. Moreover, historical reconstructions reflect racial biases, outmoded concepts of the mechanics of diffusion, and undisciplined imagination. There are also noticeable problems of impressionistic and technically defective classifications of cultures, religious belief and of languages. Not to be left out is the fact that regional summaries and analyses are fewer and less satisfactory than for most comparable ethnographic areas[7]. For instance, John Middleton argues that "previous work in this field has shown the difficulties and contradictions that result from using the concept of "race", and it is clear that this criterion does not contribute to an understanding of the cultures, (religious beliefs and history) and identities of African societies"[8]. He however agrees with other views that the peoples of Africa could be classified according to several criteria, and without doubt,

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the oldest of which is race: the Negroid race, which is the most numerous; the members of the Caucasoid race, mainly in northern and southern Africa; the Mongloid race, in Madagascar; and by the so-called Bushmanoid and Pygmoid races or sub-races[9]. The implication of these classifications is the acceptance of some kind of religious history for the various races involved, even if there were no formal and written materials to confirm them.

The Challenge of Religious Myths and Oral Traditions

It has been often emphasised that the original linguistic families in Africa were influenced greatly by the invading Arabic and Christian influences from the West. The same experience was also witnessed in the realm of belief, worship, and mode of transcendental relationship with the supernatural world. Before the advent of Islam and Christianity, there was a huge heritage of African myths and legends, although they may have contained only a sparse account about the creation of the world by a Supreme Deity. In the context of their development and civilization, such myths and legends expressing their belief in God could be said to be adequate. Such myths and legends contain stories about lesser divinities and spirits who represent what is sometimes erroneously referred to as 'the withdrawn high god', deus otiosus. Such myths "record the founding charters and accounts of the primordial activities of a society's gods. They also contain information about the people's beliefs regarding the nature and purpose of human existence and the principles underlying relationships among humans, the divinities, and other creatures"[10]. It was a popular belief that after creating the world of the living, the high god withdrew to the outer reaches of the universe, handing over to lesser divinities the responsibility for ordering the daily lives of the people, and supernaturally validating the legitimacy of the founding ancestors' authority. This accounts for one of the reasons why the realms of myths is usually the preserve of priests and initiates of the cults to which they are attached. They are thus performed to a large extent on cultic occasions. They could be in prose, and without a fixed form[11]. The important function assigned to the ancestors is seen in the high regard given to them by the living members of such families or communities. Actually, they are considered to be 'living' members of the families and communities from which they had been physically separated. To immortalise their relationship to these families and societies their deeds are believed to have been recorded in myths, providing guidelines for the social behaviour of the living. Myths in their own turn provide supernatural explanations for the present arrangement of the world, both in historical time and territorial space. The Igbo of the South-East Nigeria, for instance, have an elaborate myth relating to the creation of the world. The Yoruba[12] also have their myths and legends regarding the Supreme Being, the ancestor-relationship to families, life-after death, etc. According to Susanna Rasmussen therefore, "despite African cultural diversity and the need for caution against over-generalizing about continental Africa, there are some widespread motifs or common themes in many African myths and cosmologies: they concern deities; the creation of the universe, the origin of humans, human institutions, and values; the coming of death; animals; heroes and leaders; and powerful mediating figures associated with reproduction, sacred power, and conversion of natural into cultural substances. African

myths and cosmological beliefs may be oral; carved or wood, clay, ivory, or stone; or acted in dance"[13].

In fact, one could rightly say that myths and legends are symbols of African religiosity, which the advent of Islam and Christianity have not been able to eradicate or even replace completely, but which has become necessary to be recognised in the abiding quest for dialogue between the three religions in the African continent. Allen F. Roberts expresses it vividly, thus: "Symbols are the stuff of culture, the agreements and points of contention as to what stands for what, that constitute a group's dynamic world-view. Symbols allow people to communicate with each other, especially concerning those aspects of life that are embarrassing, threatening, or difficult to address directly, including ineffable and invisible spiritual entities. Symbols are the basis of any religious, political, or economic understanding…"[14].

One can appreciate, therefore, the basic argument posited earlier that African belief system with myths before the advent of Islam and Christianity does not justify the often wrong consideration of the same religion, especially by outsiders as "primitive", filled with "jujus" and witchcraft. It is not based on emotional display beyond the comprehension of non-Africans, as was also negatively portrayed by some scholars. For John Middleton, "both are racist views" because "the reality is quite different"[15]. African Traditional Religion was and is still a reality (for those who still profess it), which recognizes the existence of a Supreme Divinity or Creator God. A strong proof lies in the presence of mystical and living intermediaries. Mystical intermediaries include various spirits and ancestors, to whom sacrifice and prayer are typically offered in response to ill-health, lack of success, or uncertainty of role. Another means of contact between the living and the mystical agents is possession. Living intermediaries in their own turn include priests, diviners, and prophets – all hailed to possess divine knowledge[16].

The Challenge of Common Neighbourhood with Common values – basis for renewed dialogue

African countries are closely intertwined. For instance, Nigeria is bordered by Niger in the north, Lake Chad on the northeast, Cameroun on the east, Benin on the west, as well as facing the Bight of Benin (southwest) and the Bight of the defunct Biafra or Gulf of Guinea (southeast). The West African seacoast, from the Bight of Benin in Eastern Nigeria to the nation-state of Senegal demarcates the Guinea Coast culture area. This region extends west to east and encompasses the forested belt, but as it moves toward the western Sudan the terrain becomes savanna, changing beyond that to desert. The African Diaspora to the New World originated in the Guinea Coast culture area, primarily from the modern nation-states of Senegal, Bénin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Some representative peoples of the area are the Kru, Yoruba, Malinke, Asante, Ga, Mende, and the Creoles and Americo-Liberians in Sierra Leone and Liberia, respectively. The influence of the Western Sudan culture is felt enormously in the north of the Guinea Coast area which encompasses most of francophone Africa, and includes the northern territories of Ghana and Nigeria inhabited by

the Konkomba and the pastoral Fulani (Fulbe) and agricultural Hausa, respectively[17]. One cannot overlook the importance of the Western Sudan for many centuries, as an important area for trans-Saharan trade routes that extended beyond the Atlas Mountains in Morocco to the Mediterranean seacoast. Urban Centres also emerged here, such as the ancient Timbuktu, which became great Islamic seats of learning. Today, these historical and religious facts cannot be overlooked in the quest of mutual dialogue between Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions. Each had influenced the other in one way or the other.

A typical example of the need for mutual dialogue between the various religions co-existing in Africa could be shown by a relevant data presented by The World Factbook 2002[18] about Nigeria alone, showing its diversity and religious belief. Nigeria has three major tribes - Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), and Igbo (18%), as well as others like Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), Tiv (2.5%), etc. The major religions include Islam (50%), Christianity (40%), and African Indigenous beliefs (10%). To underline the importance of religion in their lives, T.L.Gall writes, "Nigerians widely hold to their traditional African religious beliefs in addition to subscribing to various branches of Islam and Christianity. Muslims now constitute 45% of the population, (and) currently, Protestants account for 26.35%, Catholics 12.1%, and African Christian 10.6% of the population"[19]. The United Nations' figures for 1993 show that whereas Muslims account for 46% of the population, Christians constitute 52%, a sign that both religions are growing fast within the continent. In other words, the rate of demographic and political importance of the three mentioned religions in Africa necessitates urgent and continuous interreligious dialogue, at least for the peace and progress of the continent. The time for *simple tolerance* for other religions has past. They should dialogue, as already mentioned, like equal partners. There are in fact, four main situations in the demographic categorisation of these religious groups: a) in some countries, Muslims are a large majority; b) in some others, Christians form the majority; c) in some countries, Muslims and Christians are almost equal in distribution; while d) in some countries, modern forms of ATRs are also growing rapidly. In group A, countries such as Sudan (71% Muslims, 7% Christians), Senegal (85% Muslims, 5% Christians), Mali (64% Muslims, 5% Christians) experience a high Muslim majority. In group B, Christians lead in such countries as Zaire (60% Christians, 1% Muslims), Burundi (70% Christians, 1% Muslims), Uganda (66% Christians, 8% Muslims), Kenya (68% Christians, 6% Muslims), Cameroon (35% Christians, 8% Muslims) and Ghana (43% Christians, 13% Muslims). In group C, both Christians and Muslims form a significant majority of the population: Nigeria (Christians 40%, Muslims 45%, although the figure is still highly debatable and varies according to agencies as stated above), Tanzania (30% Muslims, Christians 35%), Ivory Coast (40% Muslims, Christians 15%)[20]. Although these figures were given towards the end of the last century, the relationship has not much changed. What needs drastic attention is not so much demographic growth, but dialogical attention. In group D, the ATRs[21] have been growing rapidly since 1950. The same rapid growth is also witnessed among the African Independent Churches (at least 7,000 of them, with almost 130,000,000 members as at 2000.

According to A.H. Anderson, "AICs are undoubtedly a major force in African Christianity today, one manifestation of the shifting of the centre of gravity of Christianity in the twentieth Century from the North to the South. In most countries south of the Sahara, one cannot engage in Christian Work without encountering this vast phenomenon"[22].

The Challenge of Common Language Families and Legacy of Colonialism

Considering the region of the sub-Sahara, it should be noted that their languages reflect their diversity of cultures and societies. It is even speculated that the number of distinct languages exceeds eight hundred, out of the nearly 2,500 languages and dialects existent throughout Africa[23]. In fact, all of the African nation-states are multilingual with the exception of Somalia, which still has dialectical differences in its one language. It is a diversity, which has greatly inhibited the development of any indigenous African language as a *lingua franca* for the whole of the sub-Saharan Africa. Swahili, which could have stood as the closest example to this unity, is a hybrid language, exhibiting borrowings from coastal Bantu, Arabic, and Persian, and widely spoken along the eastern African coast and as far inland as Zaire. The inadequacy of Swahili as a possible unifying language is proved by the fact that it is virtually non-existent in the areas on the Niger Bend. Thus, the language map of sub-Saharan Africa includes four major families, which appear to have no common origin: *Afro-Asiatic* (predominant in the East African Horn, characterized phonetically by the absence of tone, a feature common in other African languages) , *Niger-Congo* (tonal languages and large language family in sub-Saharan Africa are found farther west, and south to Cape Province in South Africa), *Nilo-Saharan* (Sudanic), and *Khoisan*. The Benue-Niger sub-stock of the Niger-Congo family contains the Bantu languages, including Swahili. Of the Nilo-Saharan languages, the most varied and widespread are those of the Chari-Nile region. The Saharan group is spoken in Nigeria, Chad, and the Sudan, and Koma around the Ethiopian-Sudan border. Bantu languages Zulu and Xhosa, spoken in South Africa, have borrowed click sounds from Khoisan[24]. Sandawe and Hadza, spoken in Tanzania, represent two branches of Khoisan. These are factors that do not really make any intended mutual dialogue between the different peoples practising various religions – Islam, Christianity, and ATR very rosy.

It is important to note that early European contact with sub-Saharan Africa, which predates the colonial era, is mostly evidenced in the Afro-Asiatic family of languages. Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia and Eritrea show derivations from ancient Akkadian, Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic. They are also found to be closely related to the southern Arabic languages of Sabaean and Minaean, introduced in the Horn of Africa before the beginning of the Christian era. Evidences of Islamic invasions of the early Middle Ages also carried classical Arabic across North Africa and up the Nile Valley into the Sudan. A further linguistic influence occurred with the European colonization in sub-Saharan Africa which intensified linguistic borrowings between African language families and gave rise to pidgin forms of speech (spoken in the Niger Delta of Nigeria), such as the Creole spoken in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau (along the west African coasts), etc . Another great legacy of colonialism is the use by Africans of English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish as auxiliary languages for communication and formal education that cut across ethnic and nation-state

boundaries. The Kanuri developed a powerful state at the Sudanese terminus of the major trans-Saharan trade route through the Bilma oasis to Libya. The Kanuri have been Muslims since the 11th century and practise the Malikite code of Islamic law.

Islam and Christianity have wielded great influence among the Yoruba in the sub-Saharan Africa since centuries. In fact, it is said that the population of Christians and Muslims in this region share an equal proportion. The influence of these world religions has not however diminished the respect given to ancient religious practices. The three religions enjoy simultaneous patronage. For instance, the great Yoruba pantheons of deities still portray a wide range of cults and occultic practices. Rituals have great bearing on life cycle, ecology and civic calendar. They are meant to appease or gain favours from the gods.

The earth goddess, *Ala*, had an important place in the traditional Igbo religion, and her priests in many communities had judicial and political functions. The eldest male descendant of the founder of the village served as its ritual and political head in conjunction with a council of elders or of certain title holders. Before the advent of colonial administration, members of the group shared a common tutelary deity, and ancestral cults that supported a tradition of descent from a common ancestor or group of ancestors[25]. There was a belief in ancestors who protect their living descendants. Revelation of the will of the deities was sought by divination and oracles. The Arochukwu Oracles played a very important role in this aspect and in the slave trade with the European merchants[26]. Although many Igbo are presently Christians, there is a lot evidence that belief in/worship of traditional gods remain preponderant. In the light of this situation, there is an increasing need for dialogue between both religions in the regions, including the gradually thriving Islam in their midst.

Factors impeding mutual dialogue
1. **The Challenge of Restricted European and Arabian cultural influences**
Generally speaking, Africa has a rich and varied cultural heritage, deriving from its indigenous ethnic elements as well as from Arabic (Islamic) and western European (Christian) cultural influences, which came later. The failure of the European traders and first Christian missionaries to make considerable impact on the coastal areas pre-occupied the interests of the new missionary movement in the nineteenth century, such that they saw it as a part of a general failure in Africa. Examples of previous failures included that in the Kingdom of the Kongo, and in North Africa where Christianity flowered and withered giving way to Islam till this day. The new Christian missionaries therefore saw and set for themselves a mission – the re-establishment of Christianity in Africa and the need to ensure its permanence in the face of Muslim spread and the tenacity of African Traditional Religion. Today, one can say that whereas they succeeded to a large extent in upsetting the strongholds of traditional religion, the growth of Islam has remained undisturbed.

It is like Islam and Christianity did succeed in uprooting traditional religion and culture, and arrived at a common compromise of unending religious conflicts and chaos. It might not be correct to conclude on this note. Rather, one may argue that many fanatics on both sides of religious belief have presented negative images or pictures of Islam and Christianity to the people of Africa, such that so many Africans even question themselves on

the relevance of both religions in their midst when they could comfortably continue with their original traditional worship. These serious questions should not blind any one from seeing what is really true in the teachings of Christianity and Islam as revealed religions. Perhaps, there is need for deepened understanding of what these religions convey in their essential teachings as revealed and Abrahamic religions.

2. Mutual Prejudices among the religions

It is clear today that African traditional religion and culture can no longer be ignored in religious discussions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Alyward Shorter, for instance, "now, it is realized that the concepts and practices of ATR's have survived the onslaught (of Christianisation and Islamisation) and that they are entrenched in various forms of Christian (and Muslim) syncretism"[27]. The initial feelings of Christian and Muslim superior monotheism expressed in relation to the so-called primitive animism and polytheism can no longer be allowed to block mutual dialogue and interaction. No effective dialogue between the three religions can survive in a continued description of African traditional religionists as pagan, heathen, idolatrous, barbaric, superstitious, and fetish. The time is, indeed, ripe for the adherents of ATRS to describe themselves, apart from the impression given about them by sometimes biased and foreign Christian/Muslim scholars. African traditional religions and culture should no longer be associated with the so-called colonial defeat of the past, economic weakness, or superior Arabic culture. It has to be clear that such an impression of Africa in general was closely associated with colonialisation of Africa and slave trade.

Real dialogue between the three religions cannot succeed in further atmosphere of disdain for one another. For instance, Christianity can no longer continue to express itself as the religion that can save the Africans from the clutches of Islam. Even African Christians may not look down on Muslims because of the prestige associated with European colonialism and the political/economic power associated with it. The sudden economic power associated with Arabic countries and Oil (that is, the rise of Islamic economic power in the 1970's), who are mostly Muslims can also not be used to perpetuate neo-Jihadism. None of these religiously misrepresented 'egos' can serve Africa well. They would rather be sources of threat and fear, which militate against mutual co-existence and dialogue. Muslims should also drop the impression that, being Muslims, they are more African than Christians. Biblically, one of the earliest conversions (long before the birth of Islam) recorded was that of the Ethiopian Eunuch
(cf. Acts 8:26-40). In other words, Africans have also been century-long Christians before the first entrance of Islam into African soil. To succeed in dialogue with African Traditional Religion, Muslims and Christians alike should abandon the negative attitudes of ignorance and aggression towards it. Moreover, recent development and challenges demand that emerging African scholars of its traditional religion should stop being merely polemical in their approach to issues concerning Africa and its religious history, as well as its relationship to other religions. Since, it is a fact that Islam and Christianity are no longer 'foreign' religions on the continent and psyche of Africa, irrespective earlier prejudices, ATR must dialogue with them in a spirit of openness and objectivity.

3. Education and rate of illiteracy

There might be a strong role played by other factors of underdevelopment, especially high level of illiteracy and poor education. To speak of dialogue, one has to take into consideration the degree of enlightenment of the persons and groups involved, especially at the grass-root level, to be able to draw a possible conclusion. For instance, Nigeria, which is the most populated in black Africa, with a considerable percentage of followers of the three religions under consideration, is not particularly wonderful in her rate of literacy, when we consider her over all population of more than 125million people. This situation invariably affects the understanding of the people in their attitude to religions and religious toleration of others. The UNESCO statistical study of illiteracy in 1999, for instance, presents the following figure for Nigeria (1980-2000)[28]:

Table 1: Illiteracy rate and population rate (1980-2000)

Year	Population aged 15 years and over						Population aged 15 to 24 years					
	Illiterate rate			Illiterate population			Illiteracy rate			Illiterate population		
	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F
1980	67.0	55.3	78.2	23671	9541	14129	44.7	32.4	57.0	5421	1951	3469
1985	59.1	47.6	70.1	24290	9577	14713	35.0	25.1	44.8	5150	1841	3309
1990	51.2	40.5	61.5	24339	9426	14912	26.3	19.1	33.4	4457	1616	2841
1995	43.5	33.9	52.7	23834	9110	14724	18.8	14.2	23.4	3615	1360	2255
2000	35.9	27.7	43.8	22803	8639	14163	13.0	10.3	15.6	2936	1168	1767

In another study, edited by Barry Turner and contained in **The Statesman's Yearbook** for 2002, the following statistics are made available on Education: "the adult literacy rate was 61.1% in 1998 (70.1% among males and 52.2% among females). Under the new Universal Basic Education scheme it was hoped that this figure would rise to 70% by 2003. In that plan, free and compulsory education would be provided for all children aged between 6 and 15 under the terms of the scheme.

4. The Menace of Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism of any sort is an aberration of the particular faith it is claiming to promote. It is a distortion of the true tenets of such a religion. This is an important point, which its protagonists have to put into consideration, especially in the excessive use of inflammatory languages and expression in the promotion of religious belief. It is a common truth that some Muslims, Christians, members of the fast growing African Independent Churches, and African traditional religious worshippers enter into dialogue with aggressiveness and mutual blame, as well as condemnation of one another. It is no secret, for instance, that some fundamentalist Muslims and over-zealous members of the AICs blame Christians for all the misfortune and miseries that have befallen Africa. Such a confrontational attitude may make the latter develop an attitude of defensiveness and fear that cannot help dialogue to grow. That is why I consider the dialogical disposition of the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians, created in Accra, Ghana in 1977, as a sub-section of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) formed in 1976 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, a welcome development. As already mentioned, the

African Synod of Catholic Bishops, held in Rome in 1994 is another important step towards making dialogue a reality between Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions in Africa. For instance, a christocentric view of dialogue was highlighted when they stated in the *Lineamenta* of the African Synod, thus, "As Christians, we can speak of God's activity in other religious traditions without reference to Christ as the foundation and norm of the revelation of who God is" [29]. One could, therefore, agree with some several African and Western scholars in their ATRs conception of God as One Creator, One Supreme God, expressed with different names in different ethnic groups[30].

Factors Favourable For Mutual Dialogue Between ATR, Islam And Christianity

The trialogue of African Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity has become necessary and needs certain factors to live together in a spirit of encounter and commitment. The first factor favourable to dialogue is *respect (Pignedoli, S*. 1995:1; Ubaka, C. 2003:87; Isizoh, C.D. 2011:51). Respect is an attitude of acceptance and understanding for the other irrespective of difference of opinion, applied in order to achieve mutual harmony among the different religions involved in the dialogue and for the society at large. Another important factor needed for the promotion and success of interreligious dialogue, especially between the three religious groups mentioned is the cultivation of the attitude of conviction with regard to the value of interreligious dialogue. In fact, anyone who is not convinced about the relevance of interreligious dialogue should not be involved in it because the result would be unfavourable for the entire society. *Tolerance and understanding* are closely related to the attitude of respect, which is ultimately rooted in the spirit of love and concern for the feeling of the other participant in the dialogical encounter (Nwanaju, I.U. 2004:534; 2007; 2009; 2010). Another important factor connected to the aforementioned ones like a chain is the spirit of openness and honesty. Obviously, to achieve a favourable result in the promotion of dialogue, one needs them in order to avoid the dangers of prejudice and bias in relating to members of other religions. This means that humility, patience, sincerity, honesty, and perseverance are favourable factors leading to goal-oriented dialogue. Another important factor that would favour and enhance dialogue as equal partners is the improvement of the literacy level in our various African societies.

These factors bring to light the wonderful insight made by the Vatican Council II between 1962 and 1965 when it convened an Ecumenical Council, whose contributions in the area of dialogue which have enhanced the prospects of interreligious dialogue between the world major religions, including the three under consideration in this paper.   In fact, with the Second Vatican document, **Nostra Aetate**, one has seen a new impetus to talk about a dynamic and positive interaction and dialogue between Christianity and other religions. Dialogue between religions is not only obligatory because all men and women form but one community (cf Acts 17:26), but also because they all share a common destiny, namely God (cf. Wisdom 8:1; Acts 14:17; Romans 2:6-7; 1Tm 2:4), although different people look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence (NA1). In Africa, the document would be most relevant for a triangular dialogue between Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions, bearing in mind the Council Fathers' declaration that

the 'Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions'[31]. Shortly before the publication of Nostra Aetate, Pope Paul VI had urged in his first great encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*[32], on the need for dialogue, especially with the followers of the great religions of Africa and Asia. The relevance of such a dialogue is seen in the fact that through dialogue, "the Church has something to say; … a message to deliver; … (and) a communication to offer"[33]. In fact, the Church should enter into dialogue with the world in which she exists and labours.

Some other documents of the Second Vatican Council – *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Ad Gentes* also highlighted the importance of dialogue in the relationship with other religions, especially in the modern world. In Lumen Gentium (nn.16-17), for instance, there is a recognition of the possibility of salvation for other believers who are non-Christians. In fact, "the plan of salvation includes those also who acknowledge the Creator…with us, adore the one and merciful God who will judge mankind on the last day". It is really encouraging to read these lines that speak of people who 'seek God with a sincere heart', though not belonging formally to the Christian fold. The Council Fathers encouraged pastorally in Gaudium et Spes (GS) what they stated about the salvation of all sincere worshippers of God in Lumen Gentium. In GS, there is need for dialogue among all believers of different religions – a dialogue, which as a matter of fact, has its basis in the mutual respect they owe to one another in their daily interactions a s human beings and co-pilgrims on earth. This is where genuine sympathy and love play a great role in human relations and understanding.

Some critics of the various efforts to enter into a mutual dialogue between Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions argue that African traditional religions and believers are not specifically mentioned in the *Magna Carta*, *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council. Reading the document peripherally, it is true, but a close look into the shortest document of the council proves them wrong as well. First, the document constantly speaks of people of other religions, of all men (understood as humanity), etc. The document provided impetus for dialogue and so did not just solve all the problems of interreligious dialogue. Pope Paul VI's special visit to Africa in 1969 and his encyclical, *Africae Terrarum (AT)* still point to the seriousness with which Nostra Aetate was implemented immediately after the Second Vatican Council. In AT, Paul VI emphasised strongly the need to pay attention to the moral and religious values of ancient African religious cultures. He, not only corrected the wrongful categorisation of African traditional religions and believers as 'animism' and 'animists', but also went further to recognise the constant and general foundation of African tradition as a spiritual view of life. The idea of God, which forms the most important element in her spiritual concept provides a very good starting point for dialogue between her and the other religions – Christianity and Islam. Although this is a concept that is more perceived and lived than analysed among the African traditional believers, the fact remains that the presence of God permeates African life – as the presence of a higher being, personal and mysterious. God is not only *Omnipotent*, He is also invoked as Father. He is *Abba*; He is *Allah*. Like the other religions, prayers are made to God, although sometimes more spontaneous and oral than formal written texts. He is offered

sacrifices of the first fruits of the earth. It is a known fact that African religion and culture lays a great emphasis on the family as well as respect for human life, aberrations notwithstanding. The family forms the nucleus of human respect and hospitality. In relation to the African emphasis on community, one could argue that it is the microcosm of the fundamental assumption of Nostra Aetate that 'all men but form one community', thus providing a basis for mutual dialogue.

The African person, as Pope John Paul II told an *ad Limina* visit of Kenyan Bishops, provides a strong basis for communicating Christ to the people. He, therefore, encouraged them to make the Gospel incarnate in the lives and culture of the people of Africa. It is clear from the papal pronouncement s of John Paul II about religious dialogues with African traditional religions and cultures that he made us realise that the correct promotion of Inculturation in Africa is a sincere reflection of the Incarnation of the Word (Jn 1:1, 14). To do so is to allow the culture to be transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, thus, bringing forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration, and thought. On the other hand, due respect, preservation, and fostering of the particular values and riches of the African cultural heritage would lead to a better understanding of the mystery of Christ, the son of God and second Person of the Divine Trinity (cf. Mk1:11; 8:9; 9:8; 15:39).

If one should ask me immediately what the benefit of such a dialogue with African traditional religions and cultures would be for the Catholic Church and the whole of humanity, I would answer that it would help, not only to protect Catholics from negative influences which may condition the lives of so many people, but also help to foster the assimilation of positive values such as belief in a supreme being, who is eternal, creator, provident and just judge. These are also values, which are already harmonised with the content of the faith. It is also in this sense that the efforts of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Religious, especially under Cardinal Francis Arinze (1985-2002) should be commended for the promotion of dialogue with African traditional religions, among others. For him, dialogue should help to create an atmosphere of freedom, openness, and collaborative listening.

This kind of atmosphere creates the forum for genuine exchange of ideas and viewpoints, especially as argued for during the 1994 Special Synod of Bishops for Africa. To keep in balance in the dialogue with African traditional religions, they suggested the incorporation of both *dialogue ad extra* (dialogue with followers of ATR) and *dialogue ad intra* (dialogue with those who are now Christians but who would want to retain some or all of the precious values from African traditional religion and culture). Whereas the Synod Fathers referred to the former as "corporate personalities and wise thinkers" (Message, no.21), the latter referred to the domain of Inculturation, whereby the need for highlighting its spiritual dimension, theological, liturgical, catechetical, pastoral, juridical, and communications aspects are emphasised (Message, no.18).

But these noble aspirations are not as easy as imagined or proposed. Obstacles abound – the lack of proper readiness by the first and second generation of African Christians, fear of tampering with the unity of the Church, uncertainty of knowing the limits of the dialogue and Inculturation, etc. It is only honest on our part to acknowledge that the type of Catechisation brought by the early/first Christian missionaries to the majority of people in Africa made them see everything about African traditional religion and culture as negative. Even meaningful names given at birth were associated with paganism. Most of the

very first Christians from Africa trained in the European and Western system of education gave credence to this kind of negative interpretation, which did not help the Christian understanding of African traditional religion for so many decades. On the other hand, those who remained core traditional worshippers suspect the Africans who received European education and term them as unable to be authentic followers of African traditional religion and culture. Thus, dialogue is greatly hampered. On the part of many Church leaders in Africa, there is a pendulum of uncertainty, if not of fear of keeping the correct balance between the quest for Inculturation (and the demand for its compatibility with the Christian message) and communion with the Universal Church of Rome. In fact, they do not know how to interpret and implement *Ecclesia in Africa, no.62* adequately. We all know how important offspring is to an African family or couple. Should a childless couple who really wants a child go for a child through a Concubinage or through a lawful acceptance of a second woman into the family? The same issue concerns the importance attached to a male issue, especially when it concerns the continuation of the lineage. It calls for an honest answer from the Church, both locally in Africa and at the universal level. Thirdly, the encouragement of studies in Catholic Universities and Institutes with regard to veneration of ancestors and spirit-world is not yet clearly defined. The limits are not very clear. As a result, many Episcopal Conferences in Africa are not really in the position to be definitive about a concrete solution. There is the problem of how the Church in Africa can reconcile the Christian distinction between Body and Soul and the seeming wholistic approach of the human person by traditional religion.

Recommendations For The Future Dialogue Between ATR, Islam, And Christianity

The 21st century has ushered in a new mode of relationship in the world, and with it, mankind has also witnessed a tremendous shift in the manner of interacting with each other at all levels, including religion. Therefore, it would be recommendable for the three religions, African Traditional Religions, Christianity, and Islam to borrow a new leaf from this dynamic thrust in dialogical encounter in order to uplift adherents and non-adherents spiritually and morally.

To achieve this feat of making positive impact on the society through sincere dialogue with each other, it is advisable that their meeting with each other be transformed into an "encounter", which entails deep-rooted commitment and engagement to transform the face of the earth.

To transform the face of the earth through objective relationships and dedicated service to humanity, there is need to avoid and even condemn where it occurs, prejudice and bias – negative qualities that have hampered the required open-mindedness necessary for successful dialogue.

To eliminate, or even minimize the dangers posed by prejudice and close-mindedness in dialogue among the three religions, the participants should endeavour to know and be convinced of their own respective religious beliefs. This is because it has been observed that so many people, even experts in religions, have entered interreligious dialogue simple from a

speculative point of view, without much conviction and deep-rootedness in their own particular religions.

Is should be known that the conviction demanded in one's own religious background is not to be equated with fundamentalism, extremism, or undue radicalism in religious expressions and practices. This is because they would have a negative impact on the society, such as leading to violence, conflicts, and crises of various sorts. We are not unaware of such experiences all over the world. Unfortunately, the activities of some religious bigots have led to the undue categorization of so many innocent and pious people as "terrorists".

However, it is the sincere recommendation of the author that the words, 'terrorism', 'fundamentalism', 'extremism' should be qualified in their use because it would hurt, if not discourage so many people in their effort achieve some religious and spiritual perfection.

It is recommended that both Christian and Islamic scholars should work very hard to disabuse the minds of people about the genuine practices of some members of the African Traditional Religions by using positive terminologies to describe them. For instance, they should not be regarded as mere animists, superstitious, or non-believers. Perhaps, one should strive to explain the differences in their use of expressions.

But such a call for positive understanding among the different religions should not tantamount to relativising the values of the different religious beliefs because each has something unique about it, which may not be compromised.

It is recommended that dialogue between the three religions should be made a regular exercise whereby all of them play the "host" in the sense of equal participation and active contribution to issues being discussed. Communiqués can also be issued to inform people about the existence of such an encounter.

Conclusion
It has been seen from the foregoing discussion in the paper that religious dialogue, like other human projects is a challenge, and every challenge properly speaking, remains a life-long issue. That is why the author does not pretend to offer all the solutions to the challenges involved, which African Traditional Religions and Cultures pose to Christianity and Islam in the indispensable task of dialoguing with her. To make progress in mutual dialogue, misconceptions – based on ethnology, for instance, have to be overcome; there has to be dialogue as equal partners, as well as openness to the essential differences between them. The other essential qualities of humility, conviction, dedication, etc are needed for a successful dialogue of the three religions. It has, however, unfortunate that illiteracy has continued to hamper interreligious dialogue in Africa. Therefore, the need for the public and private sectors to invest more than they have done until now in the education of people in the continent, especially children and young ones. Above all, however, there has to be a recognition of their profession of a Creator-God or Allah, loving, and just by all the participants in dialogue. As a matter of fact, all of us should be involved in making this feat a reality, bearing in mind that in the long run, our destiny and salvation depends on him through our cooperation. It is the proposition of the author that everyone should strive to

overcome the age-long blame on colonialism and European influence as retarding factors in recognizing the importance of African Religions, Values, and Cultures. The time has come for a new leaf of dynamism to be added to the interaction of the three major religions in the African Continent, especially Nigeria, thus: African Traditional Religions, Islam, and Christianity.

Endnotes
1.   Hibbert, C., **(**1982) *Africa Explored: Europeans in the Dark Continent, 1769-1889*,
  London: Penguin Books.
1.   Murdock, G.P., (1959:vii). *Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., See also Hamilton, Carolyn, and John Wright, "The Beginnings of Zulu Identity", in *Indicator South Africa* 10, no.3 (1993); Lincoln, B., "Ritual, Rebellion, Resistance: Once More the Swazi Ncwala", in *Man*, 22, no.1 (1987), pp.132-156; Malan, Johan, "The Foundations of Ethnicity and Some of Its Current Ramifications in Namibia", in *Africa Insight* 23 (1993), pp.205-208.
2.   Cf. Smith, S.E., *African Ideas of God*, London, 1950, p.755.
3.   Address to Followers of traditional religion by Pope John Paul II on February 4, 1993 in Benin Republic.
4.   *Ibid*.,
5.   Fage, J.D., *A History of Africa*, London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd, 1978, p.3.
6.   In listing some of the ethnological problems in the accurate study of Africa, Murdock however made some relevant exceptions with regard to a few authors: Hermann Baumann, who, in "Völkerkunde von Afrika", with R. Thurnwald and D. Westermann as coauthors, has made an invaluable scholarly contribution in sifting and organizing the descriptive data on the peoples of Negro Africa; Daryll Forde, whose monumental editorial enterprise, the "Ethnographic Survey of Africa", has assembled and summarized masses of material, often from scattered, inaccessible, and unpublished sources, on a large number of African societies; and Joseph H. Greenberg, who has brought order out of chaos in African linguistic classification. On the basis of the various difficulties and irregularities in so many works on Africa, he recommended and used descriptive literature which helped to remove some of the clouds. I would also like to apply the same descriptive method.
7.   Middleton, John, "Introduction to Africa" in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, Vol.IX : Africa And The Middle East*, edited by John Middleton and Amal Rassam (eds), Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall & Co., 1995, p. xxiii.
8.   *Ibid.,*
9.   Killam, Douglas & Rowe, Ruth (eds.), *The Companion to African Literatures*, Oxford: James Currey, 2000, p.202.

10. Myths are to be distinguished from Folktales which serve as family or communal entertainment during hours of leisure, typically after the day's last meal and before retirement to bed. The featured characters may be all human, all animal, or a mixture of both. They are mainly anthropomorphic and use human languages, so that when a tale includes both humans and animals communication among them poses no difficulty. These characters are types, since the emphasis in the tales is on their responses to certain circumstances and the lessons to be learned about the appropriateness of a particular response in a particular circumstance.

11. The Yoruba have a divinatory text called the *Ifa.* It is however found also among the Ewe and the Fon, as well as among the Edo. The Yoruba text, which is the most popular in West Africa comprises 256 major chapters, each containing 600 verses. Each verse is a case history that records a supplicant's particular problem in the distant past, the prescription received as a solution for the problem, and the outcome of the supplicant's observing or ignoring the prescription. The diviner matches each new supplicant with an appropriate Ifa verse, which he recites from memory, and offers the indicated prescription with the assumption that the outcome in this instance will be as in the original consultation.

12. Rasmussen, S., "Myth and Cosmology", in *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, Vol.3, John Middleton (ed.), New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997, p.250 (pp.250-258); Dorothea E. Schulz, "Oral Culture and Oral Tradition", in *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, Vol.3, John Middleton (ed.), New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997, pp.359-363; Miller, Joseph C., *Introduction to The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Folkestone, Eng., and Hamden, Conn., 1980; Okpewho, Isidore, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Community*., Bloomington, Ind., 1992.

13. Roberts, A.F., "Symbolism: Overview", in *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, Vol.4, John Middleton (ed.), New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997, p.192.

14. John Middleton, "Introduction to Africa", in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, Vol.IX, Africa and the Middle East*, p.xxxi.

15. Priests are rarely specialists, who are often regarded as heads of lineages and families, although some, such as rainmakers, play more specialized roles. Diviners (and oracle operators) are thought to have the power to explain the meanings of the past and present and to foretell the future. Prophets are the messengers or emissaries of the divinity. They come to communities that experience disasters and troubles (natural, medical, or political) beyond their comprehension and control, bringing advice and messages from the divinity. They exercise charismatic authority over their followers, and, if successful, may establish new forms of social organization that may, in time, take on political and other functions, in addition to the primarily religious ones.

16. See Smith, Andrew B., "Origins and Spread of Pastoralism in Africa", in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21(1992):125-141.

17. Estimates for the population of Nigeria explicitly takes into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected. The age structure according to the

2002 estimates is: 0-14 years: 43.6% (male 28, 503, 211; female 28,156,976); 15-64 years: 53.6% (male 35,418,119; female 34,179,802); 65 years and over: 2.8% (male 1,832,682; female 1,844,121). The population growth rate is also estimated at 2.54%. Birth rate is 39.22 births/1,000 population; Death rate is 14.1 deaths/1,000 population; net migration rate is 0.27 migrants/1,000 population; infant mortality rate is 72.49 deaths/1,000 live births; Life expectancy at birth is a) total population: 50.59 years; b) female: 50.6 years; and c) male: 50.58 years. Shockingly, the HIV/AIDS-deaths in 1999 accounted 250,000; HIV/AIDS – people living with HIV/AIDS: 2.7 million (1999 estimates); HIV/AIDS – adult prevalence rate, 5.06% (1999 estimates). Population below poverty line is 45% according to 2000 estimates. Unemployment rate is also 28% (1992 estimates). The unemployment estimates of 2002 is 37%.

18. Gall,T.L.,(ed). *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Culture & Daily Life: Vol.1 – Africa*, Cleveland, OH: Eastword Publications Development, 1998, p.330.

19. See Mertens, V., "Nouvelle vitalité de L'Islam en Afrique Noire et ses implications pastorales », *Telema: Revue de Réflexion et Créativité chrétienne en Afrique* (Kinshasa), January-March, 1981, p.31.

20. cf. Shorter, A., *The African Synod: A Personal Response to the Outline Document* (Nairobi: Saint Paul Publications-Africa, 1991), p.91.

21. Anderson, A.H., "Types and Butterflies: African Initiated Churches and European Typologies", in *International Bulletin,* Vol. 25, no.3, 2001, p.110.

22. John Middleton, "Introduction to Africa" , in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, Vol. IX: Africa and the Middle East,* edited by John Middleton and Amal Rassam, Boston, Massachusetts, 1995, p.xxiv.

23. See also Vansina, Jan, "Western Bantu Expansion", in *Journal of African History* 25, no.2 (1984):129-145.

24. Most Southern Nigerian tribes practice circumcision. Clitoridectomy is nearly as prevalent but is specifically denied for the Afo, Idoma, Ijaw, and Itsekiri tribes. Age-grades occur very widely but are not quite universal. Among the eastern Ibo, for instance, young men are organized into age-sets every third year in each village (Nsu in Ehime Mbano Local Government of Imo State is a typical example), where they engage in communal labour. Approximately every ninth year the three oldest sets, including men from the thirty-five to forty-five years of age, are reconstituted as an age-grade, with police/security functions and the responsibility for executing the decisions of the village elders. After a period in this grade they are promoted to the first of three grades of "elders", who exercise political authority not only in the village but also in the district. Most of these cultural and traditional observances are being influenced by contact with Western civilization. Human sacrifice is reported for the Arago, Bunu, Edo, Ibo, Igala, Ijaw, and Yoruba; cannibalism for the Boki, Ekoi, Ibo, and some Igbira and Ijaw; headhunting for the Boki, Egede, Ekiti, Ekoi, Ibi, Idoma, Igala, Igbira, Ijaw, Kukuruku, Nge, Orri, and some Iyala and Nupe. The Edo king maintains a court and a large harem at the capital city of Benin. Here he concerns himself primarily with state rituals, cult activities, and judicial cases.

25. Ofonagora, W.I., "The Aro and Delta Middlemen of southern Nigeria and the Challenge of the Colonial Economy" in *Journal of African Studies*, 1976, 3, 2, pp. 143-164; K. Onwuka Dike, "Change and Persistence in Aro Oral History" in Journal of African Studies, 1976, 3, 3, pp.277-296; Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Inter-group Relations", in *South-Western Journal of Anthropology*, vol.14, no.2 (1958).
26. Shorter, A., *The African Synod: A Personal Response to the Outline Document* (Nairobi: Saint Paul Publications – Africa, 1991), p. 82. Emphasis in brackets are mine.
27. *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1999*, UNESCO Publishing & Bernan Press, 1999, p.II-43 (MF= Male and Female; M= Male; F= Female).
28. See Shorter, A., *The African Synod*, p.76.
29. Read particularly John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London, 1970 and *African Religion*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975.
30. See *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.
31. See Pope Paul VI, Encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6, 1964, especially nn. 65-69.
32. See Gioia, F. (ed), *Interreligious Dialogue. The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995),* Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997, p.64.