

ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNION AND THE NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA: SOME SELECTED CANONICAL ISSUES**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The preliminary Question:

Why such a topic? Obviously it is prompted by both ecclesial experiences and the need for some ecclesiastical response in the Nigerian Church. In other words there is now a need for some principles with which the Church in Nigeria can fruitfully tackle the issue resulting from its pursuit of ecclesiastical communion in relation to the phenomenon of the New Religious Movements.

The Code of Canon Law explicitly provides that full communion to be considered within three definite fidelities, namely, profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical governance.¹ These bonds clearly categorise the communion that can and do exist between the Church and her members. They also serve as parameters or perspectives by which ecclesiastical communion is analysed, and determined. The "New Religious Movements" have to be evaluated with due consideration for ecclesiastical communion.

The on going demands for ecumenism and dialogue continue to elicit both theoretical and pragmatic solutions. In some cases a working relationship emerges without any viable theological or juridical basis. With some others it is a cordial mutuality established primarily on personal trust or interest. However, ecclesiastical communion is an ecclesiological-juridic state which requires some

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guiding ecclesial principles. Such principles derived from theological reflections can lead to an effective way of relating with the various Movements and their members. Besides, there is need always for progress as result of doctrinal insights which could lead to fresh legislations and practical norms even if only for a local Church.

1.2 What is my objective in this essay

Simply stated my aim in this study is to identify and delineate some canonical issues with reference to "Ecclesiastical Communion and the New Religious Movements". I want to know and present some issues emanating from the demands of ecclesiastical communion with reference to some of the emergent "New Religious Movements". This enquiry will be entirely situated and contextualized in the Nigerian Church. To achieve this objective, an orderly analysis that brings together the ecclesiological-juridic principles needed to facilitate the study is required.

2.1 Ecclesiastical Communion

This is used in the sense of life and relationship that exists between persons or associations of persons with Christ and his Church. Ecclesiastical communion here is derived from the Greek "Ekklesiastikos, ekklesia, meaning an assembly, organization", pertaining or relating to a church. Communion in English translates into "Koinonia". "Koinonia is derived from "Koinos" meaning common. In a general etymological sense, "Koinonia" refers to the common sharing, participating, and possessing of something. It is often translated in Latin by "communio" or "communicatio". Ecclesiastical communion is, therefore, used to refer to common sharing, possession or participation involving persons in and outside the Church. This concept is also rendered as "ecclesial communion", but with a slight variation in meaning.

2.2 New Religious Movements

This concept is adopted to refer to those groups and bodies established sometime in the 20th century as alternatives to the official institutional religions; others comprise those who represent

a return to paganism and others still of agnostic nature². The "New Religious Movements" that will be studied here are those that are considered as being major ones in Nigeria, for example, the Christ Apostolic Church and the Deeper Life Bible Church.

2.3 The Church in Nigeria

By this I mean the particular churches of Latin Rite in communion with each other and with the Church of Rome within the country, Nigeria. In other words, the Church in Nigeria refers to the entire faithful (lay, religious, and clergy) and their organizational structures or entities. This Church is a portion of the one, Catholic Church considered in its peculiarities with reference to ecclesial communion and the "New Religious Movements"

2.4 Selected Canonical Issues

"Selected Canonical Issues" are chosen issues concerning ecclesiastical communion and the new religious movements in Nigeria. These issues will include maintaining and preserving communion of the faithful, ecumenism and dialogue, "communicatio in sacris", and "communicatio in Spiritualibus". These selected issues shall also be considered as challenges to the Church in Nigeria with regard to its ecclesiastical communion with the "New Religious Movements". The dynamic nature of the entities involved established the rationale for our pre-occupation with "Selected canonical issues". Our study can only choose some real problems or areas of anxiety; thus they are definitely issues of the present though not exhaustive or all inclusive.

3. TOWARDS PRINCIPLES OF ANALYSING ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNION

3.1 Ecclesiology of Communion

The concept of communion is central in Vatican II's ecclesiology. Pope John Paul II recalls this in his apostolic constitution that promulgated the new code:

*Foremost among the elements which express the true and authentic image of the Church are: the further teaching which portrays the Church as a communion and then spells out the mutual relationship which must intervene between the particular and the universal Church (...); the people of God share each in their own measure, in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, with which teaching is associated also looks to the duties and rights of Christ's faithful and specifically the laity; and lastly the assiduity which the Church must devote to ecumenism.*³

The word communion itself comes from the Latin: either "Cum moenus", a defensive installation such as a camp or fortress, or "cum munus" a common task, duty, undertaking.

In either case, the point is that many people make their own proper contribution to one and the same activity.

Yves Congar however holds that the etymological explanation of the term "communion" is not sufficient, and he states:

The word also has an ecclesial meaning which surpasses its etymological signification. It translates the Greek word Koinonia ... In a general sense Koinonia means that one shares in something with others. Its fundamental christian meaning designates the community of the faithful with Christ, hence their common participation in christian "good"; the faith, the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13), and, finally, the community which the Christians constitute on the basis of all these things. In that they are also in communion with one another (see 1 Jn. 1:3,6). Thus, the communion is seen to be constituted by the Christian life in its fullest sense. It can be subjectively more or less actively intensive since there are multiple elements which one can more or less actively possess, but it is in and of itself indivisible. One is

*either in communion or is not. Consequently, in christian usage the term, koinonein, communicare, is used in an absolute sense: in the Roman Canon we speak of the "communicantes".*⁴

The notion of communion comprises that of participation in spiritual goods, of co-possession. Communion becomes synonymous to unity; it finds its source in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, and its highest expression is in the common celebration of the Eucharist. Consequently, the council Fathers clearly affirm:

*In his Church he instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of the church is both signified and brought about.*⁵

Concerning the unique role of the Holy Spirit in this communion, the Council Fathers assert:

*It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity.*⁶

However, besides the Holy Spirit who is the principle of the Church's communion, the Council enumerates other elements, namely, the faithful preaching of the Gospel by the bishops with Peter's successor at their head, their administration of the sacrament, and their governing in love.

It means communion is both internal and external. It also expresses itself in a common visible way of behaviour, to a common profession of faith, to participation in the same sacraments and to submission to the same laws and discipline. Jerome Hamer applied this concept of communion to the Church and he says communion is the permanent form of the unity of the Church. He concludes by stating:

Communion is thus the happy and necessary condition of our pilgrimage, because it is part of the very structure of the city towards which we are journeying. It gives us a foretaste of these escha-

*tological blessings. The city of the future is, as it were, already set in being by communion with and in Christ ... This communion, which is entirely directed to the complete establishment of the kingdom, does not shut the Church in on itself. It stands open to the world. It is the form of unity willed by Christ for all mankind. So it is ready to welcome all the riches and variety set by God in his creation.*⁷

Avery Dulles refers to the Church as mystical communion.⁸ He maintains that the concept of the Church as a communion harmonizes with many biblical images. For him, that of the Body of Christ and the People of God are the most notable images. He asserts that these two models illuminate from different angles the notion of the Church as communion and he says:

*The church, from this point of view, is not in the first instance an institution or a visibly organized society, Rather it is also expressed by external ecclesiastical fellowship.*⁹

This fundamental element of communion, though primarily unitive, is also important ecumenically. Robert Kress affirms that communion immediately allows for diversity within unity. He holds:

*A communion spirit rather than a spirit of excommunication is a prime requisite, if currently divided Churches are to discover and create sufficient communion among themselves, so that they can be diverse and different, but not divide.*¹⁰

The analysis thus far indicate that communion refers to relationships which are at once internal and external. This communion is brought about by the Holy Spirit. It is ready to welcome all the richness and variety set by God in his creation. The Church has the enduring challenge to discover and create sufficient communion among other religious groups or movements. However, the highest expression of this communion is the common

celebration of the Eucharist. We have also discovered that three external elements which are susceptible to verification characterise communion among the members of the Church, and with other churches or movements: profession of faith, sacraments and ecclesiastical government.¹¹

3.2 Ecclesiastical Communion in the Code

The Code of Canon Law adopted the concept of communion. Besides, the concept of communion is related to the Eucharist (i.e. Eucharistic communion). The term communion is used 34 times in the Code.¹² In most of these cases, the reference to the Church as the Catholic Church is specific. Six times is to Ecclesia communion (communio ecclesiae).¹³ Four instances to ecclesiastical communion.¹⁴ Once to communion with the Church (communio cum Ecclesiae)¹⁵ and eight times to communion with the Catholic Church (communio cum ecclesia Catholica).¹⁶ Once to communion with Roman Catholic Church (communio cum Ecclesiae Romana).¹⁷

The Code of Canon Law bases ecclesiastical communion on baptism.¹⁸ Baptism is the door that leads to incorporation into Christ, to becoming a member of Christ's body, the Church. Through baptism all members are put in communion with one another as well as with Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This results in a participation in the triple office of Christ, the Head, and of the Church, His Body. In Can. 205, the Code provides the expression of the juridical dimension of communion. This flows directly from Lumen Gentium no. 14 and it states:

*Those baptised are in full communion with the Catholic Church here on earth who are joined with Christ in his visible body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance.*¹⁹

3.3 The Triple Bonds for Ecclesiastical Communion

The code does not intend to give a definition of communion. It merely points out the essential elements from a juridical point of view, as they can be verified in the Church's earthly and visible

condition.²⁰ The code also does not define the various degrees of communion but holds to the distinction between those in full communion with the Catholic Church and those who are not. These triple elements are: profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance.²¹ They are in fact bonds (vinculum vinculi). These elements are essential and inseparable. The lack of any renders the ecclesial communion imperfect.

3.31 The Bond of Faith

These elements determine the juridic capacity of both members of the Church and the churches or religious movements. They are regarded as bonds (vinculum, vinculi). The first is profession of faith. Faith is the objective, personal commitment to God (fides qua). Made possible through the help of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14; 2Cor. 3:16-18), faith is a free, reasonable and total response (Dei Verbum) through which we confess the truth about divine self-disclosure definitively made in Christ (Jn. 20:31; Rom. 10:8), obediently commit ourselves (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) and entrust our future to God (Rom. 6:8; Heb. 11:1). The objective of faith is contained in the "deposit of faith".²² The Old and New Testaments are the normative documents of that faith. The fundamental structure of faith is expressed clearly in Scripture and the Apostle's creed.²³

3.32 The Bond of Sacraments

The second bond or element is the sacraments. Sacrament (in Latin meaning "public pledge of fidelity") is a visible sign instituted by Christ which reveals and communicates grace. More recently a sacrament is defined as a "prophetic symbol, established by and modeled upon Christ the symbol of God, in and by which the Church, the Body of Christ, proclaims, realises and celebrates for believers who place no obstacle in that presence and action of God, which is rightly called grace."²⁴ The Catholic Church accepts seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick.

Sacraments express and reinforce faith. They do not definitely presuppose faith. But they also, with the words and sensible

elements, nourish, strengthen and express faith. Sacraments are signs and means of expressing and strengthening faith. For this reason they are rightly called "sacraments of faith". Besides the many salutary effects of sacraments we note this: the sacraments promote, confirm and manifest ecclesiastical communion. In fact, when the sacraments are administered to the faithful, they elicit ecclesiastical communion or rather they strengthen the bond of faith, hope and charity in the faithful and in the vertical order they improve their relationship with God.²⁵ In a very unique way the Blessed Eucharist has a unitary character since those who celebrate and participate in it are united to Christ. John Paul II emphasizing the constitutive factor of the Eucharist to communion says:

*The Eucharist is the most perfect sacrament of this union. By celebrating and also partaking of the Blessed Eucharist, we unite ourselves with Christ on earth and in heaven who intercedes for us with the Father, but we always do so through the redeeming act of his sacrifice, through which he has redeemed us, so that we have been "bought with a price."*²⁶

In other terms, the Eucharist is the source and sign of the unity of the Body of Christ.²⁷

This bond of the sacraments is a solidarity with the community that celebrates them. Sacraments are celebrated by, and consequently they are actions of, the Church, which is the sacrament of unity.²⁸ Though the sacraments are personal they are also essentially communal. Michael G. Lawler expresses this:

In and through its symbols, a human community proclaims its visions of the human world; it fixed the parameters of that world; it orders the constituent elements within the world; it assigns roles and goals and patterns of believing and acting and reacting in that world. In and through its symbols, a human community proclaims and realises and celebrates not only what it ultimately believes in, but also what kind of community it wishes to be and what kind of

*individual it wishes to be and what kind of individual it wishes to have as members.*²⁹

3.33 *The Bond of Governance*

The third element in the constitutive bonds for ecclesiastical communion is ecclesiastical governance. The governance of the Catholic Church is organized hierarchically and under the Roman Pontiff. The governance is exercised in the manner of hierarchical communion.³⁰ This is a communion of the hierarchy and is lived in a hierarchical relationship of head and members in the college.³¹ The Church expresses its own structure in the hierarchical communion of the various levels and dimensions of the Church, from the most local celebration of the Church to the universal. There is also a communion of Churches (*communio ecclesiarum*) whereby all the particular churches - Catholic dioceses and their equivalents are united with one another through being in hierarchical communion. This bond demands that each member of the Church maintains communion with the Church always, including specifically, communion with the Pope.³² However communion with a particular Church is the basis for Catholic Communion.

3.4 *Degree of Ecclesiastical Communion*

Vatican II and the Code of Canon Law adopted the expression "full communion."³³ This presupposes partial communion and non-communion. Full communion is presumed of those faithful who are baptised in the Catholic Church or who are received into such full communion after being baptised, and have not formally severed any of the bonds. Full communion signifies that the person enjoys all the duties and rights of a Christian in the Catholic Church. Full membership is realised on two levels - the inward and the outward levels. The inward entails possessing the spirit of Christ and love; this can be more or less fully. However this inward level is signified and mediated externally by the Church. The outward level implies also some general conditions: acceptance of the whole constitution of the Church and all the means of salvation instituted in it;

fellowship with the visible, personal and social unity of the Church by submission to the authority of the Pope and bishops. The purpose and the meaning of this sort of communion is union with Christ.

Full communion, in its inward and outward dimensions, is not static. One can grow in it just as one can lose one or all of the two factors. Partial communion is the case when even though one is incorporated and is in relation to Christ and his Church, one relapses in the bonds. Ultimately the bond which incorporated the member into Christ and the Church is baptism and it can never be lost. In the inward level it can be the case of a sinner who through sins has severed the relationship with Christ and his Church.

Communion can deteriorate to three different levels: heresy, apostasy and schism.³⁴ Heresy has come to mean a baptised person's willful and persistent dissent from orthodox doctrines of faith. It is the denial or doubt of any truth that ought to be believed with divine and Catholic faith. Apostasy (Greek, "standing apart") means the deliberate and complete abandonment of the faith by a baptised Christian. It is the total repudiation of the Christian faith received in baptism. On the other hand, schism (Greek, "division") is the formal refusal of submission to the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Pontiff, and communion with the members of the Church subject to him. Schisms are not primarily provoked by doctrinal matters but by differences over authority and Church order. Vatican II refers to such imperfect communion and states:

*For men who live in Christ and have been properly baptised are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Without doubt, the differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church - whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline or concerning the structure of the Church - do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion.*³⁵

3.5 *Constitutive Elements of the Church*

The Church, in its document on Ecumenism, presents some constitutive elements of the Church. These elements are a complex

whole of invisible and visible endowments which Christ has bestowed upon his Church. These endowments are specifically enumerated in article 3 of this document and they are:

*the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements.*³⁶

These are referred to as ecclesial elements. The Council Fathers never meant this list to be exhaustive; they are indications. However, the "word of God" – the Scriptures is the fundamental "element" which constitutes the Church. The Scripture is, therefore, the "institutional element" and it is through it that other constitutive elements of the Church are evaluated. The life of grace, involving faith, hope and charity, constitutes the inner gift of grace which links Christians with one another and to the communion of the Church.

The visible elements comprise the three bonds and some "Liturgical actions of the Christian religion".³⁷ This expression cannot be limited to sacramental actions in the strict sense. Liturgical actions here include preaching of the word of God, blessings and other liturgical actions that effect grace and create access to the communion of salvation.³⁸

3.6 Elements for Depicting Principles for Ecclesiastical Communion

Ecclesiastical communion is realised on two levels – the inward and the visible. It is in these levels the elements for depicting the principles for Ecclesiastical Communion are found. The inward level commences with the sacrament of baptism with all its ontological effects, which are being born again, being given a share of the Holy Spirit, incorporation to Christ and into the Mystical body of Christ, the Church. Resulting from this real and new state the individual lives a new life, which is a spiritual life of faith, hope, and love, in Christ and his Church, concretely, through the sacraments and belief in the fullness of the gospel as taught by the Church. These internal elements are engendered and signified in the external level through the triple bonds of faith, sacraments and ecclesiastical governance.

All the elements from these two levels constitute the principles for analysing and evaluating ecclesiastical communion.

4.1 Typology of the New Religious Movements

The New Religious Movements can be classified under two main groups with reference to their origin, christianity and underlying systems of thought. With reference to Christianity there are movements derived from Protestant Churches, like Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim. There are other movements which can be considered with reference to underlying systems of thought – those based on Holy Scripture – like Deeper Life and Scripture Union, those derived from other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism or Traditional Religions, like Goddianism, some based on a return to paganism, and sects of agnostic nature.

The New Religious Movements have been defined as religious groups with a distinctive world view of their own derived from, but not identical with the teaching of major world religions. This definition does not seem to include movements that are derived from humanistic, pagan, or gnostic backgrounds. The New Religious Movements which operate in Nigeria can be categorized under four headings: those that reject the Church; those that reject Christ; those that reject the role of God, and those that reject the role of religion.³⁹

With these general remarks we shall now briefly analyse two New Religious Movements: Christ Apostolic Church, and Deeper Life Church. We shall endeavour to consider their tenets, Church activities, and ecclesiastical governance.

4.2 Christ Apostolic Church

This movement belongs to the Aladura Movement.⁴⁰ Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C) began in 1918 during an epidemic of influenza in which about two hundred and fifty thousand people died in Southern Nigeria – the people believed only in divine healing. Through visions the members were guided to rely on prayer for healing and help in all their needs. When they rejected infant baptism, they separated from the Anglican Church. It had

its greatest expansion about 1930 during the heat of the controversy which swept through some parts of Yoruba land on the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, divine healing and conversion.⁴¹

4.21 Tenets

The group believes in the Trinity and in salvation through Jesus Christ who is God and Man. For them, salvation is the deliverance from sin and all its consequences. Salvation comes about by a simple belief in the atoning work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They hold that there are two sides to salvation, namely the divine – the mediator work of Christ, and the human – repentance and faith on the part of man.⁴² They believe firmly in the Holy Spirit as a distinctive person – a divine person who is the same with the Father and the Son and the three are called One God.⁴³ C.A.C generally takes the Church to mean:

*A company of all the people that were called out from the world of sin into the marvelous light of Christ Jesus. It consists of all that confess Christ to be the Lord and Saviour of their lives, and are waiting in earnest expectation of His second advent. It is the body of Christ.*⁴⁴

The fundamental beliefs of the Christ Apostolic Church contains most of the Apostles' Creed with a mixture of some pentecostal tenets.

4.22 Practices

Sunday services, revivals, praying bands, are the main church activities which the C.A.C carry out in order to promote their salvation and the mission to evangelise. They strongly prohibit the drinking of alcohol.

4.23 Governance

The C.A.C has an elaborate hierarchical system which resembles the hierarchical Africa society. Numerous offices are given to community leaders such as Apostles, Most Senior Apostles, Prophets,

Evangelist, Seer, Healer of the First Class, Second Class, etc. They also have other charismatic leaders like pastors and prophets. Women can assume prominent leadership positions as with the different groups of Cherubim and Seraphim. Anyone can claim a "divine call", and in many cases it is possible to receive an "ordination" from an apostle of another Spiritual Church.⁴⁵ The C.A.C moves more towards regular organization and greater importance is placed on pastors' (above prophets) theological training.

4.3 Deeper Life (Christian Ministry) Bible Church

This was founded by William Folorunso Kumuyi about 1973. He began in 1973 with a Bible Study Group with students in the University of Lagos and they produced tracts, pamphlets, and cassettes. He emphasized healing and miracles at the period when the economy of Nigeria began to decline around 1980. All these led to a transformation of the loose Bible Study Group to a denomination with specific teachings and organization: "The Deeper Life Bible Church".⁴⁶ The group has great influence on the young, especially university students.

4.31 Doctrine

The teachings are the same as of those of other Christian churches, especially of Faith Apostolic Church, on holiness and keeping away from the "wicked world".⁴⁷ This church lays special emphasis on "personal conversion", and being "born again". This requires a change of life, restitution of all the wrong one has done. The next stage they urge their members to aspire for is "sanctification" (cf. Jn. 17:17), being like Jesus in heart, attitude, disposition, motive and action. This also implies "separation" from all that is evil - no wearing of expensive dress, necklaces, reading frivolous literature.

4.32 Practices

Evangelism is a primary task for all members. Their worship is very much like other Protestant services; their hymns are taken from the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian hymn books.

There is not much emotionalism, (ecstasies, prophecies, speaking in tongues). Besides the Sunday services, there is the "Home Caring Fellowship" every Sunday evening¹⁴⁸.

4.33 Governance

This group operates a well co-ordinated form of governance. The founder is the General Superintendent. He is supported by a Board of Trustees. There are state overseers, Region Pastors, District Pastors, Zonal Coordinators, Area Leaders, House Leaders and other "workers", like Ushers, etc. This church is a member of the "Christian Association of Nigeria" though they do not take an active part in it.

5. SOME SELECTED CANONICAL ISSUES

At this stage of our study, the work intends to somehow identify, and if possible, delineate some selected issues concerning Ecclesiastical communion and the New Religious Movements. From our study so far, the following issues seem to emanate for consideration: preserving ecclesiastical communion, ecumenical movement, pastoral response or posture; "communio in sacris", "communicatio in spiritualibus" and "communicatio in rei sociali".

5.1 Preservation of Ecclesiastical Communion c. 209.1

The many Religious Movements obviously pose some problems of fulfilling or realising the call for Christ's faithful to preserve their communion with the Church. Both the internal and visible elements of ecclesial communion are radically affected by this phenomenon. The very root or basis of this communion - the sacrament of baptism - "ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto" is denied by most of the Religious Movements. The incidents of members who have not indeed received sacramental baptism and yet want to exercise the rights of the baptised is a reality to be confronted. The issue arises - have these persons indeed been justified by faith in baptism? Is the Catholic understanding of baptism contained in Can. 849 namely, that which is "validly conferred only by a

washing in real water with the proper form of words" the only way one can be born again as a child of God, made like to Christ, and incorporated into the Church¹⁴⁹?

Another related issue with regard to the preservation of ecclesiastical communion is the actual fact of maintaining the members of the Church in communion with Christ and his Church. Surely, the external triple bonds - faith, sacraments, and governance - are indicative, but how accurately can members be categorised on each of all of these? There is a crisis of faith which exists in a very subtle form. Besides the known cases of heresy, are there parameters by which the faith level of an individual is to be categorised? As for the bond of the sacraments, members are expected to accept the seven sacraments in the church. The doctrines of some of the New Religious Movements regarding these sacraments is strongly affecting and influencing some members of the Church. Consequently, some members can risk the fact of losing full communion on this account. The same is also true of the bond of governance.

There are some instances where local communities - parishes or mission stations - due to the influence of some Religious Movements are on the verge of separation or schism. The cause of rift could be problems like the manner of financial accountability, or diocesan directives or policies on church councils or societies, the person or manner of administration of the priest, or catechist, head-Christian, etc. While uniformity can never be a viable solution, to what extent can pluralism be encouraged with due consideration to ecclesiastical communion? Some members, lay and clergy alike, already have or are in groups which pose problems to ecclesiastical communion. The Church in Nigeria needs to address the problem of ascertaining, maintaining, and strengthening the ecclesiastical communion of the members, churches and believing communities or groups, in the face of the realities of New Religious Movements.

5.2 Ecumenical Movement

The opening statement of "Unitatis Redintegratio": "The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council", defines the issue here.

The church in Nigeria has the onerous task of promoting the restoration of unity among all the followers of Christ. The Church's response to this call is referred to as ecumenical movement⁵⁰. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger observes that "effective ecumenical action pre-supposes the inner unity of the authorities' action on the one hand and the Church's real life of faith on the other"⁵¹. In strict terms, the issuance of norms to foster and direct the ecumenical movement of the Church pertains to the bishop⁵². The movement itself is complex; many members of the Church are ill-equipped and yet are directly engaged in it. It is also true that not many churches have bodies for ecumenical relations; the few that have, already engage in useful and effective discussions or meetings.

5.3 Pastoral Response or Posture

Though some of these New Religious Movements adopt particularly aggressive attitudes towards the Catholic Church, the Church cannot portray a negative attitude to them. Certainly the Church herself ought to develop ways and means for defending herself and her teachings, practices, etc., against the virulent attacks of some of these Movements. However, the Church's response cannot but be that "based on light and love"⁵³. The issue here is how can a Church that is ridiculed, viciously criticised, and even openly persecuted, make a responsible and christian response? This concerns the Church's authorities and the members of these Movements. To be able to give the correct pastoral response, the issue must be regularly considered.

5.4 "Communicatio in Sacris" (Sharing in Sacred Things)

The issue here is peculiar and complex. Nigerians have a general attitude of generous welcome and openness, even to strangers. To exclude some persons from celebrations, religious or otherwise, is not a common practice, except, for cases of manifest offenders. This norm of excluding other christians from the sacraments, especially - the sacrament of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the sick, is definitely not easy to observe in the Nigerian Church, if members of these New Religious Movements ask for them spontaneously. With

the present practice of prayer meetings, revivals and out-reach programmes, that attract members of these New Religious Movements, the Church in Nigeria will have to delineate how these people are to be ministered to when they request for these sacraments.

5.5 "Communicatio in Spiritualibus" (Sharing in the Common Spiritual Heritage):

In varying degrees, some of the Religious Movements and Church have the scripture, spirit of Christ, the doctrines, and tenets of Christianity, in common. Praying together, common use of sacred places and objects, and sharing in liturgical worship constitute a vast and complex area where the Church in Nigeria needs to clarify the guidelines. There is much confusion surrounding this and it is not easy to determine the level in which these New Religious Movements share in this particular heritage. It is also not easy to ascertain the positive or negative effects of such communion.

6. CONCLUSION

The church in Nigeria will have to live with the phenomenon of the New Religious Movements. While ecclesiastical communion is both an ecclesiological and juridical characteristic that the Church is endowed with, by the same fact it presents many challenges to maintain both on the part of the individual members and on the part of the Church as an institution. Strictly speaking, ecclesiastical communion raises some canonical issues with reference to its internal and its visible or external manifestations. However, the triple bonds of faith, sacraments, and governance, constitute explicit parameters for evaluating the level or degree of the communion of an individual or a group with the Church.

The Church in Nigeria, as a matter of urgency and priority, needs to devise catechetical and pastoral programmes aimed at nourishing, sustaining, and strengthening the ecclesiastical communion of her members and communities, with the Church. This would imply efforts by the Church directed at helping members of the church maintain communion, especially, full communion, with

the Church. It will also mean that the various associations and groups in the church, parishes or others, need also to be assisted in this regard. Since communion hinges on the bonds of faith, sacraments and governance, these have to be examined more closely with special reference to the New Religious Movements in Nigeria. In particular, some areas of our faith, the entire liturgical worship, and the mode of governance of the church in Nigeria, will need a more critical appraisal and revision. For example, some simple reasons many offer for leaving the Catholic Church to join some of these New Religious Movements (they do not pray or know how to pray in the Catholic Church, do not read the Bible in the Catholic Church) are serious indications of some deficiencies in our life as a Church, a community of believers. The programmes envisaged here have to be orthodox, creative and innovative and able to stem the ongoing defections.

The Church in Nigeria, in spite of her many other pressing needs, must always be conscious of the call to unity - that all may be one. Ecumenism and dialogue are not to be ignored by any Church that lays claim to authenticity or responsibility. Ecumenical movement is itself a complex endeavour, so is the phenomenon of the New Religious Movements as they are in Nigeria. Communing with these Movements is not optional but a pastoral imperative. The most reasonable option for the Church in Nigeria will be to engage in a very comprehensive and responsible ecumenical movement. This will involve defining strategies, training personnel or leaders, initiating and directing ecumenical movements. The Church, of course, has to engage positively in pastoral programmes with the specific objective of defending the Church, her members, doctrines and practices, against the attacks of these Religious Movements. The print and electronic media are to be fully exploited to this end.

On the pedagogical level, the Church in Nigeria should directly engage in a thorough study of these New Religious Movements, especially as regards what is in them that attracts her members into them. It will also be important to know how they endear and retain their members in their own communion. The assignment of the Lord - "be fishers of men", more than ever, is to be pursued more vigorously, especially in the Nigerian Church. This needs

improved art for high yielding fishing techniques. There is the need to develop more strategies both for retaining and maintaining the members of the Church in full communion, and for incorporating more members into the Church communion. Prayer meetings, revivals, out-reach, and evangelical programmes are to be more aggressively pursued and implemented. New ministries may have to be established to respond to the challenges posed by these New Religious Movements. Specifically, priests and catechists of the future will require formation in special skills in view of their ministries toward ecclesiastical communion and in response to the challenges of New Religious Movements.

This study seeks to make evident the need for ecumenical commission, at diocesan, provincial and national levels. Such a body needs members from various disciplines - Ecclesiology, Ecumenical Theology, Canon Law, Liturgy, Sociology, etc. In particular, canonists in Nigeria need to direct their research to this area of ecclesiastical communion and the phenomenon of the Religious Movements.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. C. 205 Provides the three essential bonds for discussing ecclesiastical Communion. This Canon is new and it is a direct result of Vatican II's doctrine as contained in *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2 and *Lumen Gentium*, 14.
2. Cardinal Francis Arinze, *Pastoral Response to the Challenges of Sects. Address as Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue*, (1991) in *Catholic International* 1991 p. 606.
3. Apostolic Consitution, *Sacrae Disciplina Legis*, in code of Canon Law in English Translation, Collins, p. XIV.
4. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Lohrer, (eds.), *Mysterium Salutis*, Vols. 1-6 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965 - 1981) Vol. 5/2 pp. 404- 405.
5. Vatican II, "Unitatis Redintegratio", No. 2

6. Cf. Rosalio Jose Castillo Lara, *La Communion Ecclesiale Dans le Nouveau Code De droit Canonique*, in *Studia Canonica*, 17 (1983) pp. 331-335.
7. Jerome Hamer, O.P. *The Church is a Communion*, (New York: 1964), p. 213.
8. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (New York, 1987), pp. 47-62.
9. Ibid. p. 55
10. Rober Kress, *The Church: Communion, Sacrament, Communication*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1935), p. 95 also Robert Kress, "Leise Trenten: An Irenic Ecumenical Hermeneutic", *Theological Studies* 44 (1983), p. 407-437.
11. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, No. 14.
12. Rosalio Jose Castillo Lara, Op. Cit., p. 339
13. Can. 149; 171; 194.1, 3; 205; 675.2.
14. Can. 96; 316; 840; 1741.
15. Can. 209.
16. Can. 383.3; 463.3; 512.1; 844.3,4; 890; 111 24
17. Can. 437.1
18. Can. 96; and cf. Can. 204
19. Can. 205. cf. also LG. 14, and *Schema Legis Ecclesia Fundamental*, pp. 13-14.
20. cf. Canon. 204.1
21. cf. Canon 205
22. This is all that God definitely revealed through Christ for our salvation, considered as a treasure entrusted to the Church to be preserved, interpreted and proclaimed faithfully to all people till the end of time, (I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:12, 14, see also *Die Verbum* 10; *Gaudium Et Spes*, 62).
23. See P. Nautus, *Je Croi a l'esprit dans la sante eglise pour la resurrection de la chair* (Unan Sanctam 17)

24. Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 51; cf. also Can. 840.
25. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 59.
26. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, AAS 71 (1972) 312
27. Cf. Can. 840; LG. 14; S.C. 59.
28. *Commento al Codice di Diritto Canonico*. Cura di Pio Vito, Citta del Vaticano - Urbaniana University Press, 1985, comment on Can. 840
29. Michael G. Lawler, Op. Cit., p. 59.
30. For a detailed study of this concept see G. Ghirlanda, *Hierarchica Communion*, Rome: Universita Gregoriana, 1980.
31. Cf. James A. Cariden et al., *The Code of Canon Law - A Text and Commentary*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), Commentary on Can. 333.2 p. 272
32. Cf. Canon 209 and Can. 333.2
33. Cf. Can. 968 and LG. 23.
34. Cf. Can. 751
35. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, No. 3
36. U.R. 3
37. U. R. Loc. Cit.
38. Herbert Vorgrimler, (ed.) *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, (West German: Herder and Herder, 1963), Comment on Art. 3, p. 75.
39. Cardinal Francis Arinze, Op. Cit. p. 606.
40. The Word 'Aladura' means praying. This Movement has spread from its source in Western Nigeria to many other African countries, and even beyond. The Movement involves the Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) and other groups.
41. J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*. cf. pp. 91-104.

THE RATIONAL STATUS OF MAGICAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES***

A. A. Martins

My discussion of the rationality of magical beliefs and practices has its basis in a theoretical issue that the philosophers of the social sciences have often concerned themselves with. The issue is that of the value-ladenness of the Social Sciences. Is it possible for the social scientist to carry on his inquiries without extra-academic influences such as religion, race, emotion culture and prejudice of one kind or another colouring the conclusions that arise from them? The physical scientist is by and large considered "immune" to this virus of value-ladenness because the objects of his inquiry are impersonal entities such as atoms, gases, etc. He may have a problem with value only to the extent that the immediate problems of his environment act as the catalyst for his research but the results are bound to be cross-culturally valid as in the case of the law of gravity, for instance. For the social scientist, the problem is an acute one and hence some have arrived at the opinion that his conclusion cannot but be value-laden. This is because the social scientist is a social actor and so the beliefs and practices that guide his own social interactions cannot but come to play in his evaluation of other societies. We shall not go far into the intricate arguments in this issue. Suffice it to say that I believe in the value-ladenness of the social scientists' inquiries and conclusions.

The question that arises for me is: Is the social scientist justified in making value judgements especially when it comes to cultural issues? I consider this issue as important because such value judgements affect social relationships, the economic life of peoples, their confidence in themselves, their visions of life and their dignity

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42. Cf. *Salvation: Its Importance and Acceptance* by A. O. Suberu in *Some Doctrines and Practices of Christ Apostolic Church*, Edited by Sam. Babs Mala, (Ibadan: 1980), pp. 7-10
43. Cf. "The Holy Spirit" by J. O. Oyebanji, in *Some Doctrines and Practices of Christ Apostolic Church*, Edited by Sam. Babs Mala, (Ibadan: 1980) pp. 14-17.
44. Cf. *The Mission of the Church*, by M. A. Adeoye, in *Some Doctrines and Practices of Christ Apostolic Church*, p. 24
45. Matthew A. Ojo "Deeper Life Bible Church of Nigeria", p. 135-156 in *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, ed., by Paul Gifford, Nairobi; Uzima Press, 1992; Ibadan: Sefer, 1993.
46. Ibid. p. 142-148.
47. Ibid. p. 150-152.
48. H. Gasper, J. Muller, F. Valentin (eds.) *Lexikonder Sekten, Sondergrupper Und Weltanschauungen*, Freiburg Basel - Wien: Herder, 1990, Col. 401-404.
49. Cf. Can. 755
50. Joseph Ratzinger, *Church Ecumenism and Politics*, (Slough: St. Paul Publications - 1988), p. 137.
51. Cf. Can. 755
52. Cardinal Francis Arinze, Op. Cit., p. 609.
53. This concept is defined in *Directory Concerning Ecumenism*, No. 20.

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