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St. Patrick's College

Maynooth

Co. Kildare

Ireland

**A Contextual Application of  
The Unicity and Universality of Christ in the Context of Religious  
Pluralism: A Lubacian Hermeneutic**

Paul Kangkai

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requirements for the Degree of Doctor in Theology

Supervisor: Rev. Dr. Noel O'Sullivan

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## Abbreviations

AAS – *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*

ACW – *Ancient Christian Writers*

AD – *Ad Gentes Divinitus*. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church.

AFM– *Africae Munus*

AH – *Adversus Haereses*

ANET – *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*

ANF – *Ante-Nicene Fathers*

ASC – *At the Service of the Church*

BC – *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*

C – *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*

CCC – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CM – *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*

CPM – *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*

CSEL – *Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum latinorum*

DAH – *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*

DI– *Dominus Iesus*.

DV – *Dei Verbum*. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

DzH– H. Denzinger and Peter Huermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum*

EIA– *Ecclesia in Africa*

EN – *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on Catholic Evangelization, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1975.

ES – *Ecclesiam Suam*. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Catholic Church, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1964.

FC – *Fathers of the Church*

GS – *Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

HS – *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen*

LG – *Lumen Gentium*. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

MC – *The Motherhood of the Church*

MCC – *Mystici Corporis Christi*. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter on the Mystical Body of Christ, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1943.

ME – *Medieval Exegesis*

MOE – *Mémore sur l'occasion de mes écrits*

MP – *More Paradoxes*

NA – *Nostra Aetate*. Declaration on the Relationship of the Church in the Modern World.

ND – J. Neuner and J. Dubuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*

NRSV – *New Revised Standard Version*

OT – *Optatam Totius*. Decree on Priestly Formation.

Pascendi – *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. Pius X, Encyclical Letter on the Doctrine of the Modernists, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1907.

PG – Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*

PG – Migne, *Patrologia Latina*

PME – *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Eglise*

RH – *Redemptoris hominis*. St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on The Redeemer of Man, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1979.

S – *Surnaturel*

SC – *The Splendor of the Church*

SC – *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy.

STh – *Summa Theologiae*

TF – *Theological Fragments*

TNDT – *The New Dictionary of Theology*

TH – *Theology of History*

UR– *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Decree on Ecumenism.

## General Introduction

Our research seeks to answer two central theological questions. Why and how is Christ unique and necessary for salvation for those who adhere to him, and at the same time, how is he of universal significance for humanity? These questions are crucial given our unique experience of religious pluralism in Nigeria. Nigeria's experience is unique because two of the great monotheistic religions in the world, Christianity and Islam each has over fifty million adherents. Unfortunately, the reality of plurality has not translated into conciliatory inter-religious relations between Christians and people of other faiths in Northern Nigeria. Many in the Islamic community in Northern Nigeria are intolerant and hostile to the Christian faith. Our study will demonstrate that the search for the truth which is inclusive of all human beings is a significant theological path for a diversified and polarized society as we have it in Northern Nigeria. The research will show how Henri de Lubac's writings on the salvation of "unbelievers" and his understanding of the common destiny of humanity can be a key theological approach in relating with people of other faiths.

In 1938, Henri de Lubac wrote his first book, *Catholicisme* in which he highlighted the theological principle that Christ came to save all of humanity, and that salvation is only through Christ and the Church.<sup>1</sup> Equally important to our study is de Lubac's description of the church as the sacrament of Christ, pre-figuring the Vatican Council document, *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>2</sup> His understanding highlights the continuity between the Incarnation and the Church. It shows that the Church is the locus and means of the mediation of union between God and humanity. De Lubac posits that there is no salvation apart from Christ but, at the same time, no one is necessarily excluded from this salvation. This is because the grace of Christ is of universal application. However, since 1938, when de Lubac wrote on salvation for all through Christ and the Church, many theological interpretations have become prominent. Despite many scholarly writings on different aspects of the theological approach of de Lubac, not many have made the connection between his writings on Christ and non-Christian religions the principal focus of research which we intend to undertake.

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<sup>1</sup>Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard & Sister Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>2</sup>Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 Nov. 1964, no. 1, 48. Subsequently simply Vatican II.

## **The aim of the work**

This thesis will argue that when it comes to the important question of the relationship between the church and those who are not part of it, de Lubac's response to the question is novel. His writings on the social dimension of dogma are the key to opening up a dialogue with non-Christian religions. The social dimension of dogma de Lubac saw rooted in mystery, highlighting the unique Christian contribution to the right understanding of history and community. We will explore the theological implication of de Lubac's view that humanity cannot be fully understood apart from Christ. Also, we will make a critical examination of de Lubac's arguments of how he believes people outside the Judeo-Christian tradition can attain salvation through the Church.

The thesis will critically examine the different writings of de Lubac on how he views other faiths and people who do not profess any religion. We will show how de Lubac's method can serve as a mirror for gauging subsequent theological reflections on whether salvation is possible outside Christianity. Our thesis evaluates how de Lubac explains the theological understanding that the grace of Christ works outside the visible boundaries of the Church. We will argue that linking aspects of de Lubac's writings on non-Christian religions will assist us in responding to the complex challenge of engagement with people of other faiths in the socio-cultural and political context of Nigeria.

We highlight the fact that there has been an ideological tension between Christians and people of other faiths and an ongoing persecution of Christians in Northern Nigeria since the 1980s. The situation has been made worse since 2009 where there has been a massive campaign of violence perpetrated by the so called Boko Haram sect. The international media attention and publicity attained by the Boko Haram conflict has meant that other forms of violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria have not been adequately reported. The attacks are carried out by an Islamic militia known as *Hausa-Fulani Muslim Herdsmen* on predominantly Christian communities. Their underlying ideological framework is aimed at displacing indigenous Christian communities in order to enhance Islamic influence in predominantly Christian areas.<sup>3</sup> The atrocities carried out by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen has led to several thousands of Christians being killed, hundreds of Churches, houses and shops

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<sup>3</sup>Abdulbarkindo Adamu and Alupse Ben, "Violent Conflict in Divided Societies: The Case Study of Violent Conflict in Taraba State (2013-2015)," in *Open Doors World Watch Research* (November 2015), 6.

destroyed, tens of thousands of Christians displaced, their farmlands and villages taken over.<sup>4</sup> Against that background it is well-nigh impossible to envisage inter-religious dialogue. Given this extreme position, there is the danger or temptation to wash our theological hands and leave the solution to the politicians.

## **Methodology**

This research uses the historical, theological, comparative and contextual approaches. These approaches will assist us in evaluating the context, development and content of the theological interpretations of the necessity of salvation through Christ and the Church, and the implications for non-Christian religions.

The historical approach explores the chronological order and situations that had a decisive influence on the way that the dogmatic truth about the necessity of the Church for salvation has been expressed by the Catholic Church in the past, and on the way that it is being expressed now.<sup>5</sup> We will attempt to show that the nuanced journey of the Catholic Church's theological approach to other religions is still being clarified. For centuries, the view was that other religions were marked by humankind's fundamental sinfulness and that Christ (Christianity) offers the only path to salvation. Also, there is the view that affirms the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions, while still maintaining that Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God. A third view maintains that other religions are equally salvific paths to God. Our research posits that de Lubac prefigures Vatican II's teaching that Christ is necessary and sufficient for salvation and that he is the norm, pattern, or example of salvation, in the light of which other legitimate paths to salvation may be illuminated, evaluated, and purified.<sup>6</sup>

The theological approach analyses and synthesizes the writings of theologians, the Magisterium and all those whom we believe have made a significant contribution to the development of the Christian thinking about the salvation of those outside the Church. De Lubac was writing before the Second Vatican Council. Thus, we enter into conversation with

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<sup>4</sup>Adamu and Ben, *Violent Conflict in Divided Societies*, 67.

<sup>5</sup>On this issue we will rely on the insights of Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 203; and Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (New York: Orbis, 1997), 29-52, 137-140.

<sup>6</sup> Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October, 1965, no., 2.

other theologians to see how their views have helped in the broader discourse on the relationship between Christianity and other religions in a pluralistic context.

The thesis will use the comparative approach to evaluate the different epochs of the development of the doctrine of salvation for all. The aim is to highlight the cultural factors and the historical conditioning which gave rise to these interpretations.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the comparative approach will assist us critically in analysing the different theories by a range of theologians to the question of salvation for those outside the Church.

The contextual approach will explore the peculiar nature of religious pluralism in Northern Nigeria. It will highlight the fact that, while theologically people of other faiths are not excluded from salvation, dialogue with some extreme Islamic sects is still a big challenge. We posit that what was once a Missionary Church, whose focus was conversion is now an established Church in a country of religious diversity, where dialogue is well-nigh impossible. Given the stagnation, we believe a theological study of Christianity and other religions especially Islam, is opportune.

### **The Structure of this Thesis**

The dissertation consists of five chapters.

The first chapter is a critical historical survey of the doctrinal development of the Christian understanding of the unicity and universality of Christ. It examines the context of different interpretations: biblical, patristic, medieval and contemporary. We dialogue with different and divergent views of key theologians in the different epochs and their interventions up to Vatican II.

The chapter begins by acknowledging that no comprehensive solution is found in the Bible to the staggering question for the contemporary Church of Christianity's relationship to other religions.<sup>8</sup> This has led to different attitudes towards people of other religions. We will make a biblical survey of the developments of the different attitudes. The research will point to the fact that because the major sin of the Old Testament is worshipping gods other than the God of Israel, it was inconceivable for a biblical writer to understand a non-biblical religion.

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<sup>7</sup>Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 203.

<sup>8</sup>Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 346.



Equally, we will show that there are themes are capable of orienting us toward a more positive evaluation of nonbiblical religions.<sup>9</sup>

The thesis explores Jacques Dupuis' suggestion that special attention needs be given to the organic relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, to the continuity and discontinuity which obtain between them. Other important factors to be considered are:

The interpretation of the Christ-event by the Apostolic Church as witnessed in the New Testament, and the ensuing self-understanding of the Apostolic Church itself which influenced their evaluation of the religious traditions – first Jewish, and later Hellenistic – with which it found itself confronted.<sup>10</sup>

It is crucially important to understand and explore what Christians have believed and taught about the salvation of those outside the Church for the last two millennia. Through a careful selection of the teachings of some Fathers of the Church, we hope to establish that God has assigned to the Church a necessary role in the accomplishment of his plan for the salvation of humanity.<sup>11</sup> We will show that until the twentieth century there has generally been what might be called a “salvation pessimism” about the salvation of non-Christians, that is, there is an assumption that because of sin non-Christians will be lost.<sup>12</sup> This has radically changed since the Second Vatican Council document, *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>13</sup>

The second chapter explores the specific nature of de Lubac's writings on non-Christian religions. This is imperative because he wrote on this theme before the Second Vatican Council. We retrieve some important concepts in de Lubac's theology like the “Principle of Auscultation,” “Catholicity of Truth,” “Implicit and Explicit” Christianity, to demonstrate that the focus of his theology was the whole of humanity. We will show how de Lubac identifies the separation of nature and grace as paving the way to atheistic humanism. This separation opens the way for secularism and a life without God. Equally, it leads to a form of Christianity that seeks the lowest common denominator with atheistic humanism. This, de Lubac sees, as a

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<sup>9</sup>Senior and Stuhlmuller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 346.

<sup>10</sup>Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 30.

<sup>11</sup>Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 12.

<sup>12</sup>Gavin D'Costa, Paul Knitter, Daniel Strange, eds., *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>13</sup>Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* no., 2. See *Lumen Gentium*, 16-17; Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*, 7-8; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 3 & 14; Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 4.

danger undermining the uniqueness and centrality of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, we will analyse the specific content of de Lubac's writings on the social dimension of dogma.

The chapter begins by analysing two principles relevant to our research from de Lubac's fundamental theology, the "Principle of Auscultation" and the "Catholicity of Truth."<sup>15</sup> These two principles from De Lubac's inaugural lecture in 1929 are closely linked. When de Lubac talks of Auscultation, he means the manner of doing theology. It means both listening attentively to the context and culture in which the theologian is working, and listening to the Word of God. Catholicity of the truth is the justification behind it. De Lubac reads the Bible and the Fathers of the Church in order to engage with his modern contemporaries. In this way, de Lubac follows the example of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who dialogued with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time.<sup>16</sup> John Paul II observes that in an age when Christian thinkers were rediscovering the treasures of ancient philosophy, and more particularly of Aristotle, Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony, which exists between faith and reason. Aquinas argues that both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, hence there can be no contradiction between them.<sup>17</sup> It was through the reading of Ambrosiaster that Aquinas wrote that "all truth, by whomsoever expressed, comes from the Holy Spirit as the source of natural light and as exercising on the spirit of man a movement to understand and speak what is true."<sup>18</sup> In dialoguing with his modern contemporaries, De Lubac identifies atheistic humanism as a type of humanism which excludes God. He argues that the peoples of the West are denying their Christian past and turning away from God. It is in the light of this that he goes into dialogue with contemporary thought and culture from Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, Friedrich Nietzsche to Dostoyevsky.<sup>19</sup> While he rejects their atheistic and anti-religious stance, he surmises that they do not necessarily lead to atheistic conclusions. He believes that the truth can be spoken by people outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Still, this openness to the truth wherever it would be found did not stop him from cautioning against extreme adaptation of the Christian dogmas to contemporary culture, on the

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<sup>14</sup>Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans., Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2015), 15.

<sup>15</sup>Henri de Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 96-97.

<sup>16</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio*, (Vatican City: LibreriaEditriceVaticana, 1998), no., 43.

<sup>17</sup>John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no., 43.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, IIae, q. 109, art. 1, ad primum. Also see John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 44.

<sup>19</sup>Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, and Marc Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 11.

one hand and, on the other, of excluding human experience from the theological act.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the thesis will explore how de Lubac views as complementary “the understanding of faith” and “the understanding through faith” which makes dogma the source of universal light. Such a clarification will lead us to understand why de Lubac argues that Christ is the light of all people, and how he sees all humanity as potentially revealing the truth.

The chapter will demonstrate that de Lubac’s Christology is a descending Christology (Christology from above; Incarnational Christology), which highlights the significance of the Incarnation. Important to this study is the distinction which de Lubac makes between the “religion of Jesus” and the “religion of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> His caution is applicable to our context because in the zeal for dialogue with other religions, there is the temptation to see Jesus as just one manifestation of the Son of God and so compromise his uniqueness. His observation may be seen as prefiguring *Dominus Iesus*.<sup>22</sup>

The chapter will show that de Lubac came to the theology of religions through comparative studies between some aspects of Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>23</sup> The study within the context of the history of religions confirmed his conviction about the “extraordinary unicity of the Christian Event”<sup>24</sup> in the history of humanity. De Lubac observes that Buddhist awakening is focused on the self, and then when it extends beyond the self, empties that self and the history it inhabits, of reality. The central difficulty that de Lubac identifies in Buddhism is its lack of any developed principle of incarnation.<sup>25</sup> De Lubac posits, that while in the Christian understanding Christ the Word becomes flesh in order to redeem the world, Buddha is not a concrete person entering fully into earthly life. He is removed from the toil and suffering of the world and presents himself to humankind as a vision.<sup>26</sup> It is on this ground that de Lubac labels Buddhism as a form of Docetism: A Christological opinion which maintained that Jesus Christ had only an apparent body or a celestial body and only appeared to suffer and die.<sup>27</sup> He

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<sup>20</sup>De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 96-97.

<sup>21</sup>Henri de Lubac, “The Light of Christ,” in *Theology and History*, trans., Anne Enghund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 215.

<sup>22</sup>Declaration, *Dominus Iesus*, 2000.

<sup>23</sup>Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du bouddhisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1951); See English translation, *Aspects of Buddhism*, vol. 1. trans. George Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1953); *La Rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l’Occident* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1952); *Amida. Aspects du Bouddhisme II* (Paris: Seuil, 1955).

<sup>24</sup>Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 32.

<sup>25</sup>David Grummett, *De Lubac: A Guide to the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 137.

<sup>26</sup>De Lubac, *Aspects of Buddhism I*, 116.

<sup>27</sup>Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed. Cornelius Ernst (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 131-132.

objects to the notion that Jesus appeared to be human because it implies that humankind would also only appear to be human. In addition, we will analyse de Lubac's writings on religious pluralism. We will investigate why he questioned it in the 1960s and how we can draw from his conclusions that Christianity is a distinctive religion in the midst of many other world religions.<sup>28</sup>

The third chapter investigates the paradigm shift in the understanding of the unicity and universality of Christ since Vatican II. It evaluates the new thinking that was required in the light of the modern context of the Church. We will argue that not only is there continuity of dogmatic focus on the necessity of Christ and the Church for salvation, but also important innovations and developments in the modern communal thinking through of these dogmatic issues.<sup>29</sup> The chapter will show that a number of theologians have used Vatican II as a door through which to pass further elaboration of the Church's new respect for non-Christian faiths and further exploration of the implications of that attitude.<sup>30</sup>

In the light of the new self-understanding, the chapter examines the contributions of some important theologians who wrote significantly on the relationship between Christianity and other religions.

Karl Rahner is relevant to this research because of his theory of "anonymous Christians."<sup>31</sup> Rahner asserts that "there is an implicit and anonymous Christianity."<sup>32</sup> According to Rahner, the anonymous Christian is "someone who has not yet had the whole, concrete, historical, explicit and reflexive experience in word and sacrament of the reality of salvation history."<sup>33</sup> Such a person has merely an implicit experience in obedience to his orientation in grace towards God.<sup>34</sup> Also, there is the fullness of Christianity in which one lives explicitly, and which one knows that it is related to Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>35</sup> Rahner developed his theory from two convictions. The first is the possibility of supernatural salvation and of a corresponding faith, which is granted to non-Christians even if they never became Christian. The second view is that salvation cannot be gained without reference to God and

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<sup>28</sup>De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 40.

<sup>29</sup>D'Costa, Knitter, Strange, eds., *Only One Way?* 13.

<sup>30</sup>Lucien Richard, *What are they saying about Christ and the World Regions?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 27.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. VI (New York: Seabury, 1974), Vol. 6, 390-98.

<sup>32</sup>Karl Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith* (New York: A Crossroad Book, 1978), 306.

<sup>33</sup>Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 306.

<sup>34</sup>Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 306.

<sup>35</sup>Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 306-307.

Christ, since it must in its origin, history and fulfilment be a theistic and Christian salvation.<sup>36</sup>  
We will develop these ideas in our third chapter.

Jacques Dupuis is key to our research because of his concept of “inclusive pluralism.”<sup>37</sup>  
According to Dupuis,

Jesus is the medium of God’s encounter with human beings. The man Jesus unquestionably belongs to the order of signs and symbols; but in him who has been constituted the “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2: 36), God’s saving action reaches out to people in various ways, knowingly to some and to others unknowingly.<sup>38</sup>

We will demonstrate in this research how the core task for Dupuis is to show that the affirmation of Christian identity is compatible with a genuine recognition of the identity of the other faith communities as constituting different aspects of the self-revelation of the Absolute Mystery. It is related to the Christ event in a single but complex and articulated divine economy.<sup>39</sup> The expression “inclusive pluralism” or “pluralistic inclusivism” means two things. On the one hand, “inclusive pluralism” holds together the universal constitutive character of the Christ event in the order of salvation, and on the other hand, it outlines the saving significance of other religious traditions in the one manifold plan of God for humankind.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Dupuis’s writings on other religions have attracted many scholarly reactions which will enhance our study.

John Hick proposes a Copernican revolution in theology, whereby Christians shift from the belief that Christianity is at the centre to the realization that it is God who is at the centre, and that all religions serve and revolve around him.<sup>41</sup> Hick works out a solution that allows Christians to continue to adhere to Christ as the unique saviour without having to insist that he is necessarily unique or normative for others. He concludes that the old sense of Christian superiority has died out or that the traditional claim to the unique finality of the Christian gospel has been rescinded.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Karl Rahner, “The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation,” in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XV (New York: Seabury, 1979), 218.

<sup>37</sup>Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 87-95.

<sup>38</sup>Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 88.

<sup>39</sup>Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 94-95.

<sup>40</sup>Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 95.

<sup>41</sup>John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Collins/Founts, 1977), 131.

<sup>42</sup>John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 21.

Paul Knitter affirms that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God, truly saviour – but does not insist that he is the only Son of God or saviour.<sup>43</sup> He proposes that there may be other saviours who may bring people to “have life and have it abundantly” in different ways. In holding to the distinctiveness of Jesus, Christians can be open to the distinctiveness of Buddha or Muhammed or Confucius.<sup>44</sup> He insists that God may be revealing other distinctive and universally relevant truths in other religions, and these religions might enhance or clarify or correct the way we have understood the message of Jesus.

Roger Haight claims that Jesus was normative for Christians but not for other religious traditions.<sup>45</sup> He suggests that God was active in humanity apart from Jesus and Christian reality. Hence, Jesus was not necessary for all. Haight posits that in the encounter between Christianity and other religions, theology must go beyond Christocentrism to theocentrism. In this way, the necessity of linking salvation just to Jesus of Nazareth would be greatly reduced.

Gavin D’Costa suggests that an inclusivist approach to other religions provides the most satisfactory Christian theology of religions.<sup>46</sup> For D’Costa, Karl Rahner’s theory of the anonymous Christian provides a sound starting point to pursue a number of further theological, philosophical and phenomenological questions which confront Christians inclusivists.

Our third chapter will then examine the response of the *Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith* to some of these views.

The fourth chapter looks at the unique context of religious pluralism in Northern Nigeria. We will demonstrate that the second wave of Christian Missionaries reached sub-Saharan Africa during the 1800s. The missionaries were confronted with two major religious forces: African Religions and Islam.

The chapter highlights the fact that despite the presence of African Traditional Religion, the area of conflict has constantly been in Christian and Muslim relations. We will show that since the 1980s, but especially since 1999, northern Nigeria has been racked by repeated episodes of religious violence. It is our contention that religion is frequently the guise that the warring communities in Northern Nigeria are mobilized to agitate about social and economic

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<sup>43</sup>Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 72-83.

<sup>44</sup>Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 231.

<sup>45</sup>Roger Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 403.

<sup>46</sup>Gavin D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 117.

deprivation, which is not directly related to religious matters.<sup>47</sup> We maintain that the conflict between Muslims and Christians is because of both endemic ignorance, on the one hand, and on the other, an unwillingness to understand and respect other religious views. It is this rigid exclusive religious worldview that is a serious impediment to authentic engagement.

The fifth chapter proposes a Lubacian hermeneutic. Having retrieved from different writings what we consider to be de Lubac's theological approach, we hope to relate our findings to his study on non-Christian religions. We will critique what de Lubac has written on syncretism, liberalism, Buddhism, Islam, atheistic humanism and mission. It is then that we hope to outline what a Lubacian hermeneutic would be like in the pluralistic context of Northern Nigeria. Our hope is to demonstrate that the issues that de Lubac raised still go to the heart of the Church in her contemporary engagement with humanity and indeed with all aspects of creation and culture.<sup>48</sup> It is for this reason that we will dialogue with some of the recent Magisterial documents that emphasize the need for engagement with contemporary culture and other religions, namely, *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus*.

Our research into de Lubac's theology begins by exploring two vital principles in his fundamental theology, "the Principle of Auscultation" and "the Catholicity of Truth." With Auscultation he is able to engage with contemporary thought and culture. With Catholicity of Truth, de Lubac is able to maintain that Christ is the light of all peoples, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, he is able to view all humanity as potentially revealing the truth. It is in this light that he would dialogue with atheism but will add that atheistic philosophical methods do not necessarily lead to atheistic conclusions. This approach will show why he views the relationship with other religions and cultures more in terms of an encounter. His study of Buddhism demonstrates that every culture, religion, or denomination within a religion has to be investigated uniquely according to its specific context. In the same vein, it shows how belief and culture are closely linked and must be diligently studied in order to understand them fully. This gives us the foundation for the contextualization of our experience of engaging with people of other faiths in Northern Nigeria. We draw inspiration from de Lubac's quest for the truth which goes beyond Christianity to adherents of other religions. He was able to address

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<sup>47</sup>Abdul Raufu Mustapha, "Interpreting Islam Sufis, Shi'ites & Islamists in norther Nigeria," in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Abdul Raufu Mustapha (New York: James Currey, 2014), 1.

<sup>48</sup>De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, xxxi.

the philosophical and social ideas of his own historical era and culture in order to reintegrate them within a Christian theological vision. Our challenge is to follow suit



## Chapter One: A Critical Survey of the Biblical, Historical and Doctrinal Development of the Christian Understanding of the Unicity and Universality of Christ

### Introduction

This chapter gives a theological foundation to our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation by virtue of creation and thus, the whole of humanity. Our inspiration is from Henri de Lubac who when confronted with the same question answered that it is already in the tradition. The tradition he refers to is “to go back to the sources of Christian doctrine, to find in it the truth of our life.”<sup>1</sup>

For de Lubac, going back in tradition is to enable us to discover something new or what has been forgotten. De Lubac was able to develop his thought through his active participation in the *ressourcement* movement.

Using the *ressourcement* theological method like de Lubac, the first chapter makes a critical historical survey of the doctrinal development of the Christian understanding of the unicity and universality of Christ for salvation. It examines the Judeo-Christian attitudes to people of other religious traditions. This entails an examination of the context of different interpretations: biblical, patristic, medieval and contemporary. Our exploration will lead us to dialogue with different and divergent views of key theologians in the different epochs and their interventions up to Vatican II.<sup>2</sup>

The Second Vatican Council states that “the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so orientated that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men, and of the messianic kingdom (cf. Lk. 24:44; Jn. 5:39; 1 Pet. 1:10).”<sup>3</sup> It acknowledges that even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional, the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God’s saving love.

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<sup>1</sup>Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 31; French translation: *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits* (Paris: Cerf 2006), 29.

<sup>2</sup> We rely on the comprehensive study in this area by Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997), Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001); and in French the best work is Louis Capéran, *Le Salut des Infidèles* (Paris: Louis Beauchesne, 1912).

<sup>3</sup> Vatican Council II: *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, no. 15 (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1980), 759. See Vatican website, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1994), no. 122. “The economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so orientated that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men.” Subsequently, CCC.

In them the “the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way.”<sup>4</sup> That is why the evidence of the Old Testament does not offer us an explicit teaching on the communication of divine revelation and salvation to non-Christians. This is not to say that “Yahweh’s particular choice of Israel does not exclude the will to communicate with, be known by and bring salvation to other human beings.”<sup>5</sup> Conversely, these evidences illuminate the universal scope of God’s love and offer of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.1 God’s Universal Salvation of Humankind in Creation and the Election of Israel**

In this section, we shall explore the biblical foundation in the Old Testament of attitudes to people of other religions outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. I shall argue that despite the overwhelming negative attitude, there are many biblical themes pointing toward a more positive evaluation of nonbiblical religions. I will emphasize that the perception of the history of salvation is not limited to a chosen people but extending to all humanity.

In his comprehensive study of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, Jacques Dupuis highlights the significance of the observations of Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller that “no comprehensive solution” is found in the Bible to the staggering question for the contemporary Church of Christianity’s relationship to other religions.<sup>7</sup> From the study of both Senior and Stuhlmueller, Dupuis draws some “leads” that can be gathered in the Bible for a solution to the question of the relationship between Christianity and other religions.<sup>8</sup> He observes that the overwhelming attitude of the Old Testament to people of other religions is negative. However, Dupuis contends that given the cultural and social changes around the world, the authors are able to point out themes that are “capable of orienting us toward a more positive evaluation of nonbiblical religions.”<sup>9</sup> For him, there are other factors to be considered.

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<sup>4</sup> CCC, no. 122.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Salvation for all* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), v.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 29. Also, Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 345-47.

<sup>8</sup> These leads include: “(1) The roots of biblical religions are deeply implanted in the religions and cultures surrounding Israel. (2) The sharp self-consciousness in Israel of its religious identity as God’s chosen people resulted in negative judgments on other religious systems looked upon as worthless idolatry. (3) The same powerful sense of identity and authority often prompted in the New Testament equally negative evaluations of other religions, no validity being attributed to any religious “system” other than Judaism and Christianity. (4) The Bible’s attitude to individual gentiles ran the whole spectrum from hostility to admiration, some biblical writers acknowledging a genuine religious experience in individual “pagans.” (5) Some biblical writers, Paul among them, recognized the possibility of “natural religion” “whereby the true God could be detected in the order and beauty of his creation,” but it remained inconceivable for a biblical writer to “express admiration for a full-blown cult or non-biblical religion.” Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 29-52. Here he makes a scholarly exposition of the Catholic synopsis of biblical materials employed within the Catholic tradition on this matter. See Gavin

These include the fact that most of the biblical data are only implicitly stated. They span over a long period of time with different situations leading to distinct evaluations and attitudes. Moreover, there are obvious mutual contradictions among the data themselves. These reasons lead Dupuis to suggest that:

Special attention needs also be given to the organic relationship between the Old and the New Testament, to the continuity and discontinuity which obtain between them. The Christ-event, its interpretation by the Apostolic Church as witnessed to by the New Testament, and the ensuing self-understanding of the Apostolic Church itself notoriously influenced its evaluation of the religious traditions – first Jewish, and later Hellenistic – with which it found itself confronted.<sup>10</sup>

What this points to is that biblical data especially from the Old Testament, relating to people of other religions outside of the religion of Israel are complex, requiring careful evaluation since their salvation is not stated explicitly. Their complexity has led not only to “negative evaluation, or even derogatory statements on nonbiblical religious traditions,” but often “one-sided” interpretations.<sup>11</sup> It is based on these conclusions that we see instances of outright condemnation of idolatrous practices and veneration of false gods. The negative theological evaluation of other religions continued into the Christian Church, maintaining a negative attitude which the Christian Church professed over many centuries toward the other religions. Given the reality of religious pluralism in the twenty first century, it is expedient that the positive theological evaluations should be given centre stage if the cordial relationship between Christianity and people of other religions is to be greatly enhanced.

One way to proceed is by looking at the various nuances in the understanding of covenant as expressed in the Old Testament. The first understanding is the reference to a “cosmic covenant” through creation.<sup>12</sup> Dupuis opines that the Old Testament testifies to the use of covenant terminology before God’s covenant with Abraham and Moses. A critical reading of Genesis chapter 12 reveals this. The chapter records the beginning of the Abraham cycle, which is preceded by two previous cycles: Adam (Gen 1-5) and that of Noah (Gen 6-7). What is distinctive about the Genesis account of creation as it relates to Adam is that it does not speak of a covenant relationship between God and the first human being that he created. Rather, it testifies to the intimate personal dealings between the creator with Adam, the father of the

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D’Costa, Paul Knitter, Daniel Strange, *Only One Way: Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 13-14; Gerald O’ Collins, *God’s Other Peoples: Salvation for All* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 32.

human race. Dupuis goes on to show that the Fathers of the Church understood it to be “symbolic of a first universal covenant with the human race.”<sup>13</sup> Other biblical passages that affirm this view are Sir 17:12 which speaks of the “eternal covenant” established by God with the first parents; Jer 33:20-26 and Ps 89 make reference to a “cosmic covenant” through creation.

Just as we have seen in the “Adam cycle,” the “Noah cycle” has its own nuance. Dupuis writes that the covenant between God and Noah is struck before the flood (Gen 6:18). Noah is described as “a righteous man, blameless in his generation, ...[who] walked with God” (Gen 6:9). However, the covenant is not restricted to Noah but extends to all creation (Gen 9:1-17). It is symbolized by the rainbow. The rainbow is a “symbol of the persistence of the cosmic order, of a new world order that cancels out the destruction of the flood.”<sup>14</sup> Again, Dupuis points out that what is unique about the “cosmic covenant” in the case of Noah is that the permanence, which it promises, is due not to natural laws but to the fidelity of the living God. It is no longer only part of natural history but of a history of salvation. The implication for Israel is that “the fidelity of God in the cosmic order is the guarantee of his fidelity in the historical order.”<sup>15</sup> Dupuis’ conclusion is made clearer by Jean Danielou when he remarks that:

Cosmic religion is not natural religion in the sense of being outside the concrete historical supernatural order...It is natural only in the sense that the unique God comes to be known through his action in the cosmos and his appeal to conscience. The cosmic covenant is already a covenant of grace. But it remains imperfect in as much as God reveals himself only through the cosmos.<sup>16</sup>

The cosmic covenant is a supernatural covenant. It belongs to the same order as the mosaic covenant or the Christic covenant. Although it is a covenant of grace, it remains imperfect in as much as God reveals himself through the cosmos. In revealing himself to Noah, God revealed himself to the nations. Despite being obscure, nevertheless, it constitutes the proper object of revelation, which is the saving action of God in the world.<sup>17</sup> How are we to understand

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<sup>13</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 32. See Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1992), 1-13. See Gerald O’ Collins, *Salvation for All: God’s Other Peoples*, 2 citing F. Maass, ‘Adham,’ in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 75-87, at 83-4: ‘the use of the word *adham* in the OT presents one of the strongest evidences for ancient Israelite universalism. In most passages using *adham*, including the earliest texts, it is clear that this word is not intended to refer particularly to Israelites but to all men.’

<sup>14</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Danielou, *Les saints “païens” de l’Ancien Testament* (Paris: Seuil, 1956), 28-29. See English translation *Holy Pagans in the Old Testament* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957).

<sup>17</sup> Danielou, *Holy Pagans in the Old Testament*, 37. See also Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1991b), 131; Gustava Thils, *Propos et problèmes de la théologie des religions non chrétiennes* (Tournai: Casterman, 1966), 67-79.

the significance of the covenant between God and Noah? Dupuis is of the view that the covenant is not limited only to “the knowledge of God through the elements of nature,” but that “it deals with a personal, universal intervention on the part of God in the history of the nations, previous to the subsequent covenant with the chosen people.”<sup>18</sup> For him, the religious traditions of humanity are the chosen testimonials of the covenant with the nations.

The perception of the history of salvation is not limited to a chosen people, but extending to all humanity and human history, finds expression in the writings of the Fathers, particularly Irenaeus when he remarks:

Four covenants were given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the Deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the Law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates the human being, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel, raising and bearing human beings upon its wings into the heavenly Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

The Fathers of the Church interpreted their understanding of the covenant to be more than two covenants, through Abraham-Moses and Jesus Christ, but four, beginning with the covenants of Adam and Noah. The focus is the salvation of the humankind and not just Israel. Having seen that the covenant between God, Adam and Noah preceded God’s covenant with the chosen people of Israel, we now look at the significance of the choice and covenant with Israel.

The covenant at Sinai by God and the chosen people was not only an important event but stood at the heart of the Old Testament. It was initiated by God bringing into existence an interior union between God and his people. Israel became Yahweh’s peculiar possession out of all the peoples of the earth, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19: 5f). Israel is the People of Yahweh, and he is their God (Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17f; Jer 7:23; 11:4; Ezek 14:11). John L. McKenzie suggests that “the covenant probably confers upon Israel the peculiar sanctity compared to other peoples which the priestly class has compared to the laity of Israel.”<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, Johannes Schildenberger remarks that Israel is attached to him in the closest possible way, more than all other peoples as his personal possession. The Israelites

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<sup>18</sup> Danielou, *Holy Pagans in the Old Testament*, 33.

<sup>19</sup>See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 11, 8. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers ANF* Vol. 1, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1977), 429 cited in Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 33; See Demonstration of Aphraates, 11, 11: “The Law and the covenant have been completely transformed. God transformed the first covenant, granted to Adam, and gave another to Noah; yet another to Abraham, which he transformed in order to give another to Moses. And as the Mosaic covenant was not observed, he gave another, in these latter days, which not to be transformed . . . All of these covenants were different from one another.” See *Patologia Syriaca*, 1, 1, 498-502. See Dupuis *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, 119.

<sup>20</sup> John L. McKenzie, “Covenant,” in *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 155.

are a people belonging to him, set aside, a kingdom of priests in which Yahweh is King. Through this union, all Israelites together assume the office of priesthood on behalf of all other nations, by fulfilling the statutes of the covenant (Ex 19:5f).<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, as Dupuis has observed, despite their privileged position as the chosen people, Israel also knows that not all people among the nations are idolatrous. Indeed, “some have recognized the living God who manifested himself through the cosmic covenant.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Dupuis is of the view that the Old Testament does not tell us how many among the nations have recognized the living God. Rather all it says is that all are called to it. This leads him to conclude that Israel’s vocation is to announce the living God to all nations.<sup>23</sup> The invitation to salvation is to all peoples in as much as they acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only God and there is no other (Is 45:14). Here again, the focus is on the universality of salvation for all in which all nations will walk in the light of God’s glory. We agree with Lucien Legrand when he writes that “the God of Israel does not limit his action to the one people of Israel; he is the Lord of universal history. The Old Testament manifests a universalism where everything is placed under God’s providence.”<sup>24</sup> Equally, Lagrand asserts that the sense of election calls Israel to a universal vision of God’s plan with an attitude characterized by a universal humanist interest in the nations. Therefore, the election does not cut off Israel from the nations; it situates it in relation to them. Of paramount importance to us is the fact that the universal extension of salvation to humanity is not opposed but complementary to the election of Israel. As Lagrand has made clear, the double polarity of the election of a people and its openness to the nations reflects the plan of God for humankind: election and universalism call for each other.<sup>25</sup> Of equal value is Dupuis’ suggestion that throughout the history of Israel there was an awareness that all peoples are called by the living God to worship him who alone is. Indeed, “Israel’s own vocation consists in witnessing to this universal call.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Johannes Schildenberger, “Covenant,” in *Bauer Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, ed., Johannes B. Bauer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 142. See Irene Nowell, “Covenant,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 244: “The exodus from Egypt creates for God a special people. The experience at Sinai solemnizes the bond created through the exodus.” (subsequently TNDT).

<sup>22</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 40. See Lucien Legrand, *Le Dieu qui vient* (Paris: Desclée, 1988), 22-29. English translation *Mission in the Bible: Unity and Plurality* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992). See Claus Westermann, *Dieu dans l’Ancient Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> Lagrand, *Mission in the Bible*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 41.

### 1.1.2 The Universal Affirmation of the Lordship of Christ

This section expounds the link between the choice of Israel as the chosen people and the ministry of Jesus. The section will focus on how the New Testament relates that Jesus forbade his disciples during his lifetime to preach to non-Jews on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how we find the disciples involved in intensive missionary work very soon after the resurrection.

The people of Israel never lost the consciousness of being the chosen people at the time of Jesus. They saw themselves as different from other people, “for you are a people consecrated to Yahweh your God; it is you that Yahweh your God has chosen to be his very own people” (Dt 7:6). They are a people on a mission: “Every knee shall bend before Yahweh, every tongue shall swear by him” (Is 45:23). Lucien Richards comments that “at the time of Jesus we find an unparalleled period of missionary activity for Israel.”<sup>27</sup> This deeply held conviction of the Jewish people that they possessed the true and absolute revelation of God found expression in a sense of duty incumbent upon them to make God’s revelation known to the pagans.<sup>28</sup>

A bird’s eye examination of the words and actions of Jesus towards non-Jewish people will show two fundamental attitudes. Firstly, the New Testament relates that Jesus forbade his disciples during his lifetime to preach to non-Jews: “Go not to the Gentiles and enter not the province of Samaria but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:15). Secondly, we find the disciples involved in intensive missionary work very soon after the resurrection. The resurrection gave the early Church a new perspective on the way that they saw Jesus and his mission. They saw Jesus as the “embodiment of all of God’s promises brought to fruition, and the Christ event as the realization of revelation and history.”<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, they interpreted the Christ events to be of two significant ways, namely, that it was “universal and final.”<sup>30</sup> For Richards, the reaction of the early Church was on two fronts. They understood themselves as the chosen people, the people of a new covenant, the “first fruits” of what was to be. In the light of this understanding, the people of Israel interpreted what had happened to

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<sup>27</sup> Lucien Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 5. See Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 71. Jeremias: “Tried to resolve the apparent contradiction: on the one hand, Jesus limited his activity to Israel and, when sending the disciples on mission during his life-time, charged them not to cross the boundaries of Israel; on the other hand, he consistently and firmly promised to pagans a share in the Kingdom of God. Jeremias thinks he can solve the contradiction as follows: ‘We have to do with two successive events, first the call to Israel, and subsequently the redemptive incorporation of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God.’ Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations*, 71.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions*, 5.

them in their history as more symbolic of the purposes of God in and for creation.<sup>31</sup> Besides, they saw in Jesus the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament: he was the fulfilment of God's saving purposes. St. Paul attests to this when he says, "when anyone is united to Christ, there is a new act of creation; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>32</sup>

In the same vein, the New Testament tells us that in Jesus Christ the time is fulfilled (Mk 1:15), the fulness of time has arrived (Gal 4:4), and the Scriptures have been fulfilled (Lk 4:21). In Jesus Christ, God accomplished and fulfilled the promise made to Abraham for all the people of the world (Lk 1:55, 73). Jesus Christ is presented as the one who sums up and fulfils in his own person the whole history of the people of Israel. The covenant established by God with creation, with Israel, becomes focused in the one person of Jesus Christ. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). Anton Vögtle has put forward the view that Jesus, on his part, respected the privilege of Israel, guaranteed in the Old Testament, to be the heir and locus of the promised revelation and salvation. This privilege is founded on the fact that Israel was the covenant people.<sup>33</sup> Vögtle expressly asserts that certainly, "Jesus understood his death to mediate salvation."<sup>34</sup> The implication is that Jesus created not only an entirely new condition for entry into the kingdom of God, but also for belonging to the community of those who await salvation. This introduced a new approach to the proclamation and mediation of salvation.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the disciples of Jesus have the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize all men and women. In *Ad gentes*, we are reminded that the Church is divinely sent to the nations as "the universal sacrament of salvation."<sup>36</sup> She strives to preach the Gospel to all men and women: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age."<sup>37</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that: "The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary

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<sup>31</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Anton Vögtle, "Jesus Christ," in *Bauer Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, ed., Johannes B. Bauer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 421-422.

<sup>34</sup> Vögtle, "Jesus Christ," 424.

<sup>35</sup> Vögtle, "Jesus Christ," 424.

<sup>36</sup> Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Mt 28: 19-20.



since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men [women] share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.”<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Jesus’ existence and words are understood to disclose God to the world. Walter Kasper puts it clearly when he states that the Acts of the Apostles “proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfilment of the messianic expectation of the Old Testament and the eschatological bringer of salvation.”<sup>39</sup> He contends that it is this messianic consciousness that impressed itself so deeply on Christianity that the original confession “Jesus is the Christ” could later on turn into the proper name “Jesus Christ.” It is for the same reason that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth were quite soon called “Christians” (Acts 11:26), that is, Messiah people.<sup>40</sup> What is of crucial importance is that because of the conviction regarding the messiahship of Jesus, the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament became fundamental for the New Testament and for the interpretation of scripture in the early and medieval Church. As a consequence, the universal salvific mission of Jesus Christ and, as a result, the mission of the Church to announce and communicate the gift of Christ, Saviour of all people is upheld. Having seen the evidence of the significance of Jesus Christ for the early Church after the resurrection, we turn to the salvation of those who do not profess believe in him.

Gerald O’ Collins is of the view that in the New Testament Paul recognizes that the external testimony of nature and the inner voice of conscience could lead people to know God (Rom 1:18-32; 2:13-15).<sup>41</sup> It is demonstrated in the Gospel of Luke which relates the account of holy pagans like Cornelius and testifies to God’s universal concern for human salvation (Acts 10:1ff). Other books of the New Testament give witness to the Christian experience and conviction that “God our Saviour ... desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 12:3f). Again, O’ Collins affirms that in the historical context of the letter “truth” refers primarily to the truth of the Gospel. But when the passage was canonized as the classic biblical statement about God’s universal saving will, the content of the “truth” became nuanced. O’ Collins explains that “the condition of being saved would entail knowing and

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<sup>38</sup> CCC no. 850.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 163.

<sup>40</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> O’ Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, 120. See Gerald O’ Collins, *Salvation for All: God’s Other People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 199-206. O’ Collins affirms that: “The biblical records can help us with this issue. It presents a range of ‘outsiders’ who are remembered with respect for what they did in priestly, prophetic, or other ways.” For an assessment of Christ as the Universal Redeemer, see Gerald O’ Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 315-333.

accepting (at least with an implicit faith) the truth that God exists, rewards goodness and punishes evil (Heb 11:6). In this way, the New Testament offers us hints about the state of those who do not hear the Gospel message and hence cannot embrace the Christian faith.”<sup>42</sup>

## **1.2 Selected Study of the Development of the Understanding of Salvation in the Church: The Apostolic Church to the Fathers of the Church of the Fourth Century**

This section makes a selected overview of the development and the understanding of salvation in the Church. The section highlights the development of the interpretations from the apostolic times to the first four centuries of the Christian era.

### **1.2.1 The Apostolic Church**

The Church of the apostles gave witness to the fact that “Jesus has a normative or essential relationship to the universal kingdom of God for all men and women.”<sup>43</sup> This theme of the Reign of God was significant for the apostolic Church because “the coming of God’s reign was used by Jesus of Nazareth as the keynote of his mission.”<sup>44</sup> The Apostolic Church saw in the proclamation of the Reign of God not only the establishment of God’s reign through the life and works of Jesus, but also “the opening of all human beings toward the Reign of God through faith and conversion.”<sup>45</sup> Commenting on the paschal event, Dupuis maintains that the early apostolic Church saw that the death and resurrection of Jesus offers Christians a new perspective for understanding not only their situation, but that of all humankind, including people who belong to other religious traditions.<sup>46</sup> The paschal mystery of the death and

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<sup>42</sup> O’ Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, 120.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 144.

<sup>44</sup> Donald Senior, “Reign of God,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds., Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), 851-861. See Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963); Bruce Chilton ed., *The Kingdom of God: Issues in Religion and Theology 5* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); G. Klein, “The Biblical Understanding of ‘The Kingdom of God,’” *Interpretation* 26, 1972, 387-418; Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Fuellenbach John, “The Kingdom of God,” in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, eds., Latourelle René & Fisichella Rino (New York: St. Pauls, 1994), 586-594; J.D Crossan, *The Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: 1973); G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: SCM Press, 1973); W. Kelber, *The Kingdom of Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia, 1974); G.E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1774); Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1976); B. Scott, *Jesus, Symbol-Maker for the Kingdom* (Philadelphia, 1981); G. M. Soares-Prabhu, “The Kingdom of God: Jesus’ Vision of a New Society,” in D. S. Amalopavadass, ed., *The Indian Church in a Struggle for a New Society* (Bangalore, 1981), Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981).

<sup>45</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 31. See also his *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 48-52; Karl Rahner, “Theos in the New Testament,” in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 93-94.

<sup>46</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 31.

resurrection of Jesus was highly esteemed by the early Church because it represents the salvation effected in him by God for all humankind. In addition, the paschal mystery did not simply isolate the early Christian Church in the security of its privileged position. On the contrary, it pushes the early Church to discover the truly universal meaning of the Jesus Christ event, and consequently its effective and saving presence within human beings in other religious situations.<sup>47</sup> Again, Dupuis affirms that in Christ, God establishes a new order in his relationships with humankind, the consequences of which reach all human beings in their different situations.<sup>48</sup> For the early Church, this faith was lived consciously and explicitly. The explicit profession of faith in Jesus Christ will constitute an important requirement in the future Church. Equally, it would be a major reason for excluding many from her membership in later developments. One way of understanding the attitude of the early Apostolic Church to people of non-Christian religion is by investigating the mission of three important New Testament personalities, namely, St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John. They unveil what we can identify as the main sentiments of Christians to non-Christian religions. Apparently, there is no uniform approach to other religions as the writings on them are “complex and ambivalent.”<sup>49</sup>

### **1.2.2 St. Peter: God Shows No Partiality**

In the encounter between Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius, we discover that the gift of the Holy Spirit is extended to Gentiles. Of significance, is the emphasis that God does not show partiality when it comes to the gift of salvation. The evangelist Luke writes that while Peter was announcing the Good News to the household of the centurion at Caesarea, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (Acts 10:44). Why this episode is relevant is that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit even on the gentiles (Acts 10:45) became for Peter a sign that they too were called. Worthy of note is the fact that the gift of the Holy Spirit came after “Peter’s kerygmatic announcing of Jesus.”<sup>50</sup> As Dupuis has made crystal clear, “the entire episode brought Peter to the realization that the gentiles too can be acceptable to God: ‘Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him’ (Acts 10:34-35).”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 32.

<sup>49</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 48. See also *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 32. See J. Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 143.

<sup>50</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 48.

### 1.2.2 St. Paul: All Will Be Judged According To Their Deeds

Our encounter with St. Paul reveals two prevailing attitudes towards non-Christians. The first is Paul's pessimism as is evidenced in the Letter to the Romans (Rom 1-3). Here Paul preaches that the wrath of God will fall upon pagans for not recognizing God's permanent revelation through the cosmos (Rom 1:18-32). The dilemma for Paul is that the Jews fall under the same condemnation since they too rejected Christ (Rom 2-3). As far as Paul is concerned, the special status of the Jews as the chosen people does not exempt them. Paul sees their situation as parallel to that of the gentiles. He states emphatically that all will be judged according to their deeds: "When gentiles who have not the law do by nature (*phusikos*) what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written in their hearts" (Rom 2:14-15).<sup>52</sup> What this points to is that although they have not received the biblical revelation, they can act according to the "Torah." Also, they do so naturally and spontaneously. Giovanni Odasso articulates it succinctly when he affirms that "even the Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, if they act according to their deep yearning, in other words, if they lead a life fundamentally inspired by authentic mutual love, show that they have been reached by the divine promise of the new covenant, which has been fulfilled in Jesus, 'Messiah and Lord.'"<sup>53</sup> Paul is convinced about the possibility of the salvation of people of other religions. He believes that it will be possible through conversion. It is for this reason that he uses the biblical expression "circumcision of the heart" found in Jeremiah (Jer 4:4). For Paul, "circumcision of the heart is synonymous with true conversion."<sup>54</sup> In applying this expression to the Gentiles, Paul was stressing that they have the works of the law written in their hearts:

So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?... For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.<sup>55</sup>

Commenting on this statement, Dupuis remarks that for the Apostles, the Gentiles "who observe the law" are reached in a mysterious manner by the saving grace manifested in Christ

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<sup>52</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 48.

<sup>53</sup> G. Odasso, *Biblica e religioni: Prospettive bibliche per la teologia della religioni*, 322 in Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Romans 2:26-29.

Jesus: even if they do not know it, they are “in the Spirit,” albeit in an imperfect manner, precisely because it is not transfigured by faith in the risen Lord.<sup>56</sup> Odasso highlights the fact that from all that Paul says about the concrete situation of the religious life of the “pagan” and Gentiles, it is clear that they can attain saving faith, that is, without explicit faith in Jesus Christ, in whom the mystery of salvation has been achieved by God, at least through “a fundamental option vis-à-vis the Absolute.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Odasso is of the view that in Paul and in the New Testament as a whole, there is a tension between the “yes to religions” and the “no to the religions.” Such tension is to be understood by keeping in view the fundamental perspective of the New Testament, which proclaims the definitively victorious character of the salvation that God has brought about with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 5:12-21). Thus, he concludes that the picture drawn by Paul makes clear the real possibility of the Church engaging in dialogue with the religions.<sup>58</sup>

#### **1.2.4 St. Paul: The Unknown God**

The Acts of the Apostles gives us the testimony of St. Paul’s preaching among the Gentiles, first in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) and then before the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-31). In both instances, we see an open attitude of Paul towards the religiosity of the Gentiles.<sup>59</sup> At Lystra, Paul recognized that the paralyzed man who was listening to him “had the faith to be healed,” and he healed him (Acts 14:8-11). The Apostle to the Gentiles highlights the fact that the religion of the Greeks has now been superseded by faith in Jesus Christ. He buttresses his argument by affirming that: “In past generations he [God] allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:16-17). For Dupuis, this perspective “corresponds to God’s revelation through the cosmos spoken of in the Letter to the Romans (Rom 1:18-32). The manifestation of God through “nature” is already one vehicle towards the divine.<sup>60</sup> Another confirmation of Paul’s positive attitude toward people of other religions is his reference to the “unknown God” (Acts 17:21-

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<sup>56</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Odasso, *Biblica e religioni*, 322.

<sup>58</sup> Odasso, *Biblica e religioni*, 322. See B. Stoeckle, “Die ausserbiblische Menschheit und die Welt-Religionen,” in *Mysterium Salutis*, ed. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967), 2:1069-70.

<sup>59</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religion*, 35. See *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 35.

31).<sup>61</sup> In the speech, Paul not only acknowledges but praises the religious spirit of the Greeks.<sup>62</sup> He announced to them that the “unknown God,” whom they adore without knowing him, is preparation for the gift of faith in Christ. What the speech meant for Paul was that the religions of the nations are not devoid of their own value but find in Jesus Christ the fulfilment of their aspirations. Indeed, they constitute a positive preparation for the Christian faith. Paul’s speech was effective and yielded results because some people converted to the Christian faith. Prominent among them were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris (Acts 17:34). The speech at Athens was a decisive moment for Paul because it began a missionary strategy based on a positive approach to the religion of the Greeks. We can draw a few conclusions from his address to the Areopagites. According to Legrand, it points to a Greek world that was awaiting the “unknown God” and predisposed to meet him. In this sense, the Gentiles worship in a situation of “not knowing.”<sup>63</sup> Here we see that in Paul, there is the awareness of the possibility of salvation for those who are not Christians. However, they share in the hope of the resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. Through the Holy Spirit, non-Christians can have an encounter with the divine world in such an authentic way as to develop an experience of intense spiritual values.<sup>64</sup> Crucially, it does not take away the fact that the Christian bears a light of revelation that is enkindled in the human heart only by acceptance of the gospel of God.

### 1.2.5 St. John: God’s Universal Involvement with Humankind

The Johannine Gospel, in particular his prologue, presents us with a veritable approach to the religions of the gentiles.<sup>65</sup> It is John’s conviction that salvation history which began at creation is wrought by God through the Logos. Dupuis writes that “this history, from the beginning (Jn 1:1), is ordered to the incarnation of the Word in humanity (Jn 1:14).”<sup>66</sup>The

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<sup>61</sup> St. Paul standing before the Areopagus proclaims: “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-25).

<sup>62</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 50.

<sup>63</sup> L. Lagrand, “Jesus et l’Eglise primitive: Un éclairage biblique,” *Spiritu* 138 (February 1995), 64-77; cf. 75-76.

<sup>64</sup> Odasso, *Biblica e religioni*, 347.

<sup>65</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 50. For comprehensive study of the Christology of St. John’s Gospel see, Brown Raymond, *The Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970); M.-E. Boismard, *Le prologue de Saint Jean* (Paris: Cerf, 1953), 43-49; A. Feuillet, *Le prologue du quatrième évangile* (Brugs: Desclee de Brouwer, 1968), 62-76; Rudulf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 253-54; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); I. de la Potterie, *La verite chez Saint Jean*. 2 vols. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press).

<sup>66</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 50.

doctrine of the incarnation is an attempt to express Jesus Christ as the special agent and ultimate fulfilment of God's promises. However, before the event of the incarnation, the Word was present in the world as the source of life (Jn 1:4), as "the true light that enlightens every human being by coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him." (Jn 1:9). It is obvious that the divine Logos is actively present throughout the whole of human history even though it has not yet become incarnate. As Lucien Richards writes:

The doctrine of pre-existence and the title of Logos provided a foundation for a doctrine which attributed all the manifestations of pagan wisdom to Christ as the pre-existent and eternal Logos. Here lies the possibility of a Christian universalism that would see the work of Christ in all religions.<sup>67</sup>

The author of the Fourth Gospel makes it clear that the incarnation is the culmination of God's manifestations through his Word that encompasses the entire history of humankind: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). It is a concept developed in the Old Testament Wisdom literature. A study of Wisdom literature reveals that there is a close relationship, sometimes almost an identification, between the Wisdom of God and his Word. What we see in the Gospel of John is an affirmation of a universal action and presence of the Word of God already in human history. It demonstrates the permanence of this action of the Logos before the incarnation, and also as such, after the incarnation of the Word and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>68</sup> It is this universal and continuous involvement of God in human history that allows for a positive approach to the religions of the world.

Our key concern in this study is to establish whether the unicity and universality of Christ has a place in the context of religious pluralism. So far, we have seen that both the Old and New Testaments are not principally concerned with the situation of the salvation of other religions, hence the dominance of a negative outlook. However, our investigation has allowed us to see that there are leads found in the sacred books for a positive approach to religions, firstly and principally in the biblical faith in God's universal involvement with humankind in dialogue of salvation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Richards, *What Are They Saying About Christ And World Religions?*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 142.

<sup>69</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 50-51.

### 1.3 Optimism Concerning Salvation Outside the Church: Origenism

This section shall provide insight into the remarkable opening toward other aspects of surrounding cultures and religions despite many negative assessments. It analyses key patristic writers who saw positive signs in non-Christian religions.

According to Jerome P. Theisen, “the current development of ecclesiological doctrine bearing upon the relationship between the Church of Christ and the salvation of people outside the Church cannot be appreciated unless it is seen in the light of its historical genesis.”<sup>70</sup> Arguing along this line, Alice Priest remarks that the “traditional ways of telling this story according to traditional Catholic Church Magisterial position tend to present it as linear and somewhat simplistic, however, it is not entirely linear and is far from simplistic. There are always exceptions, tensions, and nuance.”<sup>71</sup> Dupuis on his part indicates that historically, the context in which the early Fathers wrote was vastly different from the one in which today we reflect on the significance of the other religious traditions of the world. He cautions that it would be a dangerous anachronism to transpose directly what was said in one context to the other. In addition, he suggests that opinions differed vastly, going from an open attitude toward the culture of the “nations” to downright condemnation.<sup>72</sup> Dupuis goes further to assert that “many negative assessments notwithstanding, the fact remains that the early tradition witnesses to a remarkable opening toward other aspects of surrounding culture and religion.”<sup>73</sup>

#### 1.3.1 St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165)

One of the earliest Fathers of the Church who gave a positive answer to the question about the possibility of salvation for Gentiles who had kept the natural law was St. Justin Martyr. Justin was a philosopher before his conversion to Christianity. Francis Sullivan highlights the fact that for Justin, keeping the natural law meant living according to reason, which, as a philosopher, he had known as *logos*.<sup>74</sup> Justin knew the *logos* was incarnate in Christ and he uses the understanding in answering the question put to him about the salvation of Gentiles who had lived before the coming of Christ. Justin remarks:

If some should accuse us as if we held that people born before the time of Christ were not accountable to God for their actions, we shall anticipate and answer such a

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<sup>70</sup> Jerome P. Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation* (Minnesota: St. John’s University Press, 1976), 1.

<sup>71</sup> Alice Priest, “The Catholic Church’s Theological Approach to other Religions: From Conversion to Conversation,” *Australian eJournal of Theology*, no. 9 (March 2007), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 54.

<sup>74</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response*, 15.



difficulty. We have been taught that Christ is the first-begotten of God, and we have declared him to be the *Logos* of which all mankind partakes. Those, therefore, who lived according to reason (*logos*) were really Christians, even though they were thought to be atheists, such as among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus and others like them... So also, those who lived before Christ but did not live according to reason were wicked men, and enemies of Christ, and murderers of those who did live according to reason. Whereas those who lived then, or who live now, according to reason are Christians. Such as these can be confident and unafraid.<sup>75</sup>

The theological perspective of Justin here consists in the realization that we find in the second century an anticipation of Karl Rahner's term "anonymous Christians" to describe those who are justified without explicit Christian faith.<sup>76</sup> Theisen notes that Justin, writing primarily as an apologist of Christianity for the benefit of non-Christians, does not provide a well-developed doctrine of the Church. According to Theisen, Justin's Logos doctrine, however, allows him to detect Christian values in good, noble and "reasonable" people, who lived upright lives before and after Christ. It is in this sense that Justin maintains that there exists a Logos Christianity beyond the borders of explicit Christianity.<sup>77</sup>

### 1.3.2 St. Irenaeus (130-202 AD)

St. Irenaeus bishop of Lyon and martyr for the faith directed his major work against the Gnostic heretics whom he considered to pose a grave threat to the Christian faith of his day. He spoke about the providence of God with regard to those who had lived before the coming of Christ. He argued that:

Christ did not come only for those who lived at the time of the Emperor Tiberius, nor does the Father exercise his providence only for those who are living now. Rather, he has provided for all those who from the beginning have lived virtuously in their own generation and feared and loved God, and treated their neighbours with justice and kindness, and have loved God, and treated their Christ and to hear his voice.<sup>78</sup>

The passage points to Irenaeus' reference to the people of Israel, who were anticipating the coming of the messiah. Sullivan opines that the assertion can be taken to refer to Gentiles who had come to believe in God as saviour, and thus could be said to have longed implicitly for the coming of Christ.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 46, trans. Falls, *Fathers of the Church*, 6:83-84. Subsequently FC.

<sup>76</sup> Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christian," in *Theological Investigations*, trans. Vol. 6, 390-98.

<sup>77</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 4. See L. W. Barnard, Justin Martyr. *Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 149.

<sup>78</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4:22, 2; *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, ed., J.-P Migne (Paris: 1857-66). (Subsequently, PG).

<sup>79</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response*, 16.

### 1.3.3 Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 211)

Clement was a great teacher of the School of Alexandria. He was trained in Greek philosophy which he applied to the defence and explanation of the Christian faith. Philosophy for Clement comes from God; it constitutes for the Greek world a divine economy, parallel, if not in all things equal, to the Jewish economy of the Law. Both were designed by God to lead people to Christ.<sup>80</sup> For him, Gentiles prior to the coming of Christ could be saved. Clement writes:

God has care of all, since he is the Lord of all. And he is Saviour of all; it cannot be said that he is Saviour of these, and not of others. As each one was disposed to receive it, God distributed his blessings, both to Greeks and to barbarians; and in their own time those were called who were predestined to be among the faithful elect.<sup>81</sup>

Clement took great pride in his Greek culture and learning and regarded people of other cultures as barbarians. Despite this world view, it did not stop him from teaching that God had offered the grace of salvation to them as well.<sup>82</sup> Jacques Dupuis writes that for Clement, “authentic guides of humankind are the ancient philosophers who, truly inspired by God and acted upon by the Logos, have taught the nations divine truths.”<sup>83</sup> These ancient philosophers include Indian sages along with other non-Greek philosophers:

The Indian gymnosophists are also in the number, and the other non-Greek philosophers. And of these are two classes, some of them called Sarmanae, and others, Brahmins... Some, too, of the Indians obey the precept of Buddha, whom, on account of his extraordinary sanctity, they have raised to divine honour.<sup>84</sup>

For Dupuis, this amounts to affirming, together with the presence of partial Christian truth in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, a positive significance of these traditions in the history of salvation.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 153.

<sup>81</sup> Clement, *Stromata* 7:2 (PG 9:409-10).

<sup>82</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 16.

<sup>83</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 68. See Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 153.

<sup>84</sup> Clement, *Stromata*, I, 15; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 2:316 (Subsequently, ANF).

<sup>85</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 68.

### 1.3.4 Origen (d. c. 253)

Origen was a theologian and an exegete, described by Jerome P. Theisen as “one of the most original theologians of the early Church, [who] continues the Logos thought of Justin.”<sup>86</sup> His writings on the salvation of non-Christians is complex. On the one hand, he continues in the Logos-theology of Justin, and on the other hand, he is very explicit about salvation in the Church only. Continuing the Logos-theology of Justin, Origen posits that all rational beings in the world share in the reasoning power of the Son of God, the very Logos of the Father.<sup>87</sup> Origen writes:

I am of the opinion, then, that the activity of the Father and the Son is to be seen both in saints and in sinners, in rational men and in [dumb animals], yes, and even in lifeless things and in absolutely everything that exists; but the activity of the Holy Spirit does not extend at all either to lifeless things, or to things that have life but yet are dumb, nor is it to be found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness and are not wholly converted to better things. Only in those who are already turning to better things and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ, that is, who are engaged in good deeds and who abide in God, is the work of the Holy Spirit, I think, to be found.<sup>88</sup>

This quotation brings out one of the dimensions of the complex nature of Origen’s theology. He affirms that the power of the Logos is more extensive than that of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit only dwells in the saints, while the Logos is at work in all rational beings. Along with this view is Origen’s explicit theology of salvation only in the Church. He writes that: “Let no one fool himself; outside of this house, i.e., outside the Church, no one is saved; for if someone goes outside, he becomes responsible for his own death.”<sup>89</sup> Origen was a pioneer of Christian allegorical exegesis of the scriptures. He uses the harlot episode in the book of Joshua to warn that there is no salvation outside the Church. The two Hebrew spies tell Rahab: “If anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we shall be guiltless” (Jos 2:19). Jerome P. Theisen opines that Origen claims the blood of Christ; the house itself which contains the family of the saved is a sign of the Church.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, salvation is assured only for those within the Church. For Origen, all those who break the relationship with the Church wilfully including Christians and Jews who have not accepted Christianity have themselves to blame. Dupuis notes that a different perspective is highlighted

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<sup>86</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, Bk. 1., Chap. 3, 5. Trans. G. W. Butterworth (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 34.

<sup>89</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, 3, 5 (PG 12, 841-42). See Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 5, 16 (PG 13, 520f).

<sup>90</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 6. See Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 87.

when Origen comments on 1 Cor 15:28 where he states: “The body of Christ... is the whole humankind, nay rather perhaps the whole of creation, and each of us is a member and part.”<sup>91</sup> According to Dupuis, Origen envisages a time when the sick members of the body will be restored to health and all will be saved. He agrees with J. P. Theisen that such universalism regarding the Church and the presumed restoration of its sick members “tones down considerably the ultimate seriousness of the stand taken in his Homilies on Joshua. Dupuis explains that the passage points to Origen’s eschatological perspective of universal restoration in the *apokatastasis* which, however, Origen propounded only as a “working hypothesis,” a provisional opinion.<sup>92</sup> In summary, Origen’s thoughts on the Christian attitude to other religions is nuanced.

#### **1.4 Negative and Pessimistic Approach to Salvation Outside the Church – *Extra Ecclesia Nulla Salus* - St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Irenaeus, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostum**

In this section, we shall critically examine the negative and pessimistic approach in the writings of the Fathers. The formula: “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*,” will be explored and the different interpretations by different generation of writers and teachers.

Along with the positive attitude of the Church to non-Christian religions in the patristic period, there was primarily a negative and pessimistic approach towards other religions. The approach was encapsulated by the famous axiom: “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” - “outside the Church no salvation.” This attitude dominated nearly two thousand years of Christian history and teaching. The axiom states that the Mystical Body of Christ is the Church and that outside of it there is no salvation. Many reasons can be adduced for sustaining this teaching for a long time. Firstly, the patristic world was a small world restricted only to the known world. Hans Küng describes the milieu as an era when the Church had a secure place in the whole of the inhabited world and seemed for a period that the whole world was Christian.<sup>93</sup> Geographically, the world was not as global as it is today since most of the continents had not been explored by nations in Europe. For Küng, it was taken for granted that in due course “every human being would be brought face to face existentially with the Christian message and therefore Mark 16:16 was indiscriminately applied to all those that were not baptized.”<sup>94</sup> Another reason noted

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<sup>91</sup> Origen, *Homily 2 on Ps. 36* (PG 12:1330).

<sup>92</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 87.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 313.

<sup>94</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 313.

for the prolonged traditional teaching of “no salvation outside the Church” was the absence of any major split in the Catholic Church. Although smaller heresies had taken place, it was nowhere near the split that will take place later with the Protestant Reformation. At this time, anyone who did not believe was seen in bad faith. Küng explains that this led to the axiom being taken literally and it was assumed that not only the pagans outside the Church, but also Jews, heretics and schismatics would finish up in hell. Thus, Küng concludes that even in the development of doctrine in the early Church the dangers of such a negative formulation can be seen.<sup>95</sup> The main reason for the dictum taking root is apostasy which is very clear in Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom.

#### 1.4.1 Cyprian (d. 258)

St. Cyprian was the bishop in Carthage in North Africa. He died as a martyr in 258 and is best associated with the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, “Outside the Church no salvation.” Yves Congar suggests that Origen in Alexandria and St. Cyprian in Carthage applied the expression to people who lived after Christ’s coming. They mean them in an absolute and exclusive sense.<sup>96</sup> The expression and its usage go back to Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others.<sup>97</sup> Francis Sullivan notes that Cyprian’s name is especially associated with this axiom because it occurs with frequency and urgency in his writings.<sup>98</sup> What is imperative is that despite the frequent use of this expression by Cyprian, it was never addressed as a warning to non-Christians, who were still in the majority of the people of the Roman empire of his day. On the contrary, he directed his warning to Christians, who were either in danger of being separated by heresy or schism. Cyprian writes:

Anyone who separates himself from the Church and unites with an adulteress (schism), shuts himself off from the promises of the Church, and anyone who leaves the Church of Christ, will not deserve Christ’s rewards. He is an outcast, unholy, an enemy, God is not a Father, if the Church is not his mother. If anyone outside Noah’s ark had been able to escape, then so might man outside the Church.<sup>99</sup>

Cyprian judges such people as guilty of their separation from the Church, and therefore personally responsible for their exclusion from the salvation to be found only in the Church.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 313.

<sup>96</sup> Yves Congar, *The Wide World My Parish: Salvation and its Problems*, trans., Donald Attwater (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961).

<sup>97</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*. III, 24, 1 (PG 7, 966); Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I, 6 (PG 8, 281); Origen, *In Jesu Nave* 3, 5 (PG 11, 841).

<sup>98</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 20.

<sup>99</sup> Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesiae* 6; Letter 3, 1. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: C. Gerold’s Son, 214). Hereafter cited as CSEL.

<sup>100</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 20.

In the writings of Cyprian, we see the application to the axiom of the analogy of the ark in order to illustrate the juridical exclusiveness of the term and all its consequences. He centres his ecclesiology around the concept of indivisibility and unity. As Theisen has observed, Cyprian argues that because the Church is one and indivisible, “the lapsed and schismatics withdraw and place themselves outside the unity of the Church.”<sup>101</sup> His theological formulation was influenced by the persecution of Christians in his time during the reign of Decius (250-251), the Schisms of Novatian in Rome and Felicissimus in Carthage.<sup>102</sup> His views on the lapsed and schismatics was unambiguous. It is in the same clear and decisive way that he explains the importance of union with the bishop. According to Cyprian:

Let them not think that the way of salvation exists for them, if they refused to obey the bishops or priests... The proud and insolent are killed with the sword of the Spirit, when they are cast out from the Church. For they cannot live outside, since there is only one house of God, and there can be no salvation for anyone except in the Church.<sup>103</sup>

For Cyprian, there is no dichotomy between union with the Church and union with the bishop of the local Church. Theisen contends that for Cyprian, “since the Church is founded on the bishops, salvation is contingent upon maintaining union with them.”<sup>104</sup> Consequently, “schismatics are outside the Church and outside the way of salvation because they have severed their union with the bishops.”<sup>105</sup> It is on this ground that he threatens them with excommunication.

Similarly, the attitude of Cyprian towards heretics is strict and rigid. Francis Sullivan highlights that Cyprian believes that “the unity of the Church was essentially a unity of love; and hence anyone who violated this unity by heresy or schism was sinning against the virtue of charity.”<sup>106</sup> Cyprian insists strongly that “neither baptism nor public confession, can avail the heretic anything toward salvation, because there is no salvation outside the church.”<sup>107</sup> According to him:

Nay, even though they should suffer death for the confession of the Name, the guilt of such men is not removed even by their blood; the grievous irremissible sin of schism is not purged even by martyrdom. No martyr can he be who is not in the Church; the kingdom shall be closed to him who has deserted her who is destined to be its queen.

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<sup>101</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 8.

<sup>103</sup> Cyprian, Letter 4, 4 (CSEL 3, 476).

<sup>104</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 9.

<sup>106</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 21.

<sup>107</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* 73: 21 (CSEL 3, 2:795); See *Fathers of the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press), 51:282.

Peace is what Christ gave us; He bade us be united in heart and mind; He enjoined on us to keep intact and unimpaired the pledges of our love and charity; no one can claim the martyr's name who has broken off his love for the brethren. This is the Apostle Paul's teaching and witness... "If I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, I profit nothing".<sup>108</sup>

Cyprian is of the conviction that even martyrdom cannot lead heretics and schismatics to salvation. The guilt of separation from the Church is so grave that it cannot be forgiven even for dying for the faith. In the same vein, he will not recognize baptism outside the Church. He considers it invalid. The reason he gives is that people outside the Church do not possess the Holy Spirit. If they do not possess the Holy Spirit they cannot baptize others. Furthermore, Cyprian holds a strong conviction that "the Church alone has the life-giving water and the power of baptizing and of cleansing men."<sup>109</sup> His extremely strict perspective on unity in the Church was not totally accepted. Accordingly, Jacques Dupuis notes that this interpretation "will be contradicted later but which testifies to the rigid notion of the Church on which the axiom was based."<sup>110</sup> While it can be said that Cyprian stated clearly and emphatically that there is no salvation for heretics and schismatics outside the Church, there is no evidence that he extended the interpretation to people of other religions. Dupuis agrees with Francis A. Sullivan when he writes:

There is no instance in his writings in which Cyprian explicitly applied his saying: No salvation outside the Church, to the majority of people who were still pagans in his day. We know that he judged Christian heretics and schismatics guilty of their separation from the Church. Did he also judge all pagans guilty of their failure to accept the Christian Gospel and enter the Church? We do not know.<sup>111</sup>

We see clearly that the direction of exclusion from salvation by the early Church was more internal than external. The focus is on those within the Church who are judged by the early Christian writers to be guilty of grave heresy and schism. Sullivan elaborates thus:

It is quite possible that, if asked, they would have answered that there was no salvation outside the Church for Jews and pagans either. But it is significant for the history of this axiom that we do not find them applying it to others than Christians at this time when Christians were still a persecuted minority... The case was different when Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman empire and most people had accepted the Christian faith.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Cyprian, *The Unity of the Church*, 14; trans., M. Bévenot, *Ancient Christian Writers*, 25: 56. Subsequently, ACW.

<sup>109</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 69:3* (CSEL 3, 752). See *Letter 66: 2* (CSEL 3, 728); *69: 10* (CSEL 3, 758).

<sup>110</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 88.

<sup>111</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church*, 22-23.

<sup>112</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 22-24.

When put in context, the doctrinal statement of Cyprian does not exclude from salvation everyone who was outside the Church like Jews and pagans. On the contrary, his warning is directed at “Christians whom he judged to be guilty of persisting in sins against faith and charity by reason of their allegiance to heretical or schismatic sects.”<sup>113</sup> Again, Jerome P. Theisen describes his attitude in this way: “he insists on the strict visible unity of the Church, even to the point of denying the validity of baptism, martyrdom, and the gift of the Spirit outside the authentic gathering of the faithful around the bishop.”<sup>114</sup> Subsequent theologians will continue to stress the unity of the Church. They would correct his notion of the Church especially the effects of baptism and of the Spirit outside the visible unity of the Church.<sup>115</sup>

The famous dictum, *extra ecclesia nulla salus*, was nuanced after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire in the fourth century. The formula was interpreted and extended to exclude Jews and pagans from salvation. Before Christianity became the state religion it had gone through a vicious persecution which came to an end with the edicts of emperors Galerius (311) and Constantine (313). Within a short period from the time of Constantine, the great majority of the people had embraced the Christian faith.<sup>116</sup> The consequence was that a new attitude towards people of other faiths came into focus. Francis A. Sullivan writes that the Fathers of the Church at this time applied the doctrine that “there is no salvation outside the Church” to the situation of pagans and Jews. They applied the judgment of guilt regarding everyone who had not accepted the Christian faith. Sullivan surmised that the reason behind the judgment was the assumption that the message of the gospel had by now been proclaimed everywhere, and everyone had had ample opportunity to accept it. Thus, the conclusion was that those who had not accepted it were guilty of refusing God’s offer of salvation and would be justly condemned.<sup>117</sup> Three Fathers of the Church articulated this perspective; St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom.

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<sup>113</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 22; Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 89.

<sup>114</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 10-11.

<sup>115</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 10-11.

<sup>116</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 24.

<sup>117</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 24.



#### 1.4.2 St. Ambrose (d. 397)

St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan commented on the axiom “no salvation outside the Church” from the vantage point of the sacrament of baptism before admission into the Church. Ambrose views “a desire for baptism (and the Church) as a way to the grace of salvation.”<sup>118</sup> He remarked:

If someone does not believe in Christ he defrauds himself of this universal benefit, just as if someone were to shut out the rays of the sun by closing his window. For the mercy of the Lord has been spread by the Church to all nations; the faith has been spread to all peoples.<sup>119</sup>

For Ambrose, baptism is the means to membership in the Church and the way to salvation. The lack of baptism did not guarantee salvation since it was presumed that everyone had heard the Gospel. Ambrose was aware that in the past heretics and schismatics had been denied salvation. In this context, his judgment was directed at Jews and pagans for failing to believe in Christ. For Ambrose, even if one desired baptism, the grace of salvation was extended to that person as we see in his funeral oration “On the Death of Valentinian”<sup>120</sup> over the burial of Emperor Valentinian who died as a catechumen. Ambrose says that he had heard people expressing regret that the Emperor was not baptised. He points out that the Emperor had the intention of being baptised and had asked him for baptism. Ambrose was of the opinion that Valentinian will receive the grace which he desired and obtain what he asked for. Furthermore, he contends that if martyrs are cleansed in their blood, then so is Valentinian in his good-will and piety.<sup>121</sup>

#### 1.4.3 Saint Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-ca. 395)

Gregory of Nyssa, teaching on “no salvation outside the Church,” like his contemporary Ambrose, presumed that all had heard the call to the Christian faith. Consequently, those outside the Church were guilty of denying themselves the grace of salvation.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> Ambrose, *In Psalm. 118 Sermo* 8: 57 (PL 15: 1318).

<sup>120</sup> Ambrose, *On the Death of Valentinian*, 51 (CSEL 73, 354): “But I hear that you are in sorrow because he (Valentinian) did not receive the baptismal mysteries. Tell me: what else is there in us except will, except request? Now how some time he has had the wish to be baptized even before coming to Italy, and recently he indicated that he wanted me to baptize him. It was primarily for this reason that he decided to send for me. Does he not, therefore, have the grace that he desired, the grace that he requested? And because he requested, he received. Thus, it is: ‘Whatever death the just man experiences, his soul will be at rest’ (Wis 4, 7). See 23 (CSEL 73, 341); 57 (CSEL 73, 356).

<sup>121</sup> George D. Smith, ed., *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), 783.

<sup>122</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* 30 (PG 45:76-77): “If, then, faith is a good thing, they say, why has this gift not come to all? Now if what we are saying were taken to mean that faith was distributed to men by the divine will in such a way that some were called, but others receive no call to faith, then with reason one could accuse this mystery of injustice. But if in fact the call has gone out to all, with no difference on account of rank, age or nation... how could it be right to blame God for the fact that his word has not achieved its dominion over

#### 1.4.4 Saint John Chrysostom (ca. 349-ca. 407)

St. John Chrysostom continued in the tradition of the Fathers of the fourth century, teaching the strict necessity of belonging to the Church for salvation. He laid a lot of emphasis on the guilt of those who had not accepted the faith in his day. In a famous passage, Chrysostom writes:

Do not say: “How is it that God has neglected that sincere and honest pagan?” You will find that such a one has not really been diligent in seeking the truth, since what concerns the truth is now clearer than the sun. How shall they obtain pardon who, when they see the doctrine of truth spread before them, make no effort to come to know it? For now the name of God is proclaimed to all, what the prophets predicted has come true, and the religion of the pagans has been proved false.... It is impossible that anyone who is vigilant in seeking the truth should be condemned by God.<sup>123</sup>

Commenting on this quotation, Dupuis elaborates that for Saint John Chrysostom, “there is no salvation for pagans outside the Church and that they are guilty for being outside it.”<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Theisen has observed that for John Chrysostom, “one must belong to the Church to be saved.”<sup>125</sup> While Chrysostom recognizes the salvation of the righteous in Judaism and those associated with the Old Testament, he reinforced the teaching that with the coming of Christ Judaism is no longer a way to salvation. Chrysostom was harsh on his judgment on the Jews. He judged them to be guilty of rejecting Christ and excluded them from salvation as long as they persisted in this rejection. In a sermon, he warned his congregation thus: “You have grounds for shame if you do not change for the better but persist in your untimely contentiousness. That is what destroyed the Jews.”<sup>126</sup> Theisen points out that Chrysostom’s interpretation of the axiom “outside the Church no salvation” was literal, referring to “outside the visible Church.”<sup>127</sup> So rigid was his interpretation that he did not allow Jews baptism by desire as a substitute for actual baptism. The same rigid judgment was applied to the catechumenate, which he considered insufficient for salvation. Moreover, there is no clarity

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all? For he who has full power over the universe, for the supreme honour of mankind, left something in our power, of which each one is alone the master, and this is the will, a thing that cannot be enslaved, and has self-determining power, since it is seated in the liberty of thought and mind. Therefore, such blame would more justly be attributed to those who have not been drawn to the faith, rather than to him who has called them to believe.”

<sup>123</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epist. ad Rom. hom. 26: 3-4* (PG 60: 641-42); See also Chrysostom, *In 1 Tim. 2 Hom. 7:2* (PG 62: 537).

<sup>124</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 90.

<sup>125</sup>Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 12. See J. Korbacher, *Ausserhalb der Kirche kein Heil? Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung über Kirche und Kircheng Zugehörigkeit bei Johannes Chrysostomus* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1963), 127.

<sup>126</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response*, 26. See also *In 1 Tim 2 hom. 7:2* (PG 62:537).

<sup>127</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 12.

with the question of baptism of blood. While he does not explicitly deny blood baptism, neither does he manifestly teach it.<sup>128</sup>

What we have seen is that in the first four centuries, there were developments in terms of the response of the Church to people of other religions. Before Christianity became a dominant religion of the Roman empire, the formula “outside the Church no salvation” was applied to those who wilfully separated themselves from the Church. However, as Christianity became the religion of the empire, the interpretation was expanded to Jews and pagans with the presumption that everyone had heard the Gospel and therefore are guilty for not having joined the Church.<sup>129</sup>

### **1.5 The Pivotal Role of St. Augustine in the Development of the Teaching on Salvation: The Controversy with the Donatists**

Saint Augustine of Hippo was born 13 November 354 and died 430. He is arguably the most influential writer of the patristic era and his influence on the Church is still felt today. Augustine was brought up as a Christian catechumen. However, he was baptised as a child as was the common practice in the fourth century.<sup>130</sup> After much heart-searching, he was converted and baptised by St Ambrose in the summer of 386. In addition to his pastoral duties, Augustine was for the rest of his life engaged in controversy with various heretics and schismatics who then troubled the Church: he produced treatises against the Manichaeans, Arians, Pelagians and Donatists. He died in Hippo in 430, while the city was being besieged by the Vandals.<sup>131</sup> Francis A. Sullivan explains that “Augustine’s literary career spanned a period of forty years (390-430), equally divided between the first twenty years controversy with the Donatists, and the latter twenty with the Pelagians.”<sup>132</sup> Jerome P. Theisen has suggested that it is in this literary world that we are able to explore how the interpretation of the axiom fared in Augustine’s ecclesiology.<sup>133</sup> With Saint Augustine, we see the consolidation of the axiom “outside the Church no salvation.” What is apparent is that his understanding of the Church is a modification of Cyprian’s views, and he had reservations on some of his key positions. Again, Theisen points out that St. Augustine clarified two distinct but related theological perspectives with regards to the divine economy of salvation. Firstly, the reality of

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<sup>128</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 12. See also Letter 15. J. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina* (Paris: 1844), 22, 355.

<sup>129</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 90.

<sup>130</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, ed., R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), x.

<sup>131</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xi.

<sup>132</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 27.

<sup>133</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 13.

salvation in the Word was present from the beginning of humankind and was not confined to the Hebrews or the community of Israel. Secondly, the visible Church of Christ existed only from the time of the bodily appearance of the Word of God.<sup>134</sup>

Augustine articulates this view when he remarks:

Therefore, from the beginning of the human race, all who believed in him [God], who knew him in some fashion or other, and who lived a devout and just life according to his commands – whenever and wherever they lived – undoubtedly were saved by him.<sup>135</sup>

In Saint Augustine, we see that salvation has always been through faith in Christ and worship of him. However, this salvation is open and available to those who were worthy of it. Those not of the Hebrew race received some obscure but sufficient revelation of it. As for those who did not receive such a revelation, Augustine argued that no-one lacked this opportunity who was worthy of it, and that if God refused it to anyone, it was because “he foresaw that if it were offered the person would refuse it.”<sup>136</sup> In this way, Augustine places the blame on the individual for the fact that the opportunity to come to faith was not given to him.<sup>137</sup> At the same time, “God in his foreknowledge knows who among the heretics will be reintegrated into the Church, thereby recovering salvation.”<sup>138</sup> The implication of this for Augustine is that all those who have ever lived justly have been saved by their faith in Christ, who is their head and they have been members of his body. Therefore, the body of Christ consists of all the just, beginning with Abel, the first man to die in the friendship of God.<sup>139</sup> Augustine asserts:

All together we are members of Christ and are his body; and not we who are in this place only, but throughout the world; and not at this time only; but – what shall I say – from Abel the just man until the end of time, as long as men beget and are begotten, whoever among the just made his passage through this life, whether now, that is, not in this place, but in the present life, or in generations to come, all the just are this one body of Christ, and individually his members.<sup>140</sup>

Francis A. Sullivan explains that St. Augustine was not the first to propose the idea of the Church as pre-existing the coming of Christ. According to him, Origen, among others, had spoken along these lines before him. However, Augustine was the first to describe all the just,

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<sup>134</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 13.

<sup>135</sup> Augustine, *Letter 102*, 12 (CSEL 34, Pars I-II, 554). See Augustine, *Retractations*, Bk. 1, Chap. 12, 3 (CSEL 36, 58f).

<sup>136</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 30, 37.

<sup>137</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 37.

<sup>138</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 90.

<sup>139</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 30.

<sup>140</sup> Augustine, *Sermo 341:9*, 11 (PL 39:1499-1500).

from the beginning to the end of the world, as constituting the *ecclesia ab Abel*, the “Church beginning with Abel.”<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Augustine saw both Jews and Gentiles before the coming of Christ as members of the Church of the just. Recognizing salvation as being available to all who lived justly did not stop Augustine from teaching that no one had ever been saved except through faith in Christ, the one mediator of salvation.

The understanding of the universal Church was equally important for St. Augustine. Theisen explains that it is Augustine’s conviction that the Church is the gathering of people who live by divine charity. Those who constitute it are all believers, but only those who have been elected and sanctified in Christ and the Spirit are the true faithful.<sup>142</sup> For Augustine being united to the Church will lead to the attainment of pardon and forgiveness of sins because they will possess the Holy Spirit. It is in this regard that he asserts: “the forgiveness of sins, which is not given except in the Holy Spirit, is only given in that Church which has the Holy Spirit.”<sup>143</sup> Separation from the Church is considered a grave offence by Augustine as it severs the unity of the person to Christ. Moreover, Augustine opines that the Holy Spirit is only imparted to those who maintain the unity of the Church. According to him, “those who do not love the unity of the Church do not have the charity of God; thus the understanding that the Holy Spirit is not received except in the Catholic (Church) is correct.”<sup>144</sup>

From this clarification, we observe some nuances in Augustine that are different from Cyprian’s understanding. Augustine acknowledges the gift of the Spirit outside the Church, but the gift of the Holy Spirit in person, who is called love, is proper only to those who remain in communion with the Church. It is for this reason that heretics and schismatics can receive these gifts; but “charity, which covers a multitude of sins, is the gift proper to Catholic unity and peace.”<sup>145</sup> Cyprian on the contrary, emphasized a juridical exclusiveness to the formula and deduced that baptism administered outside the Church by heretics was invalid (heretical baptism) and martyrdom outside the Church was valueless.<sup>146</sup> Augustine in contrast did not deny outright the efficacy of baptism outside the unity of the Church. Conversely, he ascribes to it at least a minimum of validity and effectiveness when he remarks:

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<sup>141</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 30. See also Yves Congar, “Ecclesia ab Abel” in *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche*, eds. H. Elfers, F. Hoffmann (Düsseldorf, 1952), 79-108.

<sup>142</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 13.

<sup>143</sup> Augustine, *Sermon 71*, Chap. 20, 33 (PL 38, 463).

<sup>144</sup> Augustine, *On Baptism*, Bk. 3, Chap.16. 21 (CSEL 51, 212).

<sup>145</sup> Augustine, *On Baptism*, Bk. 3, Chap.16. 21 (CSEL 51, 213). See *Sermon 268*, 2 (PL 38, 1232); *Sermon 267*, 4 (PL 38, 1231). *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Tractatus 32, Chap. 7, 8 (PL. 35 1645).

<sup>146</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 314.

The sacrament of Christian baptism, since it is one and the same, is valid even among the heretics, and it suffices for the consecration [of the baptized], although it is not sufficient to grant a share in eternal life. This consecration, indeed, makes the heretic guilty for he has the dominical character outside the flock of the Lord; but sound doctrine advises that he must be corrected, not consecrated again in the same manner.<sup>147</sup>

Saint Augustine insists that the baptism of heretics and schismatics is valid but does not confer on them salvation. They have to be in the Church to obtain salvation. This is buttressed in his dealing with the Donatists controversy. Augustine articulates a divergent view from that of Cyprian on the question of the validity or nonvalidity of the sacrament of baptism by heretics and schismatics. Writing on the importance of union with the Church for salvation Augustine comments:

Outside the Catholic Church he [the Donatist bishop Emeritus] is capable of everything except salvation. He can have honour, he can have the Sacraments, he can sing alleluia, he can answer amen, he can retain the gospel, he can have faith in and preach in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; but he can never find salvation except in the Catholic Church.<sup>148</sup>

While Cyprian considers the baptism conferred by heretics and schismatics to be nonvalid, Augustine on his part regards it as valid. However, Augustine contends that “baptism conferred in a sect separated from the Church did not and could not confer the Holy Spirit and hence the gift of salvation.”<sup>149</sup> Theisen concludes that for Augustine, separation from the Church leads to exclusion from salvation. The celebration of the sacraments by the heretics and schismatics are ineffectual for salvation since they are performed outside the Church.<sup>150</sup> What is the fate of those who have heard the Gospel but refused to belong to Christ and his Church?

Saint Augustine lived during the flourishing days of the patristic era. Little wonder, many assumed, including Augustine, that the Gospel was preached and the Church firmly established everywhere. Given this mindset, Sullivan explains that Augustine was convinced that those who had heard the message of the gospel and had not become Christians must be guilty of sinful rejection of the faith, and the Church in which alone salvation could be found.<sup>151</sup> According to Augustine:

God wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4), but not in such a way that he takes away their free will, whose good or bad use brings upon

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<sup>147</sup> Augustine, *On Baptism*, Bk. 3, Chap.16, 21 (CSEL 51, 213). See *Sermon 268*, 2 (PL 38, 1232); *Sermon 267*, 4 (PL 38, 1231).

<sup>148</sup> Augustine, *Sermo ad Caesarensis ecclesiae plebem*, *Sermon to the People of the Church of Caesarea*, 6 (CSEL 53:174-175).

<sup>149</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 90.

<sup>150</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 16.

<sup>151</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 35.

them a just judgment. Hence, unbelievers act against the will of God, when they do not believe in the gospel message. They do not triumph over it, but rather they defraud themselves of a great, indeed, of the greatest good, and involve themselves in great evils. They have to experience in suffering the power of him whose mercy and gifts they have condemned.<sup>152</sup>

Saint Augustine held out little hope for the salvation of any Christian who died in a state of separation from the Catholic Church. He held out even less hope for the salvation of those who in his day had still not accepted the Christian faith and baptism.<sup>153</sup> He developed his position in his anti-Pelagian writings and was convinced that those who were outside the Church through lack of faith and baptism could not be saved, and he knew of no alternative between salvation and condemnation to hell.<sup>154</sup> The views of Augustine are so significant for future understanding of the attitude of the Church to people of other religions as highlighted by Jerome P. Theisen who remarks:

In short, Augustine transmits to the Middle Ages a rather exclusivist understanding of the adage *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. While he refuses Cyprian's position with regard to the validity of baptism outside the Church, he still insists on the necessity of the Church for salvation. Union with the Church is conceived rather rigidly; it is required for the reception of the Holy Spirit and eternal life.<sup>155</sup>

All along, we have stated that Augustine saw the necessity of the Church for salvation. Union with the Church is key to his position since it is an important requirement for the reception of the Holy Spirit and eternal life. In the end his perspective in relation to people of other Faiths is rigid. The faith that Augustine and other thinkers before him allude to is an explicit one. This explicit faith is directed to Christ. It requires conversion of the heart and baptism. Indeed, the salvation that accrues to faith is related to the Church and the sacrament of baptism.

Saint Augustine's teaching and attitude to other religions was carried forward in two contradictory ways by some of his most prominent followers, St. Prosper of Aquitaine (390-455) and Fulgentius of Ruspe (468-533). Prosper departed from Augustine, whose idea comes close to predestination. Saint Augustine, on the other hand, emphasized "the primacy of grace and God's freedom in bestowing it."<sup>156</sup> Prosper, on the other hand, acknowledged God's freedom to distribute his grace as he chose, but insisted that God made a universal offer of "general" grace, while reserving "special" graces to those whom he chose to favour with such

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<sup>152</sup> Augustine, *De spiritu et littera* 33:58 (PL 44:238).

<sup>153</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 35.

<sup>154</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 35.

<sup>155</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 16. See Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 91.

<sup>156</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 91.

gifts. In this way Prosper was able to defend the universal salvific will of God without exception.<sup>157</sup> Prosper, in a work, *The Call of the Nations*, insisted that God sincerely wills that all should be saved, while admitting that the fate of infants dying without baptism remains an insoluble mystery, which we can only leave to the wisdom and mercy of God.<sup>158</sup> He differed from Augustine on those who die as unbelievers because they have never had a chance to hear the gospel. Prosper contends that Christ died not only for believers, but for unbelievers and sinners as well. Prosper's attitude is positive toward non-Christian religions, since he articulates the "belief that divine grace could bring outsiders to salvation, even though the light of the gospel had not reached them."<sup>159</sup> At the heart of St. Prosper's understanding is the text from 1 Timothy 2:3-4 which states: "God our Saviour desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This text will form the key scriptural argument for Vatican II's positive statement of God's will to save all people.<sup>160</sup>

Fulgentius of Ruspe, a century after Augustine's death returned to his rigid and exclusive anti-Pelagian interpretation. He famously declared:

Hold most firmly and do not doubt that not only all pagans but also all Jews, heretics, and schismatics who terminate the present life outside the Catholic Church will go into eternal fire 'which was prepared for the devil and his angels' [Mt 25:41].<sup>161</sup>

Fulgentius reiterates the conviction of Saint Augustine and some of the early Fathers of the necessity of the Church for salvation. What is remarkable about his position is that it not only reaffirmed the exclusion of everybody, who was not part of the Church from salvation, but it was also incorporated into the decree of the Council of Florence in 1442.<sup>162</sup>

As important and as influential as Augustine was in the patristic era, not all his views were endorsed by the official Church. Francis A. Sullivan has outlined three important areas worthy of mention. Firstly, his idea that God would condemn unbaptized infants to hell for the inherited guilt of original sin. Secondly, his teaching that as a consequence of original sin, God would justly condemn adults, who had never had a chance to hear the gospel and thus to make an act of saving faith. Thirdly, his conclusion that there were some people whom God simply

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<sup>157</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 40.

<sup>158</sup> Prosper of Aquitaine, *De vocatione omnium gentium* 2:16 (PL 51:702-3); ACW 14:118-19.

<sup>159</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>160</sup> O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 26-27. See *Lumen Gentium* 16.

<sup>161</sup> Fulgentius of Ruspe, *On Faith, to Peter*, Chap. 38 (PL 65, 704). See 39 (PL 65, 704).

<sup>162</sup> *De fide, ad Petrum* 38 (79). See (PL 65: 704).



did not wish to be saved.<sup>163</sup> The mainstream Christian tradition adopted a different outlook. In answer to the question of infants dying without baptism, it taught that God would come to the aid of a person, who was inculpably ignorant of the faith. Also, it adopted a position from scripture that “God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, most of Saint Augustine’s followers endorsed his extreme position on “no salvation outside the Church.” This pessimistic attitude towards other religions continued in the medieval period.

### **1.6 Medieval Hermeneutical Approach: From St. Thomas Aquinas’ Implicit Faith to The Interpretation of Salvation**

In this section, we shall examine how the dogmatic focus on the necessity of Christ and the Church for salvation continued and found expression in ecclesial writings and pronouncements of theologians, bishops and popes in the medieval era.

The medieval Church did not break much from the patristic one. Jerome P. Theisen points out that on the contrary, it continued to regard salvation as the patrimony of the Church. Moreover, the Church regarded itself as the locus of the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and the life of Christ. Other members of the Church saw bishops and priests to be custodians of this life and that the Christian life depended upon them as upon a fount of knowledge and grace.<sup>165</sup> Theisen opines that the implication is that the people saw the bishops and priests more and more as means to grace and of union with the Spirit. Separation from them would mean exclusion from the salvific lifeline of God.<sup>166</sup> Gerald O’ Collins explains that the medieval era sadly suffered from ignorance and was shaped by fear about maintaining the Christian identity. This manifested itself in the rejection and hostility towards people of other faiths.<sup>167</sup> Be that as it may, the dogmatic focus on the necessity of Christ and the Church for salvation continued and found expression in ecclesial writings and pronouncements of popes.

One of the earliest pronouncements in this period on the formula *extra ecclesia nulla salus* is found in the letter of archbishop of Tarragona in 1208. It contains a profession of faith which alludes to membership in the Church. The profession of faith reads:

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<sup>163</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 43.

<sup>164</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 43.

<sup>165</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 17.

<sup>166</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 17.

<sup>167</sup> O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 22. See Jeremy Johns, “Christianity and Islam,” in John McManners, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 163-95.

We believe with our heart and confess with our tongue the one Church, not of heretics, but the holy Roman, Catholic, and apostolic [Church] outside of which we believe that no one is saved.<sup>168</sup>

The significance of this comment lies in the fact that for the first time, reference is made specifically to the Roman Catholic Church outside of which there is no salvation. Jacques Dupuis opines that for the first time explicit reference is made to the Roman Church, which did not figure in the ancient documents referring to the axiom.<sup>169</sup>

The Fourth Lateran Council took place in 1215. The ecumenical council was convoked by Innocent III to address the Albigensian heretics.<sup>170</sup> Against them, the council issued a definition of Catholic faith that included the statement: “There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved and in which the priest himself, Jesus Christ, is also the sacrifice (*idem ipse sacerdos est sacrificum Jesus Christus*).”<sup>171</sup> The statement was a rejection of the anti-ecclesial claim by the Albigensians and Cathars.<sup>172</sup> They “denied the Church’s incarnational and mediatory nature and hence its visible and sacramental structure.”<sup>173</sup> The relevance of this statement lies in the fact that for the first time an ecumenical council is applying the axiom in the traditional understanding, although it was not the principal subject of discussion.

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<sup>168</sup> Heinrich Denzinger and P. Hunermann, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationem de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. 43<sup>rd</sup> (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 792. Subsequently, DzH.

<sup>169</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 93.

<sup>170</sup> Albigensianism is “a medieval heresy named after its centre, Albi, in southern France. It understood redemption as the soul’s liberation from the flesh, dismissed matter as evil, and, hence, rejected Christ’s Incarnation, the sacraments, and the resurrection of the body. Its adherents were divided into the perfect, who did not marry and lived an extremely austere existence, and ordinary believers, who led normal lives until they came to be in danger of death. In 1215 the heresy was condemned at the Fourth Lateran Council.” Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Third Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 4-5.

<sup>171</sup> DzH 802; J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 21. Subsequently, ND.

<sup>172</sup> Cathars is “name for several sects (mainly medieval sects in France, Germany, and Italy) that admitted to membership only the morally and doctrinally pure.” O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 35.

<sup>173</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 93.

### 1.6.1 Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Saint Thomas Aquinas brought new thinking in the Church's attitude to people of other religions. In addressing the question of salvation outside the Church, he shifted focus from the necessity of the Church for salvation to the necessity of Christian faith and baptism for salvation. Jerome A. Theisen has indicated that Aquinas maintains that "there is one, universal Church of the faithful outside of which absolutely no one is saved." At the same time, he comments:

But the unity of the Church exists primarily because of the unity of faith; for the Church is nothing else than the aggregate of the faithful. And because without faith it is impossible to please God, for this reason there is no room for salvation outside the Church. Now the salvation of the faithful is consummated through the sacraments of the Church, in which [sacraments] the power of the passion of Christ is effective.<sup>174</sup>

Thomas Aquinas suggests that faith in Christ and receiving the sacraments, above all, baptism and the Eucharist, were necessary for salvation. He makes it exceedingly clear that "outside the faith there is no salvation, though the kind of faith he envisions is the faith of the Church, the faith of those who are gathered together in a Church (*congregatio fidelium*)."<sup>175</sup> What is new about Thomas' understanding is his recognition that faith in the one mediator could be implicitly contained in that faith in God which is described in Hebrews 11:6, "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he is the rewarder of those who seek him." Thomas Aquinas asserts:

If, however, some were saved without the reception of revelation, they were not saved without faith in a mediator. For though they did not have explicit faith, they still had implicit faith in divine providence and they believed that God is the deliverer of men according to ways pleasing to himself and according to what he revealed to those knowing the truth.<sup>176</sup>

Thomas had Gentiles in mind who lived before the coming of Christ. He recognized how implicit faith in Christ could suffice for their salvation, and he held such implicit faith to be expressed by what Hebrews 11:6 proposed about the existence and providence of God. But after the coming of Christ, the one mediator of salvation, explicit faith in him was necessary: "It must be said that in every age and for everyone, it has always been necessary to believe explicitly in these two things."<sup>177</sup> Thomas Aquinas explains these two things by highlighting

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<sup>174</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Exposition Primae Decretalis ad Archidiaconum Tudertinum*. Ed., Raymond A. Verardo, *Opuscula Theologica*. Vol. 1 (Turin: Marietti, 1954), 425. Cited in Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 19.

<sup>175</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Turin: Marietti, 1952), Pars III, q.8, a.4, ad 2.

<sup>176</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars II-II, q.2, a. 7, ad 3.

<sup>177</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 2, a. 8, ad 1.

that no one has ever been saved without faith in the existence and providence of God, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, no one has ever had grace of the Holy Spirit except through faith in Christ, either explicit or implicit.<sup>178</sup> Francis A. Sullivan elaborates that in this comment, Aquinas demonstrates that all the articles of faith are implicitly contained in this verse of scripture, which speaks of God's existence and his providence for the salvation of humanity.<sup>179</sup> Gerald O' Collins, on his part, opines that Aquinas was one of the few Christian scholars to ever write a commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews. He was well aware of the accounts of faith in Hebrews 11:1-3 and of the further statement in Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for those who would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." O'Collins explains that, for Aquinas, the quotation from Hebrews deals with the attitudes towards God and does not include the explicit faith in Christ that we find in Romans 10:8-10.<sup>180</sup> Still, the necessity of explicit faith in the mysteries of Christ was important for Thomas.

In the same way that Aquinas emphasized the unique place of faith for salvation, he stresses the centrality and necessity of baptism for being incorporated into Christ. It was his conviction that no one could be saved without baptism. Baptism for him can take the form of "baptism by desire." O' Collins reiterates that Aquinas teaches that in the baptism of desire, 'a person can obtain salvation without actually being baptized, on account of the person's desire for baptism.'<sup>181</sup> In a situation like this, Thomas suggests that "God, whose power is not tied to visible sacraments, sanctifies a person inwardly."<sup>182</sup> To attain this, the desire for baptism need not be explicit but could be implicit. The best example he alludes to is Cornelius, whose desire for baptism was implicit.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, Aquinas believed that the Eucharist was necessary for salvation. The shift in emphasis, which Aquinas brings, lies in the spiritual bonds of union in Christ's Church. This argument is similar to the one he made on baptism. According to Aquinas, a person can be saved through the desire to receive this sacrament and the desire need not be explicit, just as one can be saved through a desire for baptism, before actually receiving the baptism.<sup>184</sup> In summary, Aquinas understood Christian faith and sacraments as necessary

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<sup>178</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.106, a. I, ad 3.

<sup>179</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 49.

<sup>180</sup> O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 29. See Gerald O' Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 252-9.

<sup>181</sup> O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 30.

<sup>182</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 68. 2 resp.

<sup>183</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 69. 3.

<sup>184</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 73. 3 resp.

means for salvation. His conviction that Christian faith and sacraments were necessary means for salvation will have far-reaching implications for subsequent generations in the Church up to Vatican II. Francis A. Sullivan has outlined three points in the teaching of Aquinas which would eventually prove helpful to Catholic theologians in their efforts to solve the new problems they had to face, when it became known that there were vast continents, whose inhabitants had never before heard the gospel preached. They are as follows:

The first of these ideas is Thomas' notion of a faith in Christ that is implicitly contained in the faith in God that is described in Hebrews 11:6. The second is his recognition of the sufficiency of an implicit desire (*votum*) for baptism and the eucharist when these sacraments cannot be received in reality (*in re*). And the third is his teaching on justification through a person's first moral decision.<sup>185</sup>

The notion of implicit faith as a means for salvation will feature prominently in the writings of modern theologians and in the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>186</sup> It must be stated that the Medieval attitude to non-Christian religions did not simply go away abruptly in the light of newly acquired knowledge. This is evident in two pivotal documents, *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII (1302) and *Decree for the Jacobites* of the Council of Florence (1442).

### **1.7.1 Bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII (1302)**

The principal controversy that dominated ecclesiastical thought during the reign of Pope Boniface VIII (1230-1302) and the Avignon Popes was the question of the two powers, spiritual and temporal, and their inter-relationship. The bull was occasioned by the controversy between the pope and King Philip IV of France over the legal rights of the king with regard to the temporal goods of the clergy. The bull claims an unlimited and direct power of the pope over the king even in temporal matters.<sup>187</sup> It admits that there are two powers spiritual and temporal but affirms that the temporal is under the control of the spiritual; concretely of the Pope.<sup>188</sup> *Unam Sanctam* is important to us because of its doctrinal conclusions. It strongly asserts:

That there is only one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church we are compelled by faith's urging to believe and hold, and we firmly believe in her and sincerely confess her outside of whom there is neither salvation nor remission of sins...; she represents the one mystical body; Christ [is] the head, but the [head] of Christ [is] God. In her there is "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism [Eph 4:5]. Indeed, at the time of the flood there

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<sup>185</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 62.

<sup>186</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; no, 18.

<sup>187</sup> DzH 870; ND 804.

<sup>188</sup> ND 804.

was one ark of Noah, prefiguring the one Church, which, made complete in one cubit, had one governor and ruler, that is, Noah; and outside of her, we read, all things subsisting on earth were destroyed.<sup>189</sup>

In a different place it remarks:

This one and unique Church, therefore, [has] not two heads, like a monster, but one body and one head, namely, Christ, and his vicar, Peter's successor, for the Lord said to Peter himself: "Feed my sheep" [Jn 21:17]. "My", he said in general, not individually, meaning these or those; whereby it is understood that he confided all his sheep to him. If, therefore, Greeks or others should say that they were not confided to Peter and his successors, let them necessarily confess that they are not among Christ's sheep; for the Lord said in John: "There shall be one fold and one, unique shepherd" [Jn 10:16].<sup>190</sup>

The bull positively affirms the unity and unicity of the Church, its necessity for salvation, its divine origin, and the foundation of the authority of the Roman Pontiff. It articulates the traditional teaching about the necessity of being in the Church for salvation but emphasises the role of the pope as head of the Church. Full membership of the Church depends on one's obedience to the pope. It states that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of all human beings that they submit to the Roman Pontiff.<sup>191</sup> Jerome P. Theisen is of the opinion that an interpretation of this text must take into consideration the prevailing juridical and corporate notion of the Church at the time. It must also take into account the canonical exaltation of the power of the papacy over the spiritual and temporal realms.<sup>192</sup> In the same vein, Francis A. Sullivan insists that while Pope Boniface taught the medieval theory of the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal power, what he solemnly defined in the last sentence is nothing more than the classical doctrine that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.<sup>193</sup> Equally, he draws attention to the divergent views of George Tavard, who insists that the final sentence must be understood in the light of the main theme of the bull, which is papal supremacy over temporal rulers but "lacks an essential condition required for a dogmatic definition, since even in Boniface's time there was no consensus on this doctrine in the Church, and it has not survived as part of the Church's patrimony of faith."<sup>194</sup> It is not surprising that

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<sup>189</sup>DzH 870.

<sup>190</sup> DzH 872.

<sup>191</sup> DzH 875.

<sup>192</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 23.

<sup>193</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 65. See O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 31-32.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66. See George Tavard, "The Bull *Unam sanctam* of Boniface VIII," in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church* (Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, V), (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 105-119.

the perspective of Pope Boniface VIII is no longer taken as dogma of the faith by Catholic theologians.

### 1.7.2 The Council of Florence (1431-1445)

The Council of Florence took place in different places; Basel in 1431, Ferrara 1438, Florence in 1439, and Rome 1445. The aim of the council was the reunification of the separated eastern Churches to the Roman Catholic Church. At the end of the council, decrees were approved for the unification of the Armenian, Greek, and Coptic (Jacobite) Churches. The decree that is of doctrinal value to us is the one for the reunion of several Coptic Churches. Their members were also called Jacobites. The bull given by Pope Eugene IV was in the form of a profession of faith citing the traditional beliefs of the Church to which they were obliged to declare their adherence. Part of the *Decree for the Copts* of 1442 is as follows:

She (The holy Roman Church) firmly believes, professes, and preaches that “none of those outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans,” but also Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can become sharers of eternal life, but they will go into the eternal fire “that was prepared for the devil and his angels” [Mk 25:41] unless, before the end of their life, they are joined to her. And the unity of the Church’s body is of such great importance that the Church’s sacraments are beneficial toward salvation only for those who remain within her, and (only for them) do fasts, almsgiving, and other acts of piety and exercises of Christian discipline bring forth eternal rewards. No one can be saved, no matter how many alms he has given, and even if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.<sup>195</sup>

Jacques Dupuis emphasizes that “this is the first official document in which, besides heretics and schismatics, mention is made of Jews and “pagans” in connection to the axiom Outside the Church no salvation.”<sup>196</sup> The bull emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is the final revelation of God and his mission is entrusted to the Church. Therefore, separation from the Church means separation from Christ, and hence loss of salvation.<sup>197</sup> Gerald O’ Collins has observed that the Council quoted greatly from the North African bishop, St. Fulgentius of Ruspe (468-533), a vigorous critic of Arians and Palegians. Fulgentius followed the pessimistic views of the later Augustine about the damnation not only of many ‘within’ the Church but also of everyone ‘outside’ the Church.<sup>198</sup> The dogmatic value of the bull is that it reinforced the traditional view that outside the Church there is no salvation and the necessity of the Church for salvation.

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<sup>195</sup> DzH 1351.

<sup>196</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 95.

<sup>197</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 95.

<sup>198</sup> O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 32.

However, it did not delve into the question of those who live or are saved outside the Church because the traditional doctrine was never in question at the time.

Fifty years after the enactment of the *Degree of the Jacobites* (1442), Columbus discovered America. The discovery shattered “what had been the assumption of the medieval mind that the world was practically co-extensive with Christendom.”<sup>199</sup> The discovery of new continents and cultures made Christian thinkers to re-examine the views of judging all pagans guilty of sinful unbelief, when they know that countless people have been living without the knowledge of the gospel, through no fault of their own. Francis A. Sullivan has pointed out that it was imperative to reconcile the traditional belief of the Church “in the universality of God’s salvific will with the fact that he apparently has left all those people without the possibility of becoming members of the Church, outside of which they could not be saved.”<sup>200</sup> The resolution of this dilemma will be championed by two sixteen century Dominican theologians of Salamanca, Francisco de Victoria and Domingo de Soto.

### **1.7 New Thinking on the Necessity of Christ and the Church for Salvation**

The most important historical event that had a tremendous influence and reconfigured the attitude of the Church to people of other religions was the great geographical discoveries at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Yves Congar points to the fact that “Christian missionaries, principally members of the Society of Jesus, made one anthropological discovery after another of the hitherto unknown peoples who were civilized and good.”<sup>201</sup> The consequence of the discoveries of the new continents was that now people did not just know that there were countries and races outside the Church (they had known that in the Middle Ages too), but they were forced to take a positive interest in them.<sup>202</sup> Hans Küng contends that there arose a greater understanding of what it meant to belong to a world which did not begin and end with the Mediterranean basin and the countries immediately surrounding it. According to him, “there began too to be an awareness of the fact that not only the *ecclesia catholica* but Christianity as a whole is clearly part of a diminishing small minority when seen in the light of hundreds of thousands of years of past history.”<sup>203</sup> With new perspectives of this kind, theology inevitably began to develop gradually away from the axiom, “no salvation outside the Church.” This will be a lengthy process culminating in the Second Vatican

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<sup>199</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 69.

<sup>200</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 69.

<sup>201</sup> Congar, *The Wide Word My Parish: Salvation and its Problems*, 97.

<sup>202</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 315.

<sup>203</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 315.



Council's emphatic affirmation that salvation is open to all, not just to schismatics, heretics and Jews, but to non-Christians too and even to atheists if they are in good faith.

### 1.7.1 Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546)

Francisco de Vitoria developed his thought as a reaction to the inhumane behaviour of some of the Spanish missionary *conquistadores* in South America. For the Spanish colonizers and missionaries, unbelief of the Christian message constituted a crime, thus, infidels could rightly be conquered and enslaved for their crimes against the Christian religion. De Vitoria on the other hand, argued that the unbelief of the Indians gave the Spanish colonizers no just cause for making war on them and enslaving them. According to him:

The Indians in question are not bound, directly the faith is announced to them, to believe it, in such a way that they commit mortal sin by not believing it, merely because it has been declared and announced to them that Christianity is the true religion and that Christ is the Saviour and Redeemer of the world, without miracle or any other proof or persuasion... For if before hearing anything of the Christian religion they were excused, they are put under no fresh obligation by a simple declaration and announcement of this kind, for such announcement is no proof or incentive to belief.<sup>204</sup>

De Vitoria's argument was that mere proclamation of the Christian message was not enough reason for waging war on them or for proceeding against them under the law of war. He was convinced that the Indians were innocent and had not broken any law against the Spaniards. Besides, he argued that unless the gospel was presented properly, without violence, threat, and coercion, both before and after its preaching, the hearers were under no obligation to accept it and could not be enslaved.<sup>205</sup> His teaching is significant because it goes beyond the medieval world-view in relation to non-Christians. He insisted that the message of the gospel has to be presented in a convincing way for the hearers to be put under obligation to accept it. After all, the scandalous behaviour of Christians might make the message so unconvincing to those who might have heard the message and not been persuaded by the truth of the religion. This line of argument was put forward as possible reason for the non-conversion of Jews to Christianity.

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<sup>204</sup> Francisco de Vitoria, *De Indis et de Iure Belli Relectiones*, ed. E. Nys, trans. J. P. Bates (The Classics of International Law Washington, 1971), 142-43.

<sup>205</sup> D' Costa, *Only One Way*, 10.

### 1.7.2 Dominico de Soto (1494-1560)

Dominico de Soto (1524-1560) argued that the implicit faith in Christ would suffice for those ‘who had never heard the gospel’ but who had followed the natural law evident in creation and through the use of their reason.<sup>206</sup> Gavin D’ Costa affirms that de Soto not only insisted on the necessity of the Church for salvation but contextualized it, while maintaining that it is was binding. De Soto’s position, with various modifications, remains the official Catholic position today, even though it was not shared by many Catholics in his era.

The contributions of Francisco de Vitoria and Dominico de Soto to the question of the salvation of non-Christians is immense. As Francis A. Sullivan has observed. Two advances were made:

De Vitoria’s recognition of the fact that people who had heard about Christ could still be guiltless of their unbelief if the gospel had been presented to them in an unconvincing way, and Soto’s admission that implicit faith in Christ would have sufficed for the salvation of people whose lack of explicit Christian faith was inculpable.”<sup>207</sup>

The two theologians complemented each other. They were united in their unshaken belief in God’s universal salvific will, but while de Victoria was believes that the Christian truth must be preached in a convincing way, De Soto, on his part, was of the conviction that an implicit faith in Christ would suffice for the people who lack explicit faith in Christ.

### 1.7.3 Jean de Lugo (1583-1660)

Jean de Lugo significant contribution to the explaining the salvation of non-Christians was in applying the theory of implicit faith not only to those who had never heard the Gospel but also to people who knew about Christ, though lacking orthodox faith. Dupuis suggests that for de Lugo, not only pagans but even heretics, Jews, and Muslims, could be saved through their sincere faith in God.<sup>208</sup> De Lugo wrote

A Jew or other non-Christian could be saved; for he could have supernatural faith in the one God and be invincibly ignorant about Christ. But such a person would not be Christian, because one is called a Christian by reason of one’s knowledge of Christ...The possibility of salvation for such a person is not ruled out by the nature of the case; moreover, such a person should not be called a non-Christians, because, even though he has not been visibly joined to the Church, still, interiorly he has the virtue of habitual and actual faith in common with the Church, and in the sight of God he will be reckoned with Christians.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> D’ Costa, *Only One Way*, 11.

<sup>207</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 76.

<sup>208</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 119.

<sup>209</sup> Jean de Lugo, *De virtute fidei divinae*, disp.12, n. 104, Lyon,1646, vol. 3, 300; ed. Vivès, Paris, 1868, vol. 1, 425.

De Lugo is highlighting the theory of salvific implicit faith in its more comprehensive form. We will see the significant impact of this explanation in the subsequent Church teachings.

## CONCLUSION

What we have done in this chapter is to give a theological foundation to our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation based on creation and our common humanity. Using *ressourcement* theological method like de Lubac, the first chapter makes a critical historical survey of the doctrinal development of the Christian understanding of the unicity and universality of Christ for salvation.

In this chapter, we have made a survey of the different attitudes of the Judeo-Christian tradition in relation to people of other faiths. The survey reveals that while scripture does not set out to explain the validity of non-Judeo-Christian religions, nevertheless, there is positive recognition of some of these religions. The chapter demonstrates that after the generous Christian openness of Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, other early writers, sadly much of what we find from the Middle Ages down to the sixteenth century and beyond, suffered from ignorance and was shaped by fear about maintaining Christian identity. As Jerome P. Theisen has argued, the formula itself, “outside the Church no salvation,” has never been the subject of a *de fide* magisterial declaration in the Roman Catholic Church, but it is repeated as traditional doctrine from the earliest centuries to the present time.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, it was subject to diverse interpretations, from the heterodox and rigid to the authentic and moderate. We have shown that even for an influential theologian like St. Augustine, his idea that God would condemn unbaptized infants to hell for the inherited guilt of original sin was rejected. The same with his idea of God’s condemnation of those who had never had the chance to hear the gospel. Equally, we noted the role of Thomas Aquinas in explaining the understanding of implicit faith in Christ, implicit desire for Baptism and the Eucharist in the salvation of non-Christians.

In more recent centuries the tension between the axiom and the need to recognize salvation for those outside the visible Church has become acute. This led generally to a gentler and a reasonable approach. However, it does not compromise faithfulness to Christ and the revelation of the triune God, and it remains faithful to Christ’s founding of the Church as the means to salvation for all people.<sup>211</sup> The teaching that the Church is the medium of all salvation

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<sup>210</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 36.

<sup>211</sup> D’ Costa, *Only One Way: Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World*, 45.

continues in the theologies of the 1950s and 1960s. This period also saw the emergence of a new way of thinking which we shall explore in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Two: The Specific Nature of de Lubac's Methodology and its Implications for the Understanding of Catholicism and the Church**

### **Introduction**

In the first chapter we gave a theological foundation to our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation. We used *ressourcement*, the theological method of Henri de Lubac, to explore critically the biblical, historical survey of the doctrinal development of the Christian understanding of the unicity and universality of Christ for salvation.

We examined the different attitudes of the Judeo-Christian tradition in relation to people of other faiths. Our survey revealed that while scripture does not set out to explain the validity of non-Judeo-Christian religions, nevertheless, there was a positive recognition of some of these religions. The chapter demonstrated the generous Christian openness of Fathers of the Church like Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and other early writers. However, much of what we find from the later centuries stifled positive engagement with people of other faiths.

The second chapter explores the specific nature of de Lubac's writings on non-Christian religions. We emphasize that de Lubac was a man of his time with all the historical influences. This is imperative because he wrote on this theme before the Second Vatican Council. We retrieve some important concepts in de Lubac's writings like the "Principle of Auscultation," "The Catholicity of Truth," "Implicit and Explicit" Christianity, to demonstrate that the centre his theology was the whole of humanity. We will show how de Lubac identifies the separation of nature and grace as paving the way to atheistic humanism. This separation opens the way for secularism and a life without God. Equally, it leads to a form of Christianity that seeks the lowest common denominator with atheistic humanism. This, de Lubac sees, as a danger undermining the uniqueness and centrality of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Etudes historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). English translation, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans., Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2015), 15.

Most importantly, we will analyse the specific content of de Lubac's writings on the social dimension of dogma.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines the historical and theological milieu of Henri de Lubac to establish how he and other *ressourcement* theologians influenced French theology and society in the period 1930 to 1960, and beyond, inspiring a renaissance in twentieth-century Catholic theology and initiating a movement for renewal that made a decisive contribution to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5).

The second section explores the theological method of de Lubac, which is *ressourcement* in order to establish how he applies it on the question of the salvation of non-Christians. He enunciates two principles: The first is the principle of "Auscultation." De Lubac suggests in this principle that attentive listening without prejudice, accurate diagnosis, and finding the right explanation for the problem is required in relating to people of other religions. The second principle is "The Catholicity of Truth." The principle recognizes that all people have something of the truth in themselves and, so, we need to be open to the fact that the truth can be found even in the most unexpected sources.

The third section addresses how de Lubac points out the unique contribution of Christianity to the world. This contribution is in Christianity's developed concept of time and history. De Lubac examines the understanding of the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation. He highlights how the Church is in continuity with the assembly of God's people in the Old Testament. De Lubac believes that there is a genuine doctrinal legacy from the Old Testament of the universal destiny of the community of God's people. For de Lubac, the Church is pre-figured in the Old Testament. At the same time, it is something new. In addition, the section explores how de Lubac interprets the Church as the locus and means, enabling humanity and all creation to attain their end. Also, it shows how he argues that salvation is possible for people of other faiths as well. Equally, the section explores the nuanced views of de Lubac on the relationship between the institutional Church and the Mystical Body which corresponds with the shifts in attitude towards people of other faith from the publication of *Mystici Corporis* and the Second Vatican Council.

The fourth section critically explores how de Lubac examines the relationship between the world religions and Christianity. We will show that for de Lubac Christianity is not in competition with other religions. However, as the incarnation of God's grace in Jesus Christ,

Christianity is the supernatural religion. Christianity unveils their positive values; by assuming them, it purifies and transforms them.

## 2.1 The Historical and Theological Milieu of Henri de Lubac

In this section, I shall review the historical and theological milieu of Henri de Lubac so as to establish how he and other *ressourcement* theologians influenced French theology and society in the period 1930 to 1960, and beyond, inspiring a renaissance in twentieth-century Catholic theology and initiating a movement for renewal that made a decisive contribution to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5).

Henri Marie-Joseph Sonier de Lubac was a French Jesuit theologian born in Cambrai, in the north of France, on 20 February 1896. He was raised in a devout Catholic family for which he remained grateful. According to him: “I have immense gratitude for my parents. They always gave us the example of duty, constancy, self-sacrifice, and piety.”<sup>2</sup> He received all his primary education in Catholic schools run by religious. De Lubac was first taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Bourg-en-Bresse (1898-1902). He continued his education in schools in and around Lyon (1902-1911) because his family moved there as a result of his father’s commitments with the bank of France. It was while he was a student at the Jesuit college of Notre Dame de Mongré (1909-1911), and under the spiritual direction of Fr Eugène Hains, SJ, that de Lubac began to discern a vocation to the religious life.<sup>3</sup> This school was also attended by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. From 1912-1913 he studied law at the Catholic university in Lyon. De Lubac entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in 1913, a year after his elder sister, Louise, enrolled into the Carmelite Order. However, his formal training for the priesthood started seven years later. This break in his studies happened because in 1914 de Lubac was drafted into military service. Thus, from 1915-1918, he served as an infantry soldier during the First World War. He suffered a shrapnel wound to the head on All Saints Day, 1917 and received the Croix de Guerre. As a result of the injury, de Lubac suffered from continuous

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<sup>2</sup> De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 11-12. Subsequently as MOE. Other writings on de Lubac see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview*, trans. Joseph Fessio, SJ, and Michael M. Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991); Jean-Pierre Wagner, *Henri de Lubac, Initiations aux théologiens* (Paris: Cerf, 2007); Wagner, *La théologie fondamentale selon Henri de Lubac*, *Cogitato Fidei*, 199 (Paris: Cerf, 1997); Rudolf Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008); John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (London: SCM, 2005); a collection of essays in *Communio*, 35 (2008) ‘Henri de Lubac’s Catholicism at 70 Years’ with an important article by Georges Chantraine, SJ, ‘Catholicism: On “Certain Ideas”’, *Communio* 35 (2008), 520-34; Paul McParlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Jordan Hillebert, “Introducing Henri de Lubac,” in *T & T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 7.

ear aches and sustained bouts of dizziness until a successful operation in 1954. He continued to serve in the army until 1919. Leaving the army, the same year, de Lubac commenced his philosophical and theological studies on the Island of Jersey from 1920 to 1923. Besides, French laws hostile to religious communities had exiled the Jesuits in Lyon to England from 1901 to 1926. Jordan Hillebert comments that:

On 29 March 1880, Minister of Education (and future prime minister) Jules Ferry instigated a series of decrees dissolving a number of ‘unauthorized’ religious congregations in France. At the time, a large portion of the nation’s children were educated in Church schools by members of religious orders, and the decrees of March 29 were part of a larger attempt to protect French youth from the illiberal and ultimately anti-republican influence of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup>

The decrees led to the closure of some twenty thousand Religious schools and another ten thousand Congregational schools in France.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of the separation of Church and State in France and the expulsion of some religious orders, Jesuit novices were obliged to go to England for their formation. This situation persisted until 1926. De Lubac commenced his advanced theological studies in Ore Place in Hastings (1924-1926) and concluded them in Lyons-Fourvière (1926-1928). He was ordained a priest, August 23, 1927. De Lubac was named Professor of *Fundamental Theology* in the School of Catholic Theology at the University of Lyon in 1929 and a year later (1930) he added the *History of Religions* to his responsibilities. This development is important to our research as it provides the foundation to his approach to the dialogue between Christianity and contemporary culture, other cultures and religions, especially Buddhism and ancient Indian religions.

De Lubac’s intellectual formation came from different sources; reading, teachers and friendships that he cultivated over many years. His philosophical formative influence began in Jersey, where he studied with fellow students like Gaston Fessard (1897-1978) and Yves de Montcheuil (1900-1944). It was in Jersey that de Lubac met his most formative influence in the person of Pierre Rousselot. While in Jersey, he read both Rousselot’s *Yeux de la foi* and *Renaissance de la raison*. Sadly, Rousselot died in 1914 but his *Renaissance de la raison*, was of immense importance to de Lubac on the question of faith and reason. Other writings he read included those of the transcendental Thomist Joseph Marechal (1861-1944), and the brilliant lay and devout Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), who in 1893 wrote his

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<sup>4</sup> Hillebert, “Introducing Henri de Lubac,” 7.

<sup>5</sup> Hillebert, “Introducing Henri de Lubac,” 7.



famous thesis *L'Action*.<sup>6</sup> As Michael Conway has pointed out about Blondel: “He sought in his philosophy to reflect a personal synthesis of life so as to coherently combine these realities without, on the one hand, denying the autonomy of philosophical reflection or, on the other, the very gratuity of the gift of faith.”<sup>7</sup> Blondel’s ultimate philosophical enterprise was to establish the correct relationship between autonomous philosophical reasoning and Christianity.<sup>8</sup> De Lubac discovered in Blondel a philosophically rigorous defence of the intrinsic relation between human nature and the supernatural – between reason and revelation, philosophy and theology.<sup>9</sup>

In Hastings, de Lubac met his teacher Joseph Huby who inspired and challenged him to investigate the supernatural question, specifically, on the *desiderium naturale videndi Deum* in St. Thomas Aquinas. Writing about the inspiration of Huby, he described how he “had warmly encouraged me to verify whether the doctrine of Saint Thomas on this important point was indeed what was claimed by the Thomist school around the sixteenth century, codified in the seventeenth and asserted with greater emphasis than ever in the twentieth.”<sup>10</sup> De Lubac challenged,

A form of theology organized around the philosophical concept of ‘pure nature,’ which supposes separation between nature and the supernatural such that nature is able to attain only purely natural ends.<sup>11</sup>

Huby was the convener of the Sunday meeting “La Pensée” of which de Lubac was a member. It was here that the first sketch of his major study *Surnaturel* was born. *Surnaturel* became de Lubac’s major study and most controversial. It was written under difficult circumstances. He remarks how the book came about as follows:

In June 1940, leaving in haste with a group of companions for La Louvesc, after having evaded the Germans who were approaching Lyons, I carried along a bag with a parcel of notes in it, among which was the notebook for *Surnaturel*. I spent several days up there putting a little order into it. Soon there was the return from our exodus... and I gave no more thought to it. But when, in 1943, being hunted by the Gestapo, I had to flee once more, I again carried along my notebook. Hidden away in Vals, which I could not leave and where I could not engage in any correspondence, I thus had something to

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<sup>6</sup> Maurice Blondel, *L'Action: Essai d'une critique de vie et d'une science de la pratique* (Paris: Alcan, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris: PUF 1950). See English translation, Maurice Blondel, *Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Olivia Blanchette (Notre Dame IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Conway, “Maurice Blondel and Ressourcement,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in the Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Conway, “Maurice Blondel and Ressourcement,” 66.

<sup>9</sup> Hillebert, “Introducing Henri de Lubac,” 8.

<sup>10</sup> De Lubac, *At The Service of The Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, trans., Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 35. Subsequently, ASC.

<sup>11</sup> De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 368-80.

occupy my retreat. Taking advantage of the resources offered by the Vals library, the manuscript swelled. When I came back to Lyons soon after the departure of the German army, it was ready to be delivered to the printer.<sup>12</sup>

De Lubac is referring to his book *Surnaturel* which did not enjoy wide circulation as it was published after the Second World War in 1946. The limited circulation was caused by a shortage of paper. In 1942, the Germans invaded the southern zone of France. Prior to the invasion, de Lubac anticipated the danger posed by National Socialism. He warned against the threat and disastrous aftermath of the philosophical ideologies driving the movement. Apart from his teaching, de Lubac was involved in other enterprises. He and Jean Daniélou, founded the series *Sources chrétiennes* in 1942 with the aim of making patristic and medieval texts accessible to a larger audience. Along with Pierre Chaillet and Gaston Fessard, de Lubac participated in the resistance against Nazi occupation through his involvement in the clandestine journal, *Cahiers du témoignage chrétien* from 1941. He became editor of *Recherches de Science Religieuse* from 1945 to 1950. In addition, de Lubac became a member of the Institut de France (Académie des sciences morales) in 1953. Owing to the publication of *Surnaturel* in 1946, *Corpus Mysticum* in 1949 and *Connaissance de Dieu* and his article on “Mystery of the Supernatural” in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, suspicion regarding his works in certain quarters intensified culminating in their withdrawal from university selves. The withdrawals came into effect before the publication of the encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950).

Things changed when shortly before the Second Vatican Council Pope John XXIII chose him to be a consultant to the preparator commission for the council. Pope Paul VI appointed de Lubac to the International Theological Commission (1969-1974) and the Pontifical Secretariat for non-Christian believers and for non-believers. De Lubac was elevated to Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church by Pope John Paul II on February 2, 1983. He received a dispensation exempting him from the duties of a bishop because of old age. De Lubac died at the age of ninety-six, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1991, in Paris.

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<sup>12</sup> De Lubac, ASC, 35.

### 2.1.1 Theological Method of De Lubac

In this section, we shall examine the theological method of de Lubac which is *ressourcement* in order to establish how he applies it on the question of the salvation of non-Christians.

According to Gabriel Flynn, Henri de Lubac belongs to

The renowned generation of French *ressourcement* theologians whose influence pervaded French theology and society in the period 1930 to 1960, and beyond, inspired a renaissance in twentieth-century Catholic theology and initiated a movement for renewal that made a decisive contribution to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5).<sup>13</sup>

In his book, *Paradoxes*, de Lubac describes how the aim of his theology is to “recover Christianity in its fullness and purity” by “returning to its sources.”<sup>14</sup> The term *resource* was coined in 1904 by Charles Péguy as part of his work to describe the cultural and intellectual revolution in his time. Accordingly, he writes:

A revolution is a call to a more perfect tradition from a less perfect tradition, a call to a deeper tradition from a shallower tradition. It means surpassing tradition in depth by going back, a search for deeper sources; in the literal sense of the word, a ‘ressource’... [A] revolution... cannot succeed unless... it causes a deeper humanity than the humanity of the tradition, which it opposes, to arise and spring forth.<sup>15</sup>

This clarion call started a great theological movement of the twentieth century. However, Jacob W. Wood notes that unfortunately for subsequent scholars seeking to understand the nature of the *ressourcement* movement, while Péguy described the general purpose of the revolution to which he was calling his comrades in arms, he did not outline a specific battle plan for the revolution’s success.<sup>16</sup> The twentieth-century theologians found themselves in similar circumstances. Again, as Wood had observed, while it could be rightly said that they generally shared Péguy’s vision and helped to carry out his revolution, few among them wrote specifically about what they thought *ressourcement* was, or reflected on how they thought one ought to engage in it. Among the few that explained what *ressourcement* meant were Jean Daniélou (1905-1974) and Yves Congar (1904-1995).

Daniélou (1905-1974) entered the Society of Jesus in 1929, studied philosophy in Jersey, taught for two years in a college, before going to Lyon for his theological studies, where

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<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Flynn, “The Twentieth-Century Renaissance in Catholic Theology,” 1.

<sup>14</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes* (Paris: Livre français, 1946), 67-69.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Péguy, “Avertissement,” in *Cahiers de la quinzaine*, ser. 5, vol.11 (1 March 1904), xxxvii.

<sup>16</sup> Jacob W. Wood, “*Ressourcement*,” 93.

he came into contact with de Lubac. He studied alongside Balthasar, with whom he discovered Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>17</sup> From 1942, Daniélou and de Lubac co-edited a collection of patristic writings in *Sources Chrétiennes*. The aim was to bring the Church Fathers to the mainstream of Catholic intellectual life.<sup>18</sup> Marie-Josèphe Rondeau describes what Daniélou meant by *ressourcement* in the light of the situation of his time:

Taking note of tendencies, some of which had emerged before the war, [Daniélou] invited theologians to return to the sources of Scripture, the Fathers and liturgy; to take into account the great currents of contemporary thought, particularly Marxism, with its interpretation of history, and existentialism, fascinated by the abyss of human freedom. He invited them to respond to the needs of souls, who expected of theology not atemporal speculation but a religious anthropology capable of being the bedrock of their spiritual lives and of shedding light on their moral choices in the midst of the storms of this world. Finally, he asked them to open themselves to universalism. Christianity, which up until now was de facto Greco-Roman, could become incarnate within the different civilizations of the world, which would need to develop the content of revelation, each according to the resources of its culture.<sup>19</sup>

The core thrust of Daniélou's understanding of *ressourcement* was a return to the sources of theology, namely, Scripture, the Fathers, and the liturgy. This consists in the fresh reading of the primary texts of the theological tradition. It is different from neo-scholastic Thomism. According to Daniélou, the neo-scholastics understood Thomism not in terms of the primary texts of Thomas Aquinas, but rather in terms of the secondary texts of the Thomistic commentators of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Wood avers that based on this view: "ressourcement is purgative of the influence of early Thomistic commentators, corrective of the errors in methodology which led them to form an erroneously ahistorical view of theology, and restorative of earlier sources, methods, and conclusions."<sup>20</sup>

Yves Congar (1904-1995) is one of the foremost exponents of *ressourcement*. A movement associated principally with the Dominicans of Le Saulchoir, Paris and the Jesuits of Lyon-Fourvière. It was while studying at the "school of theology" in Le Saulchoir (1926-1931), Belgium, as a consequence of the expulsion of the Dominicans by the anti-clerical legislation of the French Third Republic that he came under the enduring influence of Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP (1895-1990). Gabriel Flynn, notes that "In Chenu, his master and friend, he [Congar] perceived a man of ideas and action, of history and theology, of truth and

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<sup>17</sup> Bernard Pottier, "Daniélou and the Twentieth-Century Patristic Renewal," in *T & T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., 250.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Pottier, "Daniélou and the Twentieth-Century Patristic Renewal," 252-253.

<sup>19</sup> Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, "Jean Daniélou théologien," in J. Fontaine (ed.), *Actualité*, 137-8.

<sup>20</sup> Wood, "Ressourcement," 24.

faith...Following Chenu, Congar pursued a strongly historical approach to theology, while seeking to rediscover the ancient sources of the Tradition, thus placing him with those *nouveaux théologiens* who were deeply committed to *ressourcement*.<sup>21</sup> It was in Congar's series of ecclesiological renewal, *Unam Sanctam*, that de Lubac published his first major work on *ressourcement*.<sup>22</sup> Jacob W. Wood posits that it was Marie-Dominique Chenu, who introduced Congar to the method of *ressourcement* by giving him a copy of *Unity in the Church* by Johann Adam Möhler (1776-1838).<sup>23</sup> Equally, he elaborates that Möhler's ecclesiology was deeply patristic. Indeed, Congar agreed with Chenu that a "liquidation" of early modern theology – the purgation of contemporary theology from the influence of the Thomistic commentarial tradition – which began with the Tübingen School was carried through in the twentieth century by the *ressourcement* theologians. From both Daniélou and Congar, we agree with Henry Donneaud, that "theological *ressourcement* means a theological renewal based on the revitalization of the authentic sources of Christian tradition (Scripture, Fathers of the Church, Liturgy), supposedly obscured, rendered sterile, even distorted by the more recent, less pure traditions."<sup>24</sup> Donneaud adds, that *ressourcement* means a return to the authentic Aquinas, with a view to extricating certain of his insights and key positions, which later scholastic tradition may have neglected, ossified, changed, or even contradicted.<sup>25</sup> The approach involves an appeal to history and an openness to contemporary concerns. Based on this understanding, we can say without question that de Lubac was a practitioner of *ressourcement*.

This fresh study of the texts of Christianity did not go without opposition. De Lubac and other theologians who believed in *ressourcement* were accused of introducing "a new type of theology." It is imperative that we distinguish this phrase from the term *Nouvelle théologie* which is wrongly applied to the theology of Henri de Lubac. Herbert Vorgrimler notes that the expression *Nouvelle théologie*, was first used by Mgr Pietro Parante in the *Osservatore Romano*, February 1942 and referred to two Dominicans, M.-D. Chenu and L. Charlier.<sup>26</sup> Four

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<sup>21</sup> Gabriel Flynn, "Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*," 220-1.

<sup>22</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme, Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 1938) (1), 2003. English translation *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988). All citations will be from the English translation.

<sup>23</sup> Johann Adam Mohler, *Einheit in der Kirche oder das Prinzip des Katholizismus* (Tubingen: Heinrich Laupp, 1825); English translation: *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism*, trans. Peter Erb (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Henry Donneaud, "Gagnebet's Hidden Ressourcement: A Dominican Speculative Theology from Toulouse," 96.

<sup>25</sup> Donneaud, "Gagnebet's Hidden Ressourcement," 96.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Vorgrimler, "Henri de Lubac," in *Bilan de la théologie du XXe siècle*, Vol III, dirs. Robert Vander Gucht et Herbert Vorgrimler (Tournai-Paris: Casterman, 1970), 811.

years later, in 1946, it was used by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964) O.P. referring to certain Jesuits, including Henri de Lubac. On September 17<sup>th</sup> of the same year, Pope Pius XII used the expression *Nouvelle théologie* in an address to the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.<sup>27</sup> In August 1950, Pope Pius XII published *Humani Generis*, aimed against “some false opinions threatening to undermine the foundation of Catholic doctrine.”<sup>28</sup> *Humani Generis* denounced the new methods or tendencies judged to be departures from what was considered true orthodoxy. It saw the New Theology as undermining the immutability of dogma. Besides, the New Theology was seen as a threat to the traditional understanding of creation, especially where it took on board the emerging theories of evolution. As a consequence, it was feared that the place of Original Sin would be put in jeopardy.

De Lubac disliked the term “new theology” because it contradicted the very impetus of the movement which was to renew theology by a return to its biblical and patristic sources. Congar, on his part, refers to the appellation *nouvelle théologie* as an “abusive” term.<sup>29</sup> In June of 1950, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr Janssens, ordered the removal of de Lubac and four of his confreres from their religious duties in Lyon. Their work was deemed to have “pernicious errors on essential points of dogma maintained by the five professors in question.”<sup>30</sup> It was this reaction from the General of the Society of Jesus that led de Lubac to describe the censorship as a “lightning bolt.”<sup>31</sup> In the ten years after he was prevented from teaching and publishing in the field of theology, de Lubac returned to his initial interest in the history of religions in general. His greatest interest was in Buddhism about which he published

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<sup>27</sup> Jurgen Mettepenning, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: Continuum, 2010), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Pius XXII, *Humani Generis*, Encyclical Letter concerning some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine (12<sup>th</sup> August 1950), AAS 42 (1950), 561-78, § 20. ET available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_12081950\\_humani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani_en.html).

<sup>29</sup> Susan K. Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 6. See T. M. Schoof, *A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970* (New York: Paulist Newman Press, 1970), 157-227; Etienne Fouilloux, *Les catholiques et l'unité chrétienne du XIX au XX siècle: itinéraires européens d'expression française* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1982), 887-894; T. Deman, “Tentatives françaises pour un renouvellement de la théologie,” *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, Section spéciale 20 (1950): 129-167; A. Esteban Romeo, “Nota bibliográfica sobre la llamada ‘Teología nueva,’” *Revista Espanola Teologia* (1949): 303-318, 527-546.

<sup>30</sup> De Lubac, *ASC*, 68. The other professors were: Fathers Emile Delaye, Henri Bouillard, Alexandre Durand, and Pierre Ganne.

<sup>31</sup> Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 10-11. De Lubac, referring to *Humani Generis* as ‘lightning bolt’ which killed the project he “together with some good friends – such as B. de Solages, Father Congar, Father Chenu, Mouroux, Chavasse, and other – conceived the plan of a comprehensive theological work that would have been less systematic than manuals but more saturated with tradition, interpreting the valid elements in the results of modern exegesis, of patristics, liturgy, history, philosophical reflection.”

three works.<sup>32</sup> David Grumett opines that Buddhist studies enabled him to continue his religious writing and publishing whilst remaining obedient to the restrictions after the publication of *The Mystery of the Supernatural*.<sup>33</sup> He had built up materials for his writing on Buddhism from his teaching days in Lyons, where he occupied the chair of *Fundamental Theology* of the Catholic Theological Faculty from September, 1929. Commenting on this period, Grumett remarks that: “As a result of these teaching assignments, de Lubac spent considerable time in the 1930s reflecting on religious origins and the relation of Christianity to other religions.”<sup>34</sup>

Although some of the materials were published in the 1930s, others amassed through this decade and provided the basis for his later writing on religion published during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>35</sup> Jordan Hillebert has observed that de Lubac had long been struck by the originality and multiformity of Buddhism, as well as by its spiritual depths.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he argued that de Lubac’s study of religions was based on his conviction of “the extraordinary unicity of the Christian Event.”<sup>37</sup> Grumett, contends that this material has been little read or understood, to the extent that Hans Urs von Balthasar portrayed de Lubac’s view of Buddhism as “Eastern atheism.”<sup>38</sup> He considers Balthasar’s assessment of de Lubac’s understanding of Buddhism as a significant misrepresentation because it ignores the wider context given by the significant writings on religions that de Lubac published since 1933.<sup>39</sup> We will now examine the two most important theological principles, which de Lubac uses to put together his *ressourcement* methodology in answer to the unicity of Christ and Christianity to other religions, and the possibility that non-Christians will be saved. The two principles are Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth.

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<sup>32</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du Bouddhisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1951). English translation, *Aspects of Buddhism* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1953); *La reconquête du Bouddhisme de l’Occident* (Paris: Aubier, 1952); *Amida* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1955).

<sup>33</sup> David Grumett, *De Lubac: Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 135. See, Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Etudes historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). English translation, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans., Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2015), 15.

<sup>34</sup> Grumett, *De Lubac: Guide for the Perplexed*, 247.

<sup>35</sup> Grumett, *De Lubac: Guide for the Perplexed*, 247.

<sup>36</sup> Hillebert, “Introducing Henri de Lubac,” 22.

<sup>37</sup> De Lubac, ASC, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Grumett, “On Religion,” 247.

<sup>39</sup> Grumett, “On Religion,” 247.

### 2.1.2 The Principle of Auscultation

In this sub-section, we shall consider “Auscultation,” one of the most important theological principles of *Fundamental Theology* which de Lubac uses to suggest that attentive listening without prejudice, accurate diagnosis, and finding the right solution to the problem is required in relating with people of other religions.

To appreciate the significance of de Lubac’s principle of Auscultation to theology, it is imperative that we understand what it means.<sup>40</sup> Etymologically, the term “Auscultation” comes from the Latin *auscultatio* (verb: *auscultare*), which means the action of listening to sounds from the heart, lungs, or other organs, typically with a stethoscope, as a part of medical diagnosis.<sup>41</sup> The *Petit Robert* interprets auscultation more generically as: “The action of listening to sounds which are produced within the organism with the purpose of making a diagnosis”.<sup>42</sup> For O’Sullivan, “the action of listening is made either by the application of the ear on the part to be explored or by the intermediary of an instrument”.<sup>43</sup> Elaborating further, he remarks that Auscultation implies an attentive, internal listening to receive a message, or information, with a view to making a diagnosis of the state of health, or otherwise, of a human or other organism. Seen from this perspective, Auscultation is not an end in itself but has as its aim the diagnosis of an illness with the prospect of applying a remedy.<sup>44</sup> For our de Lubac, his and cultural milieu is post-modernism.<sup>45</sup> Applying this medical term to theology, the principle

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<sup>40</sup> We rely substantially on the comprehensive scholarly synopsis of the understanding of auscultation by Noel O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as the key to interpreting the theology of creation in the works of Henri de Lubac* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 113-119.

<sup>41</sup> Oxford Dictionary of English (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2005), 105.

<sup>42</sup> *Le Petit Robert* (Paris: Le Robert, 1982), 132.

<sup>43</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 115.

<sup>44</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 115.

<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 1988), 133: “Our age has been termed by some thinkers the age of “postmodernity.” Often used in very different contexts, the term designates the emergence of a complex of new factors which, widespread and powerful as they are, have shown themselves able to produce important and lasting changes. The term was first used with reference to aesthetic, social and technological phenomena. It was then transposed into the philosophical field, but has remained somewhat ambiguous, both because judgement on what is called “postmodern” is sometimes positive and sometimes negative, and because there is as yet no consensus on the delicate question of the demarcation of the different historical periods.” See [w2 Vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/.../hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html) (Accessed November 20, 2018). See also Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 203-204: “A term first used by Arnold Toynbee in 1946, and, from the 1970s, widely applied to a Western culture disenchanted with reason, scientific method, and faith in progress. At the end of the First World War, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) wrote of ‘the decline of the West.’ During the Second World War, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) reflected on a world “come of age” – an idea that would encourage secular and even ‘death of God’ theology. Immediately after the Second World War in lectures held in Munich and Tübingen, Romano Guardini (1885-1968) argued that the Modern Age had come to an end.”



of Auscultation involves three stages: firstly, the attentive listening without prejudice; secondly, the diagnosis, and finally, a solution is sought for the problem.<sup>46</sup>

De Lubac used the term Auscultation in his inaugural address at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Lyons because of his strong sense of history and culture. For de Lubac, it was necessary not only to study human nature in general to discern the call of grace, but also to listen constantly to the succeeding generations and to their aspirations so as to be able to respond to them. Aware that every generation is different, de Lubac indicated why it was necessary for every generation to be heard and respected despite the differences that might have arisen. We see the application of this principle in his life. The evidence is found in *Le drama de l'humanisme athée*, where de Lubac immersed himself in a wide range of thought, reading and studying the works of his contemporaries.<sup>47</sup> De Lubac “read deeply the formative influence on his contemporaries. His familiarity with the thought of such writers as Feuerbach (1804-1872), Comte (1798-1857), Marx (1818-1883), Nietzsche (1844-1900), Proudhon (1809-1865) and Dostoevsky (1821-1881) gives him considerable authority, when he comes to analyse their influence on the twentieth century.”<sup>48</sup>

Apart from post-modernism, another cultural context that de Lubac was listening to was the threat posed by atheistic humanism. Whereas the cultural context of Europe then and to a large extent today, is one of an alarming indifference to the Christian faith, the situation in Northern-Nigeria is one of Islamic expansion by means of extreme violence in the midst of other religions like African Traditional Religions and Christianity. This is the cultural context we have to dialogue with. It is necessary to include in our study an “Auscultation” of this unique cultural experience in order to find some common grounds with de Lubac’s writings for the purpose of dialogue.

De Lubac explicates a second understanding of auscultation outside of the initial culture and context. He suggests an attentive listening to the Word of God. It is not surprising that he wrote two important works on scripture, namely, *Histoire et Esprit*, which is a study on Origen’s use of Scripture and *Exégèse Médiévale*, which is a four-volume study of medieval

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<sup>46</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 115.

<sup>47</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Le drama de l'humanisme athée* (Paris: Spes, 1944 (1), Cerf, 2000). English translation *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995). All citations are from the English translation. Subsequently as DHA.

<sup>48</sup> DHA, 115-116.

exegesis.<sup>49</sup> In Christian spirituality, Auscultation can be found in monastic prayer life. One of such examples is found in the life of St. Benedict. Writing on the term Auscultation, St. Benedict “begins his Rule with the verb *auscultare* used in the imperative: *Ausculata* or *Obsculata* (according to the oldest manuscripts): “*Obsculata, o fili, praecepta magistri et inclina aurem cordis tui* (Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart).”<sup>50</sup> St. Benedict could have used another word *Audi*, meaning ‘hear,’ instead. On the contrary, the term he uses is *auscultare* which for him is more precise and profound. This understanding suggests listening with an obedient ear, the type that is practiced in the tradition of *lectio divina*.<sup>51</sup> In addition, “attentive listening of the heart, proposed by the term ‘Auscultation,’ suggests a greater respect and sensitivity to what one hears, both in scripture and in history.”<sup>52</sup> It is akin to what we read in the *Office of Readings* from the commentary of St Ephraem on the Diatessaron which asserts:

Lord, who can grasp all the wealth of just one of your words? What we understand is much less than what we leave behind, like thirsty people who drink from a fountain. For your word, Lord, has many different points of view. The Lord has coloured his words with many hues so that each person who studies it can see in it what he loves. He has hidden many treasures in his word so that each of us is enriched as we meditate on it.<sup>53</sup>

The quotation above highlights that the reading of scripture has to be done carefully and diligently in order to draw out its inner meaning, a point upon which de Lubac vehemently insists. Writing in *Histoire et Esprit*, de Lubac makes this profound remark about reading the Bible:

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<sup>49</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et l'esprit: l'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène* (Paris: Aubier, 1950). Oeuvres complètes, 16; (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 92-93. Chapters 1-2 translated as the introduction to *Origen, On First Principles* (New York: Harper Torchbook), 1966, vii-xxii, and conclusion in SIT, 1-84. English translation *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007). All citations are from the English translation. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, Coll. Theologie 41, Part I; 41, Part II; 59, Part I; 59, Part II (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1959, 1961, 1964), subsequently referred to as *Exégèse médiévale* I, II, III, or IV. Also see de Lubac in “Allégorie hellénique et allégorie chrétienne,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 47 (1959):5-43; “Sens Spirituel,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 36 (1949); “‘Typologie’ et ‘Allégorisme’,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 24 (1947): 180-226; See Henri de Lubac’s introduction to *Homélies sur l’Exode*, by Origen, trans. P. Fortier, Coll. *Sources chrétiennes*, vol. 16 (Paris: Cerf, 1946), 7-75; his introduction to *Homélies sur la Genèse* by Origen, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Louis Doutreleau, Coll. *Sources chrétiennes*, vol. 7a (Paris: Cerf, 1976),9-12; and “The Interpretation of Scripture ,” in *Catholicism* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), 83-103.

<sup>50</sup> Latin text is taken from: *St. Benedict, La Règle de saint Benoît*, Prologue, SC 181 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 412.

English translation: *The Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 15.

<sup>51</sup> CCC, no.1177 & no. 2708. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes *lectio divina* as a liturgical celebration, “where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer.” This form of Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ.

<sup>52</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 117.

<sup>53</sup> *The Divine Office: The Liturgy of the Hour According to the Roman Rite*, Vol., “A Reading from the Commentary of St Ephraem on the Diatessaron”, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1974), 518.

Nothing in scripture is said by chance, nothing is reported in vain. Secret intentions are hidden everywhere. The least details of vocabulary, the least anomalies of the redaction are the sign of a new mystery: the Holy Spirit didn't will them without profound reasons. The sacred text should therefore be 'Auscultated' throughout with the greatest care.<sup>54</sup>

De Lubac refers to the term auscultation in relation to the interpretation of scripture by Origen. Although the term auscultation was used initially with reference to culture and context, it is here referring to the diligent reading of scripture. De Lubac is articulating Origen by reflecting on his understanding of the spiritual interpretation of the Word of God. Nowhere is this clearer than in the quotation from the Alexandrine's commentary on the Gospel of John:

This is why no word of Jesus, and especially no word which his holy disciples judged worthy of being recounted, should be interpreted in a common way; but even those (words) which seem perfectly clear should be scrutinized with great care and one should not despair of finding something worthy of this sacred mouth, even in simple words, apparently without mystery, if we search carefully.<sup>55</sup>

Origen emphasizes the need to read the sacred scriptures not simply intellectually but with the heart in order not to skip over any mystery contained in the simplest word, whose superficial meaning seems obvious. Indeed, the expressions "scrutinized with great care," and "search carefully," evoke the idea of "Auscultation."

What is significant about de Lubac's principle of Auscultation is that there is a link between the two understandings. Attentive listening to culture and to history on the one hand and, on the other hand, the attentive listening to the Word of God. It is this "double Auscultation," that has direct bearing on our research. De Lubac's Auscultation links rather separate cultures on the one hand, and the Word of God on the other. The two are interwoven in order to make a good diagnosis of society. To arrive at our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation, we need to appreciate not only de Lubac's first principle in fundamental theology "Auscultation" but also the second, "The Catholicity of Truth."

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<sup>54</sup> De Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 91-92.

<sup>55</sup> Origen, *In Joannem* 20, 36, SC 290.

### 2.1.3 The Catholicity of Truth

This section assesses the second theological principle which de Lubac uses, “the Catholicity of Truth” which recognizes that even people outside of the Christian faith have something of the truth and, that the Christian [dogma] faith is a “source of universal light.”

There are two understandings or interpretations of the principle of “the Catholicity of Truth” in the writing of de Lubac. The first part of the principle recognises that all people have something of the truth in them and, so, we need to be open to the fact that the truth can be found even in the most unexpected sources. The second part of the principle asserts that the Christian (dogma) faith is a “source of universal light.”<sup>56</sup> Both are closely connected to his principle of “Auscultation.”

De Lubac begins by proposing attentive listening to the Word of God and to history because the truth is catholic. For him, the truth is not the preserve of any institution, group or individual but is universal; it can be heard even in the most unexpected sources. This position means that de Lubac is in conformity with the Tradition of the Church. Besides, it has implication for the theology of creation and Christology. We agree with Noel O’Sullivan that “it is because of the role of the Logos in the creation of the human being that the truth can be found in all people.”<sup>57</sup> Besides, the Gospel of John asserts clearly that Christ is the Truth, consequently enabling us to argue, on the basis of de Lubac’s assertion that the Christian faith is a source of universal light, that Christ is catholic understood in the universal sense.<sup>58</sup> Two quotations will help us in understanding de Lubac’s explanation of this perspective of the Catholicity of Truth. The first quotation is taken from his comments on the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel for whom he had high estimation. De Lubac writes:

Christian philosophy will always be a philosophy open to new developments. Whatever form it embodies, it does not withdraw into a closed system. Without at all compromising its heritage, it remains at once a philosophy of research, and a philosophy of mystery.<sup>59</sup>

From this quotation, de Lubac insists that the truth is one and is to be found in the depth and the universality of humanity; this is its catholicity. De Lubac is careful in his interpretation of Christian philosophy. In *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* he confronts the phenomenon of

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<sup>56</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 98.

<sup>57</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 120.

<sup>58</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> “Sur la philosophie chrétienne”, *Nouvelle revue théologique* 63, 1939, republished in *Recherches dans la foi. Trois études sur Origène, saint Anselme et la philosophie chrétienne*, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 150.

atheistic humanism, which he defines as an exclusive humanism, one that excludes God. Hence, he does not propose to replace atheistic humanism with Christian humanism. Conversely, he proposes the Pauline concept of the New Man and New Creation.<sup>60</sup>

The second quotation clarifying “The Catholicity of Truth” comes from Hans Urs von Balthasar in reference to de Lubac. Referring to de Lubac’s book *Catholicisme*, Balthasar opines that it “reveals a fundamental option for fullness, totality, and as wide a horizon as possible, to the extent that the power of inclusion becomes the prime criterion of truth.”<sup>61</sup> Our critical reading reveals that “this is a comment that can be surely made of the entire de Lubac corpus.”<sup>62</sup> This is because de Lubac is interested in nothing less than the totality of truth and he realises that its search prevents him from excluding even what at face value may seem diametrically opposed. For de Lubac, following the tradition of the Fathers is paramount to his approach. We observe this in his reference to St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas’s genius is constituted in a kindred spirit. He “held theology, spirituality, and pastoral practice in a dynamic and vital unity.”<sup>63</sup> It is not surprising that he served as a paradigm for de Lubac and the *ressourcement* theologians’ goal: to diagnose accurately contemporary problems in order to solve them by creatively drawing on Christianity’s living tradition.<sup>64</sup>

It is opportune here to begin with a reference to a fourth century writer cited by a fifteenth century writer Erasmus (1466-1536). Erasmus cited an anonymous Latin author (called Ambrosiaster by Erasmus), who remarked that “for everything that is true, irrespective of the speaker, is spoken by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>65</sup> Thomas Aquinas who read and was influenced by Ambrosiaster wrote that: “All truth, by whomsoever expressed, comes from the Holy Spirit as the source of natural light and as exercising on the spirit of man a movement to understand and speak what is true.”<sup>66</sup> We can draw three conclusions from the assertion of Aquinas. Firstly, it is an acknowledgement of the unity of truth. Secondly, it affirms that it is under the action of the Holy Spirit that the human person attains to the truth. Thirdly, the adjective ‘natural’ qualifying ‘light’ is important in that it implies that the human person, even apart from

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<sup>60</sup> Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5: 17.

<sup>61</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar et Georges Chantraine, *Le cardinal Henri de Lubac*, 62.

<sup>62</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “Ressourcement theology, aggiornamento, and the hermeneutics of tradition,” *Communio*, 18 (1991), 546-7.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen M. Fields, “Ressourcement and the Retrieval of Thomism for the Contemporary World,” 355-6.

<sup>65</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Corinthios prima*, XII, 3 (CSEL 81, 2, 132). See “Ambrosiaster,” in *Dictionnaire des auteurs grecs et latins de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Brepols, 1991), 39.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologie*, Ia, IIae, q, 109, art. 1, ad primum. See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* § 44, “He sought truth wherever it might be found and gave consummate demonstration of its universality.”

revelation, can discover and express the truth, because the Holy Spirit is the ‘source’ of natural light.<sup>67</sup> These observations are key to our understanding of de Lubac’s explanation of the Church, her mission and the salvation of those outside her which is key to our research. The search for the truth is pivotal to de Lubac’s theological hermeneutic. For him, theology cannot remain unchanging and ossified since it is meant to bring light, successively, to various aspects of the truth. He argued that neither the thought of any one man or woman nor of one generation is capable of equally encompassing all of its aspects.<sup>68</sup> We see the connection and continuity of a holistic search for the truth in two crucially important documents of the Church, namely, *Dei Filius*,<sup>69</sup> of the First Vatican Council and *Gaudium et Spes*, which affirmed:

Methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are.<sup>70</sup>

It is obvious here that God is not only the creator of the world but is also the guarantee of the unity of truth. In addition, we find a clear justification for the principle of Auscultation. The quotation affirms de Lubac’s opinion that the act of theology involves an openness to all currents of thought, despite sometimes, some of them not being in total agreement with the Christian faith. For de Lubac, the ultimate purpose for the diligent study of sources that may be alien or at variance with the Christian faith is that it leads to dialogue. Writing in *Catholicisme*, he notes:

Does not the only effective method for discerning the truth which is hidden and of not suffocating the good which would emerge consist in a systematic willingness to study sympathetically ways of thinking which are the most distant from us and in this study to concentrate on privileged cases, however unusual they may be?<sup>71</sup>

De Lubac is affirming the importance of difference. This perspective is obvious in his long theological engagement with other religions and ideas. During the German occupation in the early 1940s, de Lubac presented studies on Ludwig Feurbach, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche at ‘semi-clandestine’ and anti-Nazi conferences. The contents of his discourse on these philosophers and thinkers would be published in his influential book, *The Drama of*

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<sup>67</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 98.

<sup>68</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 97.

<sup>69</sup> Heinrich Denzinger and P. Hunermann, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationem de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. 43<sup>rd</sup> (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 3004. Subsequently, DzH.

<sup>70</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36.

<sup>71</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 257; 259-260.

*Atheist Humanism* (1944).<sup>72</sup> In the 1960s, in recognition of his commitment to dialogue with people of other religions and atheists, de Lubac with his colleague Jean Daniélou was invited to serve at the newly created Secretariat for Non-Believers by Pope Paul VI. While there, he assisted in the writing of the Second Vatican Council's statement on atheism.<sup>73</sup> It is no surprise that de Lubac, among his many achievements, is remembered as an authority on modern atheism.<sup>74</sup> De Lubac's analysis of the writings of atheists like Ludwig Feurbach, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche is of immense significance to this study. We observe that "despite their atheistic and anti-religious, stance, they do not necessarily lead to atheistic conclusions."<sup>75</sup> De Lubac maintains that the Christian may find in them criticisms that will necessarily form part of his synthesis. He claims that "even at their most blasphemous, atheistic philosophers, advance criticisms whose justice a Christian is bound to admit," especially the views of a philosopher like Proudhon.<sup>76</sup> What is uppermost is that the truth comes first, no matter its source. Writing in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, de Lubac emphasizes the obligation on the Church to "assimilate" thought that is even distant from itself: "In the Church the work of assimilation never ceases, and is never too soon to undertake it."<sup>77</sup> In the same vein, de Lubac saw positive value in the thoughts of other philosophers like Socrates, Descartes, and even Voltaire: "And not only Socrates with his dialectic, but Descartes, too, with his clear and distinct ideas – and even Voltair's irony, on occasion."<sup>78</sup> De Lubac posits that "we shall not make them our masters; being too well aware of their limitations. But their services will be valuable in helping us to keep our heads."<sup>79</sup> De Lubac's openness to difference is obvious, but it would lead him into conflict with many of his contemporaries who thought otherwise. A vivid example is the case of Proudhon.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) was a French philosopher, politician and the founder of the mutualist philosophy. De Lubac saw in Proudhon "one of the most vigorous representatives of the doctrine of immanence opposed to the Christian faith."<sup>80</sup> In his book

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<sup>72</sup> De Lubac, ASC, 40.

<sup>73</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, §19-21. De Lubac, ASC, 119

<sup>74</sup> Gardner, "An Inhuman Humanism," 225.

<sup>75</sup> O'Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 123.

<sup>76</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 12. The three principal philosophers de Lubac is alluding to are: Auguste Comte, Ludwig Feuerbach (who must share the honour with his disciple, Karl Marx) and Friedrich Nietzsche.

<sup>77</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 13.

<sup>78</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 88.

<sup>79</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 88.

<sup>80</sup> De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Namur: Culture et Verite, 1989 (1), Paris: Cerf, 2006), 36. See *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 38.

*Proudhon et le christianisme*,<sup>81</sup> de Lubac reflected on the course which he taught in *Fundamental Theology* between 1941-1942. He recalled how he built bridges of friendship which included unbelievers. One of such was Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) with whom he developed a lasting friendship. In addition, de Lubac maintained correspondence with several readers who were unbelievers. “One of them had been surprised that a Catholic had been able to speak of the anticlerical Proudhon with freedom and sympathy.”<sup>82</sup> De Lubac’s openness to other views, especially those of atheists, was considered most uncommon in the light of the modernist controversy of the time. What was even more ground-breaking was de Lubac’s response to his critic when he remarked:

It is within our faith that we draw this freedom of spirit, and in a very sincere submission to our Church. For the faith, fully lived – as much, at least, as human weakness permits – does not appear to us as a constraint but as liberation (...). The Church (...) – like an immense maternal womb, in which all that is authentically human is in the final analysis received with the same love, whatever might be the differences and eccentricities (...). This is what can be observed in the strictest and most traditional Catholicism.<sup>83</sup>

In the quotation above, we observe that the foundation of de Lubac’s openness to others is not found in a pseudo-liberalism or a psychological optimism. On the contrary, it is found in the nature of faith itself. This is because the Christian faith obliges us to auscultate and dialogue with difference, because we can never let up on truth irrespective of its source.<sup>84</sup> Our contention is that the search for the truth irrespective of its source makes the quest for dialogue with people of other cultures and religions possible. Besides, his openness to difference has a far-reaching implication as it unveils his understanding of the Church and of the truth. This leads us to the second part of the understanding of the principle of the Catholicity of Truth by de Lubac. It affirms that the Christian [dogma] faith is a “source of universal light.”<sup>85</sup>

Henri de Lubac, in his inaugural lecture proposed an explanation of how faith is the source of universal light. He did this by making a distinction between the intelligence *of the faith* and the intelligence *by the faith*.<sup>86</sup> According to de Lubac, “after the understanding of faith comes, as a necessary complement, the understanding through faith.”<sup>87</sup> The intelligence *of the faith* corresponds to the traditional term *fides quae* (what we believe), while its

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<sup>81</sup> De Lubac, *Proudhon et le christianisme* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1945).

<sup>82</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 39.

<sup>84</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 125.

<sup>85</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 98.

<sup>86</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 98.

<sup>87</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 98.



complement, the intelligence *by the faith*, is akin to, but not identical with, the *fides qua* (act of faith).<sup>88</sup> For him, intelligence *by faith* is not only for baptized Catholics, however, faith enlightens human reason.<sup>89</sup> The significance of the second understanding of the Catholicity of Truth is that it brings out the relationship between faith and reason. What de Lubac sets out to show is that reason is deeply enlightened by Christian revelation. Faith and reason are not in competition with one another. However, “the deepest part of man will never be understood if it is not illuminated by a ray coming from the unfathomable brightness of the trinitarian life. For him, the human person is destined to resemble the Trinity, because he was created in its image.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, we see in de Lubac that Christ cannot be understood in isolation from the community of the Trinity; neither can the Church or creation, for that matter. Christ reveals God as the internal movement of love. The Church and, through her, all humanity is called to participate in the community of the Trinity.

For de Lubac, the Christian faith enlightens all peoples. Hence, he proposes that everyone needs the light of Christ to come to the full knowledge of the truth. What de Lubac is suggesting in relation to the earlier principle of “Auscultation” is that truth is catholic and is not restricted to any institution, group or individual, that is, it is universal and can be heard even in the most unexpected sources. Indeed, de Lubac contested and refuted the concept of truth, which he considered to be at variance with the Christian understanding. He was not satisfied with the methodology of the comparative approach to religions and several varieties of psychological, historical, and philosophical reductionism. However, this did not stop him from dialoguing with them.<sup>91</sup> Writing in the 1960s, de Lubac questioned the idea of religious pluralism. De Lubac asks: “Does not one speak today, in an empirical sense, of diverse religions, among which there are no scruples about including Christianity – in the class of universal religions?”<sup>92</sup> Similarly, de Lubac observes that the common designation of the subject in Catholic theological faculties has always been *historia religionis*, or “history of religion,”

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<sup>88</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 125. See Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork, Ireland: The Mercier Press, 1955), 2-3. Ott states that “theology is a science of faith. It is concerned with faith in the objective sense (*fides quae creditor*) that which is believed, and in the subjective sense (*fides qua creditor*), that by which we believe. Theology like faith accepts, as the sources of its knowledge, Holy Writ and Tradition (remote rule of faith) and also the doctrinal assertions of the Church (proximate rule of faith). But as a science of faith it seeks by human reason to penetrate the content and the context of the supernatural system of truth and to understand this as far as possible.”

<sup>89</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 125-126.

<sup>90</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 100.

<sup>91</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 35. According to de Lubac, “The comparative approach to religion, based on the supposition that different ‘religions’ could be neutrally set alongside each other, had been in vogue since the nineteenth century.”

<sup>92</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 40.

which is singular.<sup>93</sup> De Lubac argues that although many religions have similarities in spirituality, to posit a transcendent unity of religions is misguided. He contends that such conclusions are drawn based on a superficial examination of the different texts, and on “insufficient attention to the qualitative differences” between religions.<sup>94</sup>

De Lubac’s openness to different ideas is also reflected in his engagement with philosophy. He respected the uniqueness and autonomy of theology, philosophy, other disciplines, other religions, as well as non-religions. This is apparent in de Lubac’s *At the Service of the Church*, where he makes a defence of his involvement in the “supernatural” question. De Lubac is of the view that his 1946 work [*Surnaturel*] was a legitimate criticism of what he saw as the sterile confrontation of certain schools of “modern scholasticism”. According to de Lubac, they showed more interest in the self-righteous defence of their own positions rather than a concern for creative thought, leaving the way open to the ‘ups and downs’ of “separated philosophy.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, in addressing the “supernatural question” de Lubac was concerned about the issue of separation; the separation of philosophy and theology, of nature and grace, of faith and reason. Explaining the purpose of his 1946 work de Lubac writes:

In *Surnaturel*, it is a more fundamental problem from the point of view of rational reflection that is undertaken: the problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology, between reason and faith, between the development of the resources of human nature and the potential reception of a supernatural given, a relationship as conceived in principle in Christian thought. It seems that what emerges from this essentially historical study is a certain conception of two orders, called natural and supernatural, which has been expressed in certain schools in more recent centuries, resulting in a ‘separated theology’ which itself leads to a ‘separated philosophy’. This conception does not fully conform to the whole of Christian tradition nor to the full blossoming of the life of the spirit.<sup>96</sup>

In this quotation, de Lubac makes an important observation. He insists that the “separation” led to an understanding of the human person that did not take into account his or her end which, in turn, opened the way to atheistic humanism. De Lubac was not alone in holding this position. Yves Congar, his contemporary, was equally critical of the tendency to neglect the Fathers and Scriptures, leading to a situation, where philosophy replaced theology. What Congar is referring to is a form of scholasticism that is characterised by the dialectical method of the schools, which became an end in itself. According to Congar: “Instead of theologising, they

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<sup>93</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*.

<sup>94</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 46.

<sup>95</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 36.

<sup>96</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 93.

philosophised. Debates between theological schools took place on the basis of philosophy. More and more they also used the methods of the schools, and profaned the sacred act of speaking about God.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Fergus Kerr is of the view that the endless, complicated speculation about the hypothetical status of human nature prior to or apart from grace, gradually led to the emergence of totally secularized conception of humanity. Indeed, of human beings without any desire for God.<sup>98</sup> Kerr’s observation touches on the understanding in theology that the human person could be considered as autonomous with a natural end, sufficient in himself, thus giving a basis in reality to the abstraction “pure nature.” De Lubac views this separation as paving the way for secularisation and a life without God. In *Le mystère du surnaturel*, de Lubac refers to a new practical dualism, which has not only led to a separation of Christian life and secular life, but it also permeates Christian life itself. This leads to a form of Christianity that seeks the lowest common denominator with atheistic humanism. Besides, there is the danger of undermining the uniqueness and centrality of Christ. The Christ event is significant because it shows the human being in his or her essence and the depths of which the human alone could never attain. To exclude the light of Christ is to cast man into the darkness of minimal vision, where he or she has no possibility of knowing the self nor of realising the ultimate end.

The historical context in which de Lubac was writing was the situation in his homeland, France. De Lubac was able to observe how the separation of natural and supernatural ends had direct consequences in his country. For de Lubac, the separation between religious faith and agnosticism in his country, and finally between Church and state, was not principally as a result of the work of rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment but, more significantly, the work of theologians themselves. By theology insisting on the autonomous individual, theology opened up the way to atheistic humanism. This is summarized by Fergus Kerr when he asserts:

The philosophies which broke free of supernaturalist Christianity to develop their own naturalist and deist theologies, had roots in the anti-Protestant and anti-Renaissance scholasticism of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>99</sup>

Fergus Kerr notes that these debates are much older than de Lubac. He is merely picking up on dimensions that go back principally to Blondel’s *L’Action* and *La Lature* and the clash between theology and Neo-Scholasticism. De Lubac uses the principle of “Auscultation” by making a

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<sup>97</sup> Yves Congar, *La foi et la théologie* (coll. ‘Le Mystère chrétienne’), (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 252.

<sup>98</sup> Fergus Kerr, “French Theology: Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac,” in *The Modern Theologians*, ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 115.

<sup>99</sup> Kerr, “French Theology,” 113.

diagnosis of the danger of the separation of philosophy and theology. In this way, de Lubac anticipates the insights of the Second Vatican Council document on priestly formation which says:

In the revision of ecclesiastical studies the main object to be kept in mind is a more effective coordination of philosophy and theology so that they supplement one another in revealing to the minds of the students with ever increasing clarity the Mystery of Christ.<sup>100</sup>

Bernard Sesboüé points to the fact that too much emphasis on neo-scholasticism and a form of neo-Thomism in the theology of the Church stifles theology as a discipline. Consequently, theology became lifeless in the centuries that followed the Golden Age of the medieval theologians.<sup>101</sup>

A key concern for de Lubac in *Catholicisme*, which is his first major work is the quest for the truth. Balthasar captures this vividly when he notes:

His first major work, *Catholicisme*, which sets the style and orientation for all that will follow, reveals the fundamental decision as a decision for fullness, totality, and the widest possible horizon – it is precisely the power of inclusion that becomes the chief criterion of truth – so that, negatively, it becomes a major concern of his to point out where the entire tradition, and in particular the ecclesial and theological tradition, has become narrow or rigid, often with immensely destructive consequences.<sup>102</sup>

This quotation indicates that de Lubac's major works reveal the order of an organic whole, which successfully attempts to present the spirit of Catholic Christianity to contemporary man and in such a way that he appears credible in himself and his historical developments. He or she is in dialogue with the major forms of other interpretations of the world. This is opposed to a narrow or rigid ecclesial or theological tradition, which has led to destructive consequences. It is this search for truth in its totality and fullness that took him to different unexpected sources even those which seem to be contrary to the Christian tradition.

Having made the aforementioned observation, it is pertinent at this point to return to our hypothesis which is how does the study of the unicity and universality of Christ in the context of religious pluralism enhance peaceful coexistence and diversity? We believe that the answer to this question can be found in de Lubac's argument that the ray of light which has its source in the Trinitarian life is present in every person, created in the image of God. He examined in his inaugural lecture where he reflected on this subject. Now that we have seen

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<sup>100</sup> Vatican II, Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius* § 14.

<sup>101</sup> Bernard Sesboüé, "Le Surnatunel chez Henri de Lubac," 113.

<sup>102</sup> Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 28-29.

the close connection between auscultation and the principle of catholicity of truth, we will explore how his understanding and interpretation of the Catholicism and salvation for those who are not part of it conforms to our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation by virtue of creation and thus, the whole of humanity.

## 2.2 The Concept of the Catholicism

In this section, we shall focus on de Lubac's understanding of the Catholicism in his first published book, *Catholicisme*. We shall highlight the significance of the publication as key to understanding de Lubac's writings. We shall then examine how he interprets the role of the Church for salvation and how this raises the question of the relationship between her and those who are not part of her. We begin with an examination of the de Lubac's programmatic work *Catholicisme*.

*Catholicisme, Les aspects sociaux du dogme* is de Lubac's first published book.<sup>103</sup> It is the gateway to de Lubac's theology. Hans Urs Von Balthasar posits that *Catholicisme*, gives "the style and orientation of the entire work."<sup>104</sup> *Catholicisme* is the ideal point of entry into de Lubac's understanding of the Church, and how he addresses the question of the salvation of unbelievers which we find in the seventh chapter. Equally, de Lubac examines the substance of Christian witness or mission and its implication for the "common destiny of humanity." We will proceed by looking at de Lubac's understanding of the social dimension of salvation the spirit of "Catholicism," and de Lubac's understanding of mission. We begin with an examination of the understanding of social dimension of salvation in *Catholicisme*.

De Lubac's conclusions are rooted deeply in the theology of the Church Fathers. He maintains that human identity is rooted in unity, not in division. De Lubac returns to Clement of Alexandria who asserts:

(Christ) intercedes for men and calls on them: "Hearken," he cries, all you people, or rather all you who are endowed with reason, barbarians or Greeks! I summon the whole human race, I who am its author by the will of the Father! Come unto me and gather together as one well-ordered unity under the one God.<sup>105</sup>

De Lubac is highlighting and re-affirming the doctrine of creation which postulates the brotherhood of all men [women], "since all men [women] were made in the one image of the

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<sup>103</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicisme*.

<sup>104</sup> Balthasar, *The Theology of Henry de Lubac*, 62.

<sup>105</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptic*, C. (St. I, 84-85). See the translation by Mondésert, *Sources chrétiennes*, n. 2. Pseudo-Chrysostom, In *ascens.*, s. 3 (PG 52, 797).

one God”.<sup>106</sup> According to de Lubac, this unity was disrupted by sin which is the cause of division among human beings. It is Christ that restores the unity that was lost through the miracle of Calvary:

Minute drops of blood making the whole world new, working the salvation of all men, as the drops of fig-juice one by one curdle the milk, reuniting mankind, knitting them together as one.<sup>107</sup>

De Lubac posits that Christ bears all humanity within himself. Christ “incorporated himself in our humanity and incorporated it in himself”.<sup>108</sup> In this way, de Lubac emphasizes that the Incarnation is redemptive. We can say that for de Lubac, the Christian answer to the question “what is humanity?” is Christ himself. This shows the solidarity of humanity as a whole in the person of Jesus Christ. De Lubac affirms that Christ the Redeemer does not offer salvation merely to each one; he effects it, he is himself the salvation of the whole.<sup>109</sup> The idea of ransom and gathering is similar to what we read in the prophet Jeremiah:

Here the word of Yahweh, O nations, Declare it in distant coastlands. Say: he who scattered Israel gathers him, keeps him as a shepherd keeps his flock; Yes, Yahweh ransoms Jacob, he redeems him from the hands of someone stronger.<sup>110</sup>

In the same way that de Lubac insists that humanity is one, he posits that the Church is one. De Lubac writes:

The *Unica Catholica*, is not just her mere universality, open to all men and excluding none... but the bond of peace, that cohesion that is created where her sway extends. In the fullest meaning of the word she brings beings into existence and gathers them together into one Whole. Humanity is one, organically it is the Church’s mission to reveal to men that pristine unity which they have lost, to restore and complete it.<sup>111</sup>

De Lubac is highlighting the fact that the Church was predestined and is continually on a mission of speaking about the truth of unity to the world. At the heart of the mission of the Church is the unity of humanity. The Church cannot be Church if she is constituted by division and dissent. Little wonder that de Lubac remarks in *Catholicism*: “For destruction of unity is a corruption of truth, and the poison of dissension is as baneful as that of false doctrine.”<sup>112</sup> De Lubac argues in the words of Tertullian that “the schismatic or the provoker of dissension outrages what is dearest to Christ” since it is “a crime against that ‘spiritual body’ for which

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<sup>106</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 31.

<sup>107</sup> Gregory Nazianen, *Orat.* 45, c. 29 (PG 36, 662-64).

<sup>108</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 37-38.

<sup>109</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 39.

<sup>110</sup> Jer 31:10-11.

<sup>111</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 52-53.

<sup>112</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 71, 77.

Christ sacrificed his carnal body.”<sup>113</sup> The unity of the Church is visible in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a sacrament of unity not only between historical human beings but also with the “mystical body.”<sup>114</sup>

In *Catholicisme* de Lubac explains the substance of Christian witness and its implications for the “common destiny of humanity.” De Lubac points out the unique contribution of Christianity to the world. This contribution is in Christianity’s developed concept of time and history. The Christian understanding of time is different from what the Greeks, Hindus and Buddhists understand it. The uniqueness of Christian history has its roots in Jewish tradition. De Lubac is of the view that for the Christian, God is active in history, although he himself is not history. He agrees with Origen that “the goodness of God through Christ has recalled his universal creation unto one end.”<sup>115</sup> De Lubac insists that for the Christian, history is the vehicle of salvation. Moreover, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”<sup>116</sup> God became a human being to “reconcile the world to himself,” thereby restoring men and women as one so that all might inhabit the New Jerusalem. De Lubac links this understanding of history to the interpretation of Scripture. He sees the entire scriptures, Old and New Testaments, as deriving their meaning in Christ. Biblical accounts of the Israelites and their Patriarchs foreshadow what is to come in Christ.<sup>117</sup> Another concept borrowed from the Jewish tradition is the social understanding of salvation. For de Lubac salvation is social. In this regard, he remarks:

Just as the Jews put all their trust for so long not in an individual reward beyond the grave but in their common destiny as a race and in the glory of their earthly Jerusalem, so for the Christian all his hopes must be bent on the coming of the Kingdom and the glory of the one Jerusalem; and as Yahweh bestowed adoption on no individual as such, but only insofar as he bestowed universal adoption on the people of the Jews, so the Christian obtains adoption only in proportion as he is a member of that social structure brought to life by the Spirit of Christ.<sup>118</sup>

The social structure refers to the Church. Similarly, the Spirit of Christ is another reference to the Church. Our author wrestles with the unfair criticism levelled at Christianity for being too individualistic. De Lubac sees this problematic of *Catholicisme* in Jewish nationalism. He finds Jewish nationalism to be so narrow and incomplete and in contradiction with the world-wide

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<sup>113</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, lib. 5, c. 19, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson 1885-1887, 10 Vols. Repr (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994).

<sup>114</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 89.

<sup>115</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 143.

<sup>116</sup> John 1: 14.

<sup>117</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 173.

<sup>118</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 60.

character of Judaism, which focuses on the kingdom of God. De Lubac posits that: “Judaism passed on to Christianity its concept of salvation as essentially social. If, having regard to the greater number of the faithful, the Church derives more particularly from the Gentile – *Ecclesia ex gentibus* – the idea of the Church, none the less, comes from the Jews.”<sup>119</sup>

De Lubac shows the social character of the Church through his image of “the Church as a mother.” Through this image, de Lubac is able to demonstrate that the Church is a religious society.<sup>120</sup> The Church is not only institutional but has a spiritual dimension. According to de Lubac, there has always been an understanding of the Church as “a mystery surpassing its outward manifestation.”<sup>121</sup> Those who are called into this spiritual reality precede the institutional Church. It is the Church that is “a *convocatio* before being a *congregatio*.”<sup>122</sup>

In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac articulates his interpretation of Catholicism. However, he did not set out to explain explicitly all the meanings of Catholicism. Writing on the choice of the title, *Catholicisme*, de Lubac asserts:

I have chosen it as the title of this book to show the spirit in which I have tried to write it rather than as an indication of what it contains. This is not a work on the *Catholica*. Consequently, here will be found no treatise on the Church or on the Mystical Body – although these pages refer continually to both, and particularly to the question of their identity.<sup>123</sup>

This quotation highlights de Lubac’s understanding of the term “Catholicism.” For him, “Catholicism”, represents a breadth of vision; it refers to the manner of doing theology, rather than to its content. De Lubac asserts that he does not set out to write a treatise on the Church or on the Mystical Body of Christ in his first book. His emphasis is on the spirit of Catholicism rather than in the confessional sense. In this way, de Lubac is not undermining the importance of ecclesiology but, on the contrary, putting it in perspective. De Lubac ensures that we understand what Catholicism is within as wide an horizon as possible. For him, the term Catholicism evokes the meaning of both universality and inclusiveness. It is the horizon that enables de Lubac to listen attentively both to humanity and to the Word of God.<sup>124</sup>

In the introduction to *Catholicism*, the English translation of *Catholicisme*, de Lubac insists that it is not intended to be a technical work. He “wanted to present the subject as

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<sup>119</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 61.

<sup>120</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 62.

<sup>121</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 64.

<sup>122</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 64.

<sup>123</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 17.

<sup>124</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 87.



impersonally as possible, drawing especially on the treasures, so little utilized, in the patristic writings.”<sup>125</sup> Aware of how ancient the texts are and the developments in theology which have been made since their time, de Lubac does not take over in their entirety all the ideas they offer us. He seeks only to understand them, and listens to what they have to tell us, since they are our Fathers in the Faith and since they received from the Church of the time the means to nourish the Church of our times as well.<sup>126</sup> He sought to bring to light the very diverse and sometimes contrary trends of Tradition. In them, de Lubac found the unity of this Tradition in all that affects the essentials of Catholicism. It is the unity of all the faithful to the one Church, who live by the same faith, in the same Holy Spirit.<sup>127</sup> De Lubac’s method is new, considering that he was writing in a theological milieu that was still in the grip of neo-scholasticism.<sup>128</sup> Given the importance of *Catholicisme*, it is imperative that we outline what other writers and commentators think of this ground-breaking book.

In the foreword to *Catholicism*, the 1988 English translation of *Catholicisme*, Joseph Ratzinger asserts that he discovered in the autumn of 1949: “Perhaps Henri de Lubac’s most significant work.”<sup>129</sup> Ratzinger asserts that the encounter with this book became an essential milestone on his theological journey.<sup>130</sup> He goes on to say that in *Catholicisme*, de Lubac does not treat merely isolated questions. “He makes visible to us in a new way the fundamental intuition of Christian Faith so that from this inner core all the particular elements appear in a new light.”<sup>131</sup> De Lubac shows how the idea of community and universality, rooted in the Trinitarian concept of God, permeates and shapes all the individual elements of Faith’s content.<sup>132</sup> For Ratzinger, de Lubac’s idea of the Catholic is the key that opens the doors to the proper understanding of the whole. Ratzinger points out that de Lubac “lets the Fathers of our Faith speak so that we hear the voice of the origin in all its freshness and astonishing

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<sup>125</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 19.

<sup>126</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 19-20.

<sup>127</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 20.

<sup>128</sup> Here we make a distinction between the terms ‘scholastic’ and ‘neo-scholastic’. The scholastic tradition which developed in the twelfth and through the thirteenth centuries under the influence of Aristotelian philosophy is of immense value, whereas the neo-scholasticism, which consisted of commentaries on the Summae, led to a certain sclerosis of theology. It tended to neglect the writings of the Fathers. Much of de Lubac’s contribution to theology was in rediscovering the true teaching of the Scholastics. See article: Rolf Schönberger, ‘Scolastique’, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Moyen Âge*, t. II, André Vauchez (dir.) (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 1409f.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen* (Stuggard: Deutsche Verlags-Ansalt, 1998). English translation by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis: *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, Undated), 98.

<sup>130</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 11.

<sup>131</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 11.

<sup>132</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 11.

relevance”.<sup>133</sup> He contends that theology is much more relevant the more it returns to its centre and draws from its deepest resources. It is not a question of clinging to the dead past. On the contrary, de Lubac is in dialogue with what is said by our most modern contemporaries. He hears it not as an outsider, but as one who is deeply sympathetic. De Lubac reads the Bible and the Fathers with the problems that we wrestle with in mind, and because he asks real questions, he finds answers – and the Fathers become our contemporaries.<sup>134</sup> Ratzinger affirms that de Lubac was a man of his time. We see this in the problematic of *Catholicisme*, which is “the narrow-minded individualistic Christianity”.<sup>135</sup> This leads to a narrowing of the Christian vision to individualism, only preoccupied with personal salvation. Ratzinger posits that de Lubac highlights “the social dimension of dogma”. Nevertheless, he observes that the social dimension of dogma which de Lubac saw rooted in mystery has often sunk to the merely sociological so that the unique ‘[Christian contribution to the right understanding of history and community disappeared from sight.<sup>136</sup> The focus on the social dimension of dogma has led to sociological misunderstanding. Sacraments are often seen merely as celebrations of the community where there is no more room for the personal dialogue between God and the soul. This constitutes a kind of reversal of the previous individualism constricting the theological meaning. In addition, it brings to bare the difficulty between the central theological themes and their concrete and practical applications.<sup>137</sup>

*Catholicisme* is esteemed by Vincent Carraud, a philosopher. For Carraud, “It is the very catholicity of Catholicism that is the necessity to take on board the entire Tradition, which ensured the greatness of Fr de Lubac’s work”.<sup>138</sup> In the same vein, de Lubac clarifies in the foreword to the 1978 Italian edition of *Catholicisme* that his book is not about Catholicism or about the Catholic Church. “It is a collection of diverse studies which, by their very diversity, intend to show the universal, and more precisely the catholic, nature of Christianity”.<sup>139</sup> Alfred Vanneste sees the newness in de Lubac’s approach. Reviewing de Lubac’s *Catholicisme*, he writes:

As much by its content as by the structure of its argumentation, the work differed radically from the classical ecclesiological treatises, which were profoundly marked by

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<sup>133</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 11.

<sup>134</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 11.

<sup>135</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 12.

<sup>137</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 12.

<sup>138</sup> Carraud Vincent, “Une oeuvre nécessairement immense,” *Communio*, 103 (septembre à octobre 1992), 10.

<sup>139</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, Chaper V, 137-164.

the anti-Protestant controversies and by the constraints of an anti-rationalistic apologetic.<sup>140</sup>

Here, Vanneste points to the fact that de Lubac's approach is not only new but ground-breaking. It differed radically from the ecclesiological manuals that preceded him. Those were marked by anti-Protestant controversies and anti-rationalistic apologetic, a feature that de Lubac avoided in his work.

Michel Fedou, on his part, suggests that respecting de Lubac's work means also recognising, on a wider scale, the importance of his contribution to twentieth century Christian thought. Fedou remarks that:

Fr de Lubac is part of that generation – also evidenced by Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar – who have in common the legacy of each in his own way, cleared the path for a renewed intelligence of the Christian mystery.<sup>141</sup>

De Lubac identified and put aside the narrow-minded neo-scholasticism found in the manual tradition. On the contrary, he invites his readers to see the human being in his or her full dignity.

Herbert Vorgrimler gives us an important insight into de Lubac's seminal work. Writing on de Lubac's *Catholicisme*, he remarks:

At the time this book ushered in a new type of theology. Fully respectful of the originality of Christian revelation, it (this theology) integrated everything that was human into a great movement of charity, without being moralistic or sentimental... The book incarnated, from then on, the renewal of theology, anticipating the best of current theology on earthly realities.<sup>142</sup>

This quotation highlights Vorgrimler's assessment of the different themes in de Lubac's *Catholicisme*. Vorgrimler indicates that de Lubac is not only respectful of the originality of Christian revelation but is not judgemental of other non – Christian traditions. De Lubac pays special attention to the salvation of non – Christians in the seventh chapter of *Catholicisme* which we shall examine at the end of this chapter. In the seventh chapter, de Lubac makes an exposition of the Church's role in salvation. It is there that he examines the apparent tension between "salvation (only) through the Church" and the "common destiny of humanity in

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<sup>140</sup> Alfred Vanneste, "Review of *Catholicisme, Les aspects sociaux du dogme*," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 80 (2004), 207.

<sup>141</sup> Michel Fedou, *Henri de Lubac. Sa contribution à la pensée chrétienne* (Paris, Médiasèvre, 1996), 42.

<sup>142</sup> Herbert Vorgrimler, "Henri de Lubac," in Robert Vander Gucht et Herbert Vorgrimler, dirs. *Bilan de la théologie du XXe siècle II* (Tournai-Paris: Casterman, 1970), 811.

Christ.”<sup>143</sup> *Catholicisme* is of immense importance because it contains the main ideas of many of his later works. De Lubac develops his thoughts and ideas from an article into a book, or a chapter or a subsection of a chapter into an independent work. Certainly, his first major work defies any categorization because of its formative significance for the entire body of his works. We see the evidence of this in his exposition on the Church.

### **2.2.2 The Church as the Continuation of the Incarnation**

This sub-section reviews de Lubac’s understanding of the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation. We will explain how for de Lubac the Church is in continuity with the assembly of God’s people in the Old Testament. We shall demonstrate how de Lubac believes there is a genuine doctrinal legacy from the Old Testament of the universal destiny of the Community of God’s people.

The foundation of Henri de Lubac’s theological discourse on the Church can be traced back to his first published work *Catholicisme*.<sup>144</sup> For de Lubac, the Church possesses roots, which far predate the birth of Jesus, having been prepared for over centuries in the history of the Jewish people and prefigured in the earthly paradise of Eden.<sup>145</sup> De Lubac remarks that “Everywhere the Church appears in figure, in the whole fabric of the history of God’s people.”<sup>146</sup> Drawing from Hebrew Scripture, de Lubac highlights how images of the Church abound. He points to the image of the tree of life in the midst of Paradise, from which flowed the four rivers of the Word of God; Noah’s Ark in which the human race was preserved from destruction; the Holy Place where bread was offered and renewed; Mount Zion on which was founded the city where God dwelt; the tabernacle containing the divine commandments and the manna given to the people in the wilderness; Rahab’s house in Jericho from where hung the rope enabling the escape of the spies of Israel from the hostile city; the temple of Solomon in which God was continually worshipped.<sup>147</sup> In addition, de Lubac cites ancient texts to emphasize that the Church is in continuity with the assembly of God’s people in the Old Testament.

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<sup>143</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 217-245

<sup>144</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*.

<sup>145</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 184.

<sup>146</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 184.

<sup>147</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 184-187. See Ps 47:9; 1 Pet 3:20; Ps 115:16; Ish 2:66; Ps 47:5-7; Is: 2: 12; Jos 2:1; 2 Chron 2:1-18.

One such text is *The Shepherd of Hermas*, where the Church is depicted as an elderly woman, “created before all things.”<sup>148</sup> Other images that he uses include: “the betrothed,” “the bride of Christ,” and “the chosen people,” “the son of God.”<sup>149</sup> De Lubac contends that these are not just mere metaphors. They are not simply literary expressions. Conversely, the emphasis that is laid is on a genuine doctrinal legacy from the Old Testament of the universal destiny of the Community of God’s people.

The novelty of Christianity, de Lubac observes, consists in “its being a transfiguration rather than a fresh creation.”<sup>150</sup> De Lubac clarifies this view by referring to St. Paul, who remarks that “the Church is the People of the New Covenant. Israel according to the Spirit takes the place of Israel according to the flesh: but it is not a collection of many individuals, it is still a nation albeit recruited now from the ends of the earth.”<sup>151</sup> Consequently, de Lubac holds that the Old Covenant is entirely oriented toward the preparation of the New and it is in this that it achieves again its full meaning at the very moment when, as such, it ceases to be.<sup>152</sup> Here, we see the continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament.

The continuity extends into the New Testament from the time of Christ, the Apostles, to the present time. The model of motherhood is one de Lubac uses to explain both the understanding of the Church and her continuity, and his understanding of the social character of salvation.<sup>153</sup> De Lubac writes:

The Church as she is should be in verifiable continuity with the community of the first disciples, which in turn, and from the beginning, a clearly defined group, social in character, organized, and having its heads, its rites, and – soon its legislation.<sup>154</sup>

De Lubac, in this citation points to the biblical order of the Church as an explanation of her continuity. He suggests going back to the work of the apostles and disciples prior to the Passion. There, we see that they were directed by Christ himself during his earthly ministry, and in particular to their calling by Christ.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision II, 4, 1, SC 53 bis, Paris: Cerf, 1968, ANF II, 12.

<sup>149</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 57-58.

<sup>150</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 58.

<sup>151</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 58.

<sup>152</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 58.

<sup>153</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 62. See *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), 75-84; *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 236-278.

<sup>154</sup> De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 86.

<sup>155</sup> Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 54.

### 2.2.3 The Catholicity of the Church

This section explores how de Lubac interprets the Church as the locus and means, enabling humanity and all creation to attain their end and how salvation is possible for people of other faiths as well.

In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac articulates his understanding of the Church. The Church for him, is “Jesus Christ spread abroad and communicated.”<sup>156</sup> This mission began at the Incarnation and was carried on up to Calvary. Two aspects of the Church are highlighted here. The Church is both redemptive and a reunion. He explains this by going back to the understanding of the name catholic by the Fathers of the second century and onward. As Ignatius of Antioch points out, they understood the Church as ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.<sup>157</sup> De Lubac draws special attention to the fact that classical Greek philosophers used the word Καθολικός to indicate a universal proposition. For de Lubac, “a universal is a singular and is not to be confused with an aggregate.”<sup>158</sup> According to him, the Church’s catholicity has nothing to do with geography or statistics. On the contrary, de Lubac is of the view that the Church was

Already Catholic on the morning of Pentecost, when all her members could be contained in a small room, as she was when the Arian waves seemed on the point of swamping her; she would still be Catholic if tomorrow apostasy on a vast scale deprived her of almost all the faithful.<sup>159</sup>

The catholicity of the Church has its roots in the divine mysteries of the Incarnation and Pentecost. It is not measured numerically or geographically. Thus, de Lubac posits that the nature of catholicity is not material, but spiritual. He maintains that “like sanctity, catholicity is primarily an intrinsic feature of the Church.”<sup>160</sup>

Keeping in mind that our thesis is that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation by virtue of creation, and our common humanity, de Lubac’s interpretation of reunion contributes towards the realization of our theological position. De Lubac posits that “unity,” reunion, is the hallmark of understanding the catholicity of the Church. He opines that it is the Church that completes the work of spiritual reunion of all people on earth. Like Christ, the Church, knows what is in man and woman and can

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<sup>156</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 48. See Bossuet, *Allocution aux nouvelles catholiques* (Oeuvres oratoires, Lebarcq, t. 6, 508).

<sup>157</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Smyrnaeos*, VIII, 8, 1, SC 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1945, 1; 1998), 138.

<sup>158</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 48.

<sup>159</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 49.

<sup>160</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 49.

penetrate his or her very depth.<sup>161</sup> What de Lubac is affirming is that the Church is in every human being and addresses herself to the whole person. Using the metaphor of a musical organ, de Lubac affirms that there is an intimate relationship between the dogma to which she adheres in all its mystery and human nature, infinitely and mysterious in its turns.”<sup>162</sup>

Significant to our quest is the fact that de Lubac sees a link between the Church and humanity. It is this acknowledgment of the Church as the locus and means, enabling humanity and all creation to attain their ends that salvation is possible for people of other faiths as well. Affirming the unifying role of the Church, de Lubac asserts:

In the fullest meaning of the word she brings into existence and gathers them together into one Whole. Humanity is one, organically one by its divine structure, it is the Church’s mission to reveal to men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it.<sup>163</sup>

De Lubac, in emphasizing the unifying role of the Church, brings together “the intrinsic link between humanity and the Church, between creation and Christ, between the natural and the supernatural”.<sup>164</sup> He clarifies that created in the image of God, who is one, humanity is enabled to rediscover its lost unity through the Gospel, the sacraments and the life of the Church.<sup>165</sup> The pristine unity, which was lost, refers to the unity of the human race. De Lubac alludes to how the Fathers of the Church, in their treatment of grace, salvation and creation were not content only to mention the formation of individuals, but of humanity as a whole.<sup>166</sup> Affirming the role of the Church as locus and means of salvation leads de Lubac to include others outside of her as part of that restoration. Before looking at what de Lubac says about the salvation of non-Christian believers, we examine what he writes on the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

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<sup>161</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 49.

<sup>162</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 49. De Lubac maintains that “the supernatural dignity” of the baptized rests “on the natural unity of man, though it surpasses it in an infinite manner”. The unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>164</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 419.

<sup>165</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 419.

<sup>166</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 25.

### 2.2.4 The Church as the Mystical Body of Christ

In this sub-section, I shall focus on how de Lubac's views on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Mystical Body is nuanced, corresponding to the shifts between the publication of *Mystici Corporis* and the Second Vatican Council.

Henri de Lubac wrote extensively on the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. The concept was not an innovation as it can be found in earlier Church documents. Historically, the first chronological evidence of the term *corpus mysticum* would seem to be the famous Bull of Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam* (1302).<sup>167</sup> Prior to this document, St Paul speaks of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and this inspired many Fathers of the Church. In his book *Corpus Mysticum*, de Lubac points to the fact that some Fathers of the Church, namely, Hilary, Augustine, and Leo, spoke in terms of the "mystery," or the "sacrament of the body of Christ."<sup>168</sup> For Cyril of Alexandria, the union of the faithful within the Church is referred to as a mystical union.<sup>169</sup> St. Ambrose on his part, contends that the body, which is the Church, has Christ as the "mystical head."<sup>170</sup> A comprehensive historical survey of the various understandings of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>171</sup> Be that as it may, we must acknowledge that the history of the literature in which the Church is identified in some fashion with the Mystical Body of Christ is long. However, "to place de Lubac's work in its immediate historical context, it is necessary to note that in the course of de Lubac's lifetime the Church documents have differed in the manner in which they describe this relationship."<sup>172</sup> Of immense significance to us is the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pius XII.<sup>173</sup> Here, Pius XII identifies the Church with the Mystical Body of Christ without

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<sup>167</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>168</sup> De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 5.

<sup>169</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannem* (PG 73, 161, 1045, 1045).

<sup>170</sup> De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 6.

<sup>171</sup> The following writings are useful on the theme of the Body and Blood of Christ. Gilbert Ostdiek, "Body of Christ, Blood of Christ," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins & Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 141-144; L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herde, 1963), 262-286; J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM: 1952); "Body and Blood of Christ," in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. X. Leon-Dufour (New York: Seabury, 1973); "Body and Blood of Christ," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962); "Body and Blood of Christ," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

<sup>172</sup> Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 72. For a historical exposition see, Emile Mersch in *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (1933); English translation: *The Whole Christ: The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition*, trans. John R. Kelly (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1938).

<sup>173</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_pxii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_pxii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html) (Accessed September 10, 2018 ). See [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html). See "Church as the Mystical Body of Christ," in *Heinrich Denzinger: Enchiridion*



nuance where he affirms: “If we would define and describe this true Church of Jesus Christ – which is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church – we shall find nothing more noble, more sublime or more divine than in the expression ‘the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.’”<sup>174</sup> This identification occurred in a historical context in which there was a danger of separating the invisible communion of grace from the visible Church. In the same vein, Yves Congar highlights the accomplishment of this encyclical, which lies in the union of thought of St. Thomas on the invisible union in grace and the Bellarmine’s emphasis on the Church as a visible society.<sup>175</sup> It is clear in this encyclical that the Church is viewed as a visible body founded by Christ, who is its head, and animated by the Spirit. At the same time, the Mystical Body is identified with the historical and visible ecclesial institution which is the Church. How does a person become a member of the visible Church and by implication a member of the Mystical Body? *Mystici Corporis* teaches that it is by virtue of identification with the Church. The document prescribes those who qualify for membership of the Mystical Body as

Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body or to have been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed.<sup>176</sup>

This goes to show the importance of baptism for full membership into the Body of Christ. Equally, it shows that membership is lost if some choose to separate themselves from the body or through grave faults committed. A crucial contribution of *Mystici Corporis* is that it affirms that those who do not belong to the visible body of the Catholic Church have a “certain relationship with the Mystical Body” by an “unconscious desire and longing.”<sup>177</sup> Grillmeier observes that the doctrine of the *votum sacramenti* or *votum ecclesiae* (baptism by desire) formed the bridge between the reality that most people are outside the Church, the doctrine of the universal salvific will of God and the necessity of the Church for salvation.<sup>178</sup> Besides, the concept of the *votum ecclesiae* ensured that the formula “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” (no salvation outside the Church) was never interpreted in a narrowly restrictive manner. Nevertheless, in *Mystici Corporis* there is nothing between full membership in the Church and

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*symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals.* Latin-English, 43<sup>rd</sup> Edition, ed., Peter Hünermann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 770. Subsequently, DzH.

<sup>174</sup> *Mystici Corporis*, I, 13. See DzH 3800, 3805.

<sup>175</sup> Yves Congar, “Le Concile de Vatican II,” Coll. *Theologie Historique* 71 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 154.

<sup>176</sup> *Mystici Corporis*, para. 22 in translation in ed. Claudia Carlen *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Wilmington, N.C.: McGrath Publishing Co. 1981), 103. See DzH 3802.

<sup>177</sup> Congar, “Le Concile de Vatican II,” 103.

<sup>178</sup> Grillmeier, “People of God,” 171.

a relationship to the Church by means of the *votum*. The problem this poses is that the strict identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Mystical Body, on the one hand, and the inadequacy of the theology of the *votum ecclesiae*, on the other hand, necessitated a new presentation by the Second Vatican Council of the relationship of non-Catholics with the Church.<sup>179</sup> De Lubac's influence on some major documents of the Council will be profound.

In *Catholicisme* de Lubac identifies the Mystical Body, at least, potentially, with the whole human race:

Thus the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, a supernatural unity, supposes a previous natural unity of the human race. So the Fathers of the Church, in their treatment of grace and salvation, kept constantly before them this Body of Christ, and in dealing with the creation were not content only to mention the formation of individuals, the first man and the first woman, but delighted to contemplate God creating humanity as a whole.<sup>180</sup>

De Lubac emphasizes the understanding of the unity and totality of humanity based on the divine image in which all are created in the image of God without any individual being excluded. According to Susan Wood: "This image constitutes a participation in God and is fundamentally Christological and historical since it is founded on the existential fact that all human beings are created with a supernatural finality, with an orientation to the beatitude. Thus, the unity of the body results from its orientation to and participation in God."<sup>181</sup> De Lubac opines that it is sin that brings about separation between the individual and the unity of the body, while redemption is the recovery of the lost unity, not only of humanity with God, but also of the unity of human beings among themselves.<sup>182</sup> What is apparent is that de Lubac identifies the Mystical Body with the Church, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, he has a concept of catholicity, which identifies the Church, at least potentially, with the whole human race.<sup>183</sup> This would imply that those outside the official Church are part of her. However, in *The Splendour of the Church*, de Lubac affirms the views of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, which identifies the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ not only with the whole human race, but also with the Roman Catholic Church when he remarks: "To describe this Church of Christ – which is the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church – there is no name more noble, none more excellent, none more divine than the "Mystical Body of Jesus Christ."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 74-75.

<sup>180</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 3.

<sup>181</sup> Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 81.

<sup>182</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 8.

<sup>183</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 27. See Eugen Maier, *Einigung der Welt in Gott: Das Katholische bei Henri de Lubac* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983). See Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 82.

<sup>184</sup> De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, 86; See also *Meditation sur l'Eglise*, 106.

We can surmise that de Lubac’s writings regarding the relationship of the Church to the Mystical Body shifted from *Catholicisme*, which anticipates *Lumen Gentium*, to *The Splendour of the Church*, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, which strongly reflects *Mystici Corporis*. Crucially, we can conclude that in the first place de Lubac’s exposition of the Mystical Body is more extensive than the Church, although all members of the Church are also members of the Mystical Body. Secondly, in a paradoxical way, the Church extends its visibility, transcending what Christianity is, and reaching out beyond Christianity itself.<sup>185</sup> Before we examine what de Lubac explains about the relationship of the Mystical Body to people of other religions, it is key to our work that we highlight what he writes on the connection between the Church and sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

### 2.2.5 The Church as Sacrament

In this sub-section, we emphasize that for de Lubac, the Church is locus and means of the mediation of union between God and humanity. At the same time, she is not the Mediator but the mediation.

In de Lubac, there is a close link between the understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body and the idea of the Church as sacrament.<sup>186</sup> The concept dates back to St. Cyprian in the third century, when he used the phrase, “the inseparable sacrament of unity” (*inseparabile unitatis sacramentum*) in reference to the Church.<sup>187</sup> De Lubac’s designation of the Church as sacrament of Christ – though not a new idea – was innovative, when he proposed it in 1938 and pre-figured the Vatican Council document, *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>188</sup> In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac cautions against the notion that the real Church, which is the Body of Christ refers merely to the hierarchical and disciplined society. This meaning is limited since it does not lead to effective union. De Lubac contends that

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<sup>185</sup> De Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, 24.

<sup>186</sup> We do not intend to make a comprehensive presentation here as there are many literatures on this already. However, we rely on the detailed study by Karl Rahner, ‘Über die Sakramente der Kirche,’ (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1985). French translation by Marc Debacker, *Les sacraments de l’Eglise* (Paris, Parish: Nouvelle, 1987), 12-14. See Raymond Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979); Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960); Henri de Lubac, *The Church Paradox and Mystery* (Shannon: Alba House, 1969); C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953); Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: 1976); J. Hamer, *The Church is a Communion* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964); Hans Kung, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967). See Noel O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 431-436.

<sup>187</sup> St. Cyprian, Epistle 69; 6 (PL 3, 1142 B), quoted in *Lumen Gentium* § 9, note 1.

<sup>188</sup> St. Cyprian first used the phrase: “inseparabile unitatis sacramentum (the inseparable sacrament of unity)”, in reference to the Church; Epist. 69; 6 (PL 3, 1142 B), quoted in *Lumen Gentium* § 9, note 1. This reference by Cyprian of the Church as “sacramentum” is most significant. We note that in the third century the term “sacramentum” was used in reference to the sacraments.

If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ; She represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term; she really makes him present. She not only carries on his work, but she is the very continuation.<sup>189</sup>

From the quotation above, it is apparent that de Lubac is highlighting the continuity between the Incarnation and the Church. Our author's concept of the sacrament is that it is both the sign of union between God and humanity and, also the means to the union.<sup>190</sup> In this way, the Church is locus and means of the mediation of union between God and humanity. At the same time, she is "not the Mediator but the mediation."<sup>191</sup> When de Lubac refers to the phrase "she really makes him present," it is the Eucharist that he is referring to. Moreover, it is in the Eucharist that the Church is most fully realised in history. Secondly, de Lubac addresses what is essential to the relationship between the Incarnation and the Church, and the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. Indeed, as far as Christianity is concerned, the founder is continually present.<sup>192</sup> What is significant from our own point of view here is that we identify two major trends in de Lubac's theology from the publication of *Catholicisme* and that which is expressed in *Mystici Corporis*. While the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* emphasizes the Church as the Roman Catholic Church, in *Catholicisme* de Lubac's view of the Church is rather that of the totality of the human race called to be members of the Body of Christ.<sup>193</sup> With this in mind, we examine de Lubac's views on the salvation of non-Christians.

### **2.3 *Catholicisme's* Seventh Chapter: The Church's role in Salvation**

In this section, we shall critically explore how de Lubac examines the obvious tension between "salvation (only) through the Church" and the "common destiny of humanity in Christ." We will show that for de Lubac Christianity is not in competition with other religions.

De Lubac identifies two perspectives when it comes to the question of salvation. In the first place, there is the view that maintains that salvation must be limited to those who participate in the mission of the visible Church. The reason being that the Church is the ongoing presence of Christ in the world. Secondly, there is the understanding that postulates that the whole of humanity participates in salvation to the extent that it is united by the creative power of Christ. In the spring of 1930, de Lubac, while occupying the chair of fundamental theology

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<sup>189</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.

<sup>190</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.

<sup>191</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.

<sup>192</sup> Matthew 28:20.

<sup>193</sup> Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 89. She notes that de Lubac's view is similar to the statement in *Lumen Gentium*, 1, 7: "For by communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body, those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."

at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Lyons, was asked to develop and teach a supplementary course on the history of religions.<sup>194</sup> De Lubac accepted and dedicated a lot of time to investigate the question of the salvation of non-Christians, especially by comparing some aspects of Buddhism and Christianity. He treated this question during the period between the two world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945). His approach was to focus on the role of the Church in the salvation of humanity as a whole, rather than dwelling on how individual non-Catholics can be saved.<sup>195</sup> He applied his patristic knowledge and arrived at conclusions by a careful reading of the Church Fathers whom he cited profusely. De Lubac rejects such positions as the one which denies grace to nonbelievers, salvation by recourse to miracles, and the hypothesis of a natural salvation, whereby the greater part of humanity would be cast into the twilight of Limbo.<sup>196</sup> What is uppermost for de Lubac is that salvation for everyone is achieved through Christ who gives a more or less obscure revelation of the Father to everyone, that the grace of Christ is of universal application. He cites the views of early Fathers like Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, and Augustine at various times to articulate his position. David Grumett points out that there are two different possibilities in de Lubac that need to be examined on the salvation of non-Christians. The first is the salvation of the person who has not heard the Gospel message. The second is the salvation of the person who has heard this message but has not converted.<sup>197</sup> These views differ but complement one another as attested in two of his writings, *Catholicisme* and *The Splendour of the Church*. In *The Splendour of the Church* de Lubac's identifies the Mystical Body with the Roman Catholic Church. He asserts:

Here we profess that the Church is formed by the Holy Spirit and that she is "his own proper work," the instrument with which he sanctifies us; we affirm that it is in her and by the faith that she communicates to us that we have a part in the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection into life, and we say that there is a vast assembly, "spread throughout the whole world, hoping by faith in love, and united with God by the bonds of a marriage which is eternal and indissoluble, and that no one can be saved if he does not remain faithfully in the bosom of its unity."<sup>198</sup>

In this quotation de Lubac suggests that salvation is only in the Roman Catholic Church, which would be the same as the view of *Mystici Corporis*. However, in another passage he reflects the same universalism characteristic of *Catholicisme* when he writes:

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<sup>194</sup> De Lubac, ASC, 31.

<sup>195</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 130.

<sup>196</sup> Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis*, 90.

<sup>197</sup> David Grumett, "On Religion," 258.

<sup>198</sup> De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, 31-32.

Following in the footsteps of St. Thomas, we can give the name “Church” to that gigantic organism which includes the host of angels as well as men, and even extends to the whole of the cosmos as well.<sup>199</sup>

What is key about this statement is that de Lubac’s universalism not only addresses the question of how all of humanity is related to the Church, but also how salvation is not found apart from the Church. Acknowledging that not all human beings belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, de Lubac explored the complex question of the relationship of non-Christians to the Church. Inspired by the writings of the Fathers of the Church, he began by examining the salvation of those to whom the Gospel has not been preached. He went against the prevailing narrow position of the Jansenists, who presumed that divine grace is restricted to a small, clearly defined group of faithful Christians.<sup>200</sup> De Lubac argued that grace cannot be diluted, and is no less powerful the more lavishly or widely it is bestowed.<sup>201</sup> To highlight the universalism of salvation, de Lubac cites Irenaeus who avers that Christ, “from the very beginning and in every part of the world, gives more or less obscure revelation of the Father to every creature, and that he can be the ‘salvation of those who are born outside the Way.’”<sup>202</sup> De Lubac agrees with Irenaeus that the universality of Christ extends to all the world. According to Irenaeus, the crucified Son of God is ‘inscribed crosswise’ upon the ‘length and breadth and height and depth’ of the whole universe.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, he quotes St. John Chrysostom who opines that “grace is diffused everywhere and that there is no soul that cannot feel its attraction.”<sup>204</sup>

De Lubac, considered St. Augustine to be one of the strictest of the Fathers. However, this did not stop Augustine from asserting that “divine mercy was always at work among all peoples, and that even pagans have had their ‘hidden saints’ and their prophets.”<sup>205</sup> Augustine is clear that the universality of salvation is the result not of human effort but of God’s sovereign action. According to Augustine, salvation is universal as a result of the divine will and that the

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<sup>199</sup> De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, 29.

<sup>200</sup> Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler, “Jansenism,” in *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed. Cornelius Ernst (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 236: “In theology the Jansenist doctrine of grace was wholly erroneous: grace was due to Adam by right, the virtues of pagans are only vices, mankind is enslaved to sinful concupiscence and even the justified remain subject to it at least interiorly; sin is possible even without interior freedom of choice; Jesus died for the elect only and the mass of men are damned (Predestination).” De Lubac remarks on the Jansenists: “For it is certainly important not to leave the smallest opening for that accusation formerly made by the Jansenists against the Jesuits (generally unjustly) of having brought the century to unbelief through their false maxims about the possibility of salvation for men of all religions.” De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 222.

<sup>201</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 217-218.

<sup>202</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.22.2, *AFN* Vol. 1, eds, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 494.

<sup>203</sup> *Irenaeus’s Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 34, trans. J. Armitage Robinson, ed. Iain M. MacKenzie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 11.

<sup>204</sup> John Chrysostom, Homily on John 8, 1.

<sup>205</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 219.

“whole race of humankind in all its diversity” will be saved.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, Augustine believed that salvation is inclusive of those who lived before the coming of Christ. He expresses his view in a letter to the priest, *Deogratias*, where he admonished that pagans should acknowledge that it

Makes no difference that people worship with different ceremonies in accord with the different requirements of times and places, if what is worshipped is holy... And the divinity was certainly never lacking to the righteousness and piety of human beings for their salvation”<sup>207</sup>

Here, Augustine is suggesting that the power of grace works across religious boundaries. In another passage, Augustine insists that God

From the beginning of the human race, he did not cease to speak in prophecies, and there were not lacking those who believed in him, both from Adam up to Moses and in the people of Israel... as well as in other peoples before Christ came in the flesh.<sup>208</sup>

Augustine posits that there are many biblical witnesses to the universal benevolence of God. The biblical records present a range of “outsiders,” who are remembered and respected for what they did. In addition, Augustine cites Old Testament biblical figures to argue that there were people of other nations, who belonged not by earthly but by heavenly fellowship, to the true Israelites, the citizens of the supernatural fatherland. These include Job an Edomite, Ruth the Moabite widow, Naaman an Aramean army commander and Balaam the Mesopotamian diviner.<sup>209</sup> Augustine reinforces his teaching on salvation for non-Jews by affirming that “it is acceptable to us to believe that, in other peoples as well as Jews, there were men [women] to whom this mystery was revealed.”<sup>210</sup>

The overwhelming possibility of the salvation of non-Christians did not stop de Lubac from investigating the place of those who have heard the Gospel message but have not yet converted. De Lubac asks in *Catholicisme*:

If an implicit Christianity is sufficient for the salvation of one who knows no other, why should we go in quest of an explicit one? In short, if every man can be saved through a religion that he unwittingly possesses, how can we require him to acknowledge this religion explicitly by professing Christianity and submitting to the Catholic Church?<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Augustine, *Enchiridion* 27, 103, in *On Christian Belief*, trans. Matthew O’Connell (New York: New City, 2005), 333.

<sup>207</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 102.10, 4 Vols, trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City, 2001-2005), vol. 2, 25-26.

<sup>208</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 102.15, Vols. 2, 28.

<sup>209</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 188-90; Ruth, 2 Kgs 5, Num. 22-24.

<sup>210</sup> Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* 18.47, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 893.

<sup>211</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 221.

Here, de Lubac raises a fundamental question. Since salvation is possible outside the Church in the shape of an implicit Christianity, why is it necessary for such a person to become a Christian and Church member? De Lubac answers this question in two distinct parts: he affirms the necessity of the Christian faith, on the one hand and, on the other hand, he asserts the obligation to Church membership. For de Lubac, the Christian faith posits a purpose or *telos* to human life. Despite the fact that people of other religious belief might gain heightened spiritual awareness or be motivated by a deep charity, something is missing in the non-Christian religions like Buddhism and Hinduism. It is in the light of this that de Lubac asserts: “Outside Christianity nothing attains its end, that only end, toward which, unknowingly, all human desires, all human endeavours, are in movement: the embrace of God in Christ.”<sup>212</sup> Thus, de Lubac links this end with the unity of “a common life,” which he finds in no other religion or social movement but Christianity.<sup>213</sup> What then is the role of the Church in the salvation of non-Christians? De Lubac posits that the role of the Church in the salvation of non-Christians is through the principle of the unity of the human race. He writes:

The human race is one. By our fundamental nature and still more in virtue of our common destiny we are members of the same body. Now the life of the members comes from the life of the body. How, then, can there be salvation for the members if, *per impossibile*, the body itself were not saved? But salvation for this body, for humanity consists in its receiving the form of Christ, and that is possible only through the Catholic Church. For is she not the only complete, authoritative interpreter of Christian revelation? Is it not through her that the practice of the evangelical virtues is spread throughout the world? And, lastly, is she not responsible for realizing the spiritual unity of men insofar as they will lend themselves to it? Thus this Church, which as the invisible Body of Christ is identified with final salvation, as a visible and historical institution is the providential means of this salvation.<sup>214</sup>

In this quotation, de Lubac highlights that non-Christians will be saved by virtue of the mysterious bonds which unite them to the faithful. This is possible because they are an integral part of humanity which is to be saved. Those who do not belong exteriorly to the Church can be saved, but their salvation is through the Church by virtue of the unity of the human race. After all, salvation is through the unity of the body. In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac suggests that other religions are not to be judged. Writing with Buddhism and Hinduism in mind, he opines that although they are not complete, people who do not find themselves within the Christian condition of salvation are saved through their ties with the faithful.<sup>215</sup> Indeed, the unity of the

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<sup>212</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 221.

<sup>213</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 221.

<sup>214</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 223-224.

<sup>215</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 224.



human race allows de Lubac to account both for the necessity of the Church for salvation and for the salvation of people apparently outside of the Church. Moreover, it is crystal clear that in de Lubac's soteriology the concept of the Mystical Body is inclusive rather than exclusive. From the foregoing, it is obvious that for de Lubac, there is no salvation apart from Christ but, at the same time, no-one is necessarily excluded from this salvation. What does this statement imply?

De Lubac's response to the question of the salvation of non-Christians is Christological at its core. De Lubac's conclusion follows the lead of the Fathers and the principles of Thomas Aquinas that "the grace of Christ is of universal application, and that no soul of good will lacks the concrete means of salvation, in the fullest sense of the word."<sup>216</sup> Indeed, de Lubac is affirming that there is no question but that salvation is brought about through the grace of Christ, but at the same time, no-one is excluded from its influence. It must be borne in mind that in de Lubac's understanding of the relationship between Christ and humanity, everyone is intrinsically connected to Christ. It is on this ground that he asserts: "Everyone, whether Christian or not, and whether he is 'in a state of grace' or not, whether or not he is oriented to God, and whatever his knowledge or ignorance, has an inadmissible organic link to Christ."<sup>217</sup> Thus, de Lubac demonstrates his understanding of man and woman who is created in the image and likeness of God. This is at the heart of our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation by virtue of creation and thus, the whole of humanity. De Lubac argues that all humanity is connected to Christ, by virtue of its creation, not in an external way, but organically. This organic link is incapable of being lost. It is for this reason that all can speak something of the truth that is Christ, a reference to the Catholicity of Truth which we discussed earlier.<sup>218</sup>

From the discussion above, we can deduce what sense de Lubac intends when he says that all salvation comes "through the Church." De Lubac is suggesting that since the only grace by which we are redeemed is the grace of Christ, it is in some sense the grace of the Church.<sup>219</sup> As God has established Christ as the one mediator of salvation for all humanity, he has established the Church as the means which salvation will come to all humanity.<sup>220</sup> Francis A. Sullivan observes that this suggests that by responding to God's call, i.e. by corresponding with

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<sup>216</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 219.

<sup>217</sup> De Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église* (Paris: Aubier-Montaign, 1966), 128. Subsequently, PME.

<sup>218</sup> De Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église*, 128.

<sup>219</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 130-131.

<sup>220</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 131.

his grace, an individual is brought into a saving relationship with the Church. As regards the person who has had no direct contact with the Church, de Lubac insists that if that person is docile to the suggestion of grace, his soul already tends spontaneously to the Church as to its natural home; he is already a Catholic “by anticipation”; he can be said to “aspire” to the fullness, which the Church would offer him, and in which he would be ready to “lose himself” once the obstacles that hide it from him were removed.<sup>221</sup> Thus, de Lubac posits that they will be saved through the Church.

In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac clarifies that the way method of salvation will differ according to whether the unbeliever has or has not encountered the Church.<sup>222</sup> If the person has not encountered the Church, de Lubac is of the view that the only condition on which his salvation is possible is that he should be already a Catholic as it were by anticipation. This is because, for him, the Church is the “natural place” to which the soul amenable to the suggestions of grace spontaneously tends.<sup>223</sup> However, de Lubac affirms that in the case of the unbeliever who comes in contact with the Church, as long as she is shown to him in her true likeness, “he has a strict obligation actually to enter her fold.”<sup>224</sup> De Lubac maintains that by his “correspondence of grace, he already aspires to her in secret.”<sup>225</sup>

De Lubac identifies the solution to the question of the salvation of non-Christians in the principles laid down by the Fathers of the Church. Thus, it allows us to harmonize their testimony of the Church as the sole means of salvation with the testimony of the universal action of our Saviour. In the first place, when the Fathers allow the pagan world something of, the light of Christ, they generally set this light in a prophetic relationship with the light of the Gospel. They see the Church that is to come in the lives both of the holy people of the Gentile world as well as of the righteous under the Old Law.<sup>226</sup> St Irenaeus says of the saints, who lived before the time of the Gospel: “They heralded Christ’s coming and obeyed his Law.”<sup>227</sup> According to Clement of Alexandria: “Just as God sent prophets to the Jews, so did he raise up in the midst of Greece the most virtuous of her sons and set them as prophets amidst their nation.”<sup>228</sup> De Lubac cites St. Augustine, when in connection with Jacob, the Idumean speaks

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<sup>221</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 127.

<sup>222</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 236.

<sup>223</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 236.

<sup>224</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 237.

<sup>225</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 237.

<sup>226</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 237.

<sup>227</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, 4, 27, 2 (PG 7, 1058-59).

<sup>228</sup> *Stromates*, lib. 6, c. 5 (PG 9, 261B).

of the vast “spiritual Jerusalem.”<sup>229</sup> Augustine does not use the term in any sort of opposition to the visible Church, as the soul of the Church might be opposed to its body, but only to the material city which it was a figure.<sup>230</sup> For de Lubac, Gentiles as well as Jews all prepared for the universal Church; and she the Church does not hesitate now to recognize them as her members.<sup>231</sup> Having explored the views of de Lubac on how anyone can be saved outside the Church, we turn to the question of the concept closely related to it, why mission?

De Lubac understands the Church to be missionary. However, we must add that his understanding is nuanced. On the one hand he asserts the possibility that non-Christians will be saved, and, on the other hand, he recognizes the contrary theological axiom that outside the Church there is no salvation (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). He asks: “How can we account for the demand that has been reiterated for the past two thousand years calling for her (Church) expansion as the most urgent of all tasks?”<sup>232</sup> What do we make of the view that seems to suggest that non-Christians are merely prospective Christians? De Lubac comments on this as follows:

For since a necessary function in the history of our salvation was fulfilled by so great a mass of “unbelievers” – not indeed in that they were in formal error or in a state of degradation, but in that there is to be found in their beliefs and consciences a certain groping after the truth, its painful preparation or its partial anticipation, discoveries of the natural reason and tentative solutions – so these unbelievers have an inevitable place in our humanity, a humanity such as the fall and the promise of a Redeemer have made it.<sup>233</sup>

From this citation, we can conclude that de Lubac is highlighting how the continuing presence of non-Christians in the world serves to remind Christians of the millennia of preparation that was required for the gradual raising up of the social, intellectual, and material life of humankind to the level at which it was ready to receive the Gospel of Christ.<sup>234</sup> He contends that their preparation consisted in a certain groping for the truth, which is to be found in their beliefs and consciences, partial anticipations, and discoveries of the natural reason.<sup>235</sup> Using the metaphor of the scaffolding which is necessary, while a building is being constructed, but discarded afterwards, de Lubac insists that non-Christians who lived before the time of Christ should not be treated in the same way once the building of the Christian faith has been completed.

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<sup>229</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 237.

<sup>230</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, lib. 18, c. 47 (PL 41, 609). See *Catholicism*, 239.

<sup>231</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 239.

<sup>232</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 220.

<sup>233</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 232.

<sup>234</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 232.

<sup>235</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 232.

Conversely, like the heavenly Jerusalem, which is built of living stones, so also are its scaffolding built of living beings. De Lubac concludes that the whole of humanity has a common eternal destiny and “all members of the human race enjoy the same essential equality before God.”<sup>236</sup> Hence, the mission of the Church is to lead all people including non-Christians to salvation if it is to be authentically true to its calling. If this is the case, then how does he accept and explain the contrary view that there is no salvation outside the Church?

De Lubac remains ever faithful to his methodology by returning to the Fathers of the Church. The tradition of the axiom extra *Ecclesiam nulla salus*, outside the Church no salvation goes back to St. Ignatius (35- 108), the bishop of Rome, St. Irenaeus (140-202), bishop of Lyon, and Origen (184-253). However, it was made popular by Cyprian of Carthage. De Lubac notes that the teaching of the Church on the understanding of this axiom had a specific meaning; referring to apostates. It was only from the time of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) that the principle of “outside the Church no salvation” has been interpreted as excluding the possibility of salvation to Christians in other religions, thus, implying that only members of the Roman Catholic Church may be saved. David Grumett opines that: “viewed positively, Cyprian’s principle affirms the power of salvation rather than speculating on damnation. However, despite what de Lubac might have hoped, very many people would not view any Church as the place to ‘which a soul amenable to the suggestions of grace spontaneously tends.’”<sup>237</sup> Grummet argues that in an age where global communications make the message of many Churches, including that of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately present across the globe, it is increasingly unrealistic for theologians to posit the existence of a category of person, who has had no opportunity to gain any knowledge of that message.<sup>238</sup>

In *Catholicism*, de Lubac emphasizes that Christians have a strong missionary mandate. The focus of mission is “collaboration” rather than “escape.”<sup>239</sup> To this end, missionary work is not restricted to some people, while others are excluded. On the contrary, it is the “duty of all, normally no doubt the least determined of all duties, but the strictest and the most universal.”<sup>240</sup> De Lubac reiterates that there is no uniform type of missionary work. However, opportunities for mission are varied and frequently unexpected, and must, therefore, be seized as and when they appear. Moreover, it is the responsibility of Christians to bring

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<sup>236</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 232-233.

<sup>237</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 236.

<sup>238</sup> Grumett, “On Religion,” 261.

<sup>239</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 241.

<sup>240</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 241.

non-Christians to salvation. He writes thus: “It is not for these chosen few, for whose coming the hidden labour of the whole mass was in travail, to enjoy, proud and isolated, their precarious superiority.”<sup>241</sup> De Lubac simply posits that “through its long preparation, foundation, and expansion, the Church was intended for all, so Christians who have been brought within it have no entitlement to enjoy their situation in proud, isolated superiority.”<sup>242</sup> On the contrary, Christians have been brought into the Church for the salvation of those outside, in order that all may enjoy their full, God-given humanity. De Lubac emphasizes vehemently that the desire to evangelize cannot be grounded in the supposition that those outside the Church are, or will be, rejected or cursed. Conversely, the missionary endeavour entails great respect for the humanity of the person being evangelized, a humanity which they already possess.<sup>243</sup>

De Lubac was able to draw all these conclusions via his studies and comparisons of some “aspects of Buddhism” and Christianity. His comprehensive and meticulous studies led him to identify “two apparently irreconcilable conceptions of the human worldviews”.<sup>244</sup> Two of his earlier writings, *Catholicisme* and *Surnaturel* prepared him for comparing Christianity and other religions and at highlighting the singularity and uniqueness of the former over the latter, both in terms of doctrine and mysticism. De Lubac often quoted the dictum of Irenaeus about Christ: “He brought all newness in bringing himself [Christ].”<sup>245</sup> He was convinced of the “absolute newness” that Christianity represented in the religious history of humankind, when he wrote in his programmatic *Catholicisme*:

Christianity, by those doctrinal aspects that we have just emphasized as well as by others, brought something absolutely new into the world. Its concept of salvation is not merely novel in comparison with that of those religions in existence at the time of its birth. It is a unique phenomenon in the religious history of mankind... Amid this universal chorus Christianity alone continues to assert the transcendent destiny of man and the common destiny of mankind. The whole history of the world is a preparation for this destiny. From the first creation to the last end, through material opposition and the more serious opposition of created freedom, a divine plan is in operation, accomplishing its successive stages among which the Incarnation stands out as chief.<sup>246</sup>

Commenting on this quotation, Jacques Dupuis is of the view that de Lubac’s affirmation of the relationship between the world religions and Christianity follows the structure that

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<sup>241</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 243.

<sup>242</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 243.

<sup>243</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 2.

<sup>244</sup> De Lubac, DHA.

<sup>245</sup> ‘Omnem novitatem attulit, semetipsum afferens, qui fuerat annuntiatus,’ Saint Irenaeus, AH IV, 34, 1. See Karl Rahner et.al., *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, II-IV (London: Burns & Oates), 100 – 2, 846. See also PME, 17.

<sup>246</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 137-141.

distinguishes – without separating them – nature and the supernatural.<sup>247</sup> De Lubac is here asserting that, on the one hand, the supernatural is absolutely gratuitous on God's part, and, on the other hand, it satisfies the natural desire of the human person to be united with the divine.<sup>248</sup> Dupuis contends that both are intimately united in Jesus Christ. He insists that “in him and through him, the supernatural does not replace nature, but informs it and transforms it.”<sup>249</sup> According to de Lubac, it is the same with the relationship between the world religions and Christianity. Christianity is not in competition with other religions. However, Christianity is the supernatural religion because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It does not thereby follow that the other religions are without any truth and goodness: indeed grace “does not destroy nature.” As Dupuis has observed about de Lubac, the world religions simultaneously contain “seeds of the Word,” traces of God and traces of sin. Without competing with them, Christianity unveils the positive values found in other religions; by assuming them, it purifies and transforms them.<sup>250</sup> How does de Lubac explain salvation in Jesus Christ extending to non-Christians?

Here de Lubac echoes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's “fulfilment theory” and made it his own. De Lubac is of the view that the mystery of Christ reaches the members of other religious traditions as the divine response to the human aspiration for union with the Divine, but the religious traditions in themselves do not play any role in this mystery of salvation. Thus, to attribute to non-Christian religions positive saving role would amount to placing them in competition with Christianity, thereby obscuring the uniqueness of the latter.<sup>251</sup> Dupuis points out that de Lubac cites Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who avers that the divine plan will surely be an orderly one: it must have a single axis, a single point of convergence. For him, that single axis is Christianity, the sole way to salvation. “To attribute to other traditions a positive role in the mystery of the salvation of their members would in fact mean making them parallel ways of salvation, thereby destroying the unity of the divine design”.<sup>252</sup> The implications of de

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<sup>247</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 50.

<sup>248</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 50-51.

<sup>249</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 51.

<sup>250</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Le fondement théologique des missions* (Paris: Seuil, 1946), 71-72. See “The Light of Christ,” in *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 201-220. See N. Eterovic, *Cristianesimo e religioni secondo H. de Lubac* (Rome: Citta Nuova, 1981), 283-284.

<sup>251</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Église* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 148-149. English translation, *The Church Paradox and Mystery* (New York: Alba House, 1969).

<sup>252</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism*, 138; *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 51.

Lubac's understanding of the fulfilment theory and the salvation of non-Christians will be of significant influence later in the Church, a subject we will look at in our third chapter.

## Conclusion

We have made an exposition of the writings of de Lubac in the light of our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation by virtue of creation and thus, the whole of humanity. We have established that de Lubac is a *ressourcement* theologian, he arrived at his conclusions principally by returning to the sources of theology, namely, Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and liturgy. Being a man of his time, he was at pains to avoid the extremes of adapting the Christian dogmas to contemporary culture, on the one hand, and, on the other, of excluding human experience from the theological act. This would explain why he rejected all accommodation of the dogma of faith "to the whims and caprices of intellectual fashion."<sup>253</sup> On this, he was guided by two principles; the principle of auscultation and catholicity of truth. The principle of auscultation involves an attentive listening to the context and culture in which the theologian is working. In catholicity of truth, de Lubac recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them and, so, we need to be open to the fact that the truth can be found even in the most unexpected sources. In addition, he recognizes the Christian faith as the source of universal light and that everyone needs the light of Christ to come to a full knowledge of truth.

Matthew Levering remarks that in *Catholicism* de Lubac responds at length to those who consider that the Christian claim to be the perfect religion, the one Church into which God is uniting everyone, is dismissive of other religions.<sup>254</sup> De Lubac suggests that in God's pedagogical plan, in preparing for Christ's coming (and second coming), God always had in view the salvation of the nations and not solely the salvation of those visibly united to the Church.<sup>255</sup> For him, Catholicism does not mean compelling everyone to be Catholic. On the contrary, the Catholic vision of human unity, toward which the Church works constantly, is an eschatological one in service of all the nations: only God will bring about the final unity. Thus, de Lubac affirms the need to respect non-Christian religions, even while also insisting upon the truth that only Christ fulfils the desires of the human race.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 96-97.

<sup>254</sup> Matthew Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event* (Washington, D. C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 168.

<sup>255</sup> Isaiah 25:6-12.

<sup>256</sup> Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, 168-169.

De Lubac in *La Foi Chretienne* affirms that membership of the Church is a response to God's invitation to us to share in the life of the Trinity, and that Trinitarian relationship is at the core of God's invitation to us to share in the divine life.<sup>257</sup> For him, the Church represents the spiritual and social reunification of the unity of humankind which is why he refers to it as the mystical body of Christ. This leads de Lubac to make two fundamental identifications of what constitutes the Church. The first is found in *The Splendour of the Church*, which echoes *Mystici Corporis* that views the Church as the Roman Catholic Church. The second is found in *Catholicism*, which identifies the Church with a more universalist view found in Aquinas and in *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>258</sup> As incarnation of God's grace in Jesus Christ, Christianity is the supernatural religion. However, other religions have the seeds of the Word. Although de Lubac does not view other religions as equivalent to Christianity theologically, he does regard them as linked with Christianity as a result of past historical interactions. For de Lubac, Christianity cannot be understood or lived out in separation from them. Similarly, Gemma Simmonds points out that, "his concept of the supernatural destiny of humanity rests in his understanding of the individual person made in the image of God and the embodiment of that image in the Church of Christ."<sup>259</sup> Again, de Lubac's emphasis on the social character of Catholicism not only represents a retrieval of a patristic theme, it highlights the unity of the human race and then interprets this unity by its reference to Christ. It is crystal clear that when it comes to Christianity's relationship with non-Christians, de Lubac places great importance to respect for the catholicity of truth and the consequent necessity for dialogue. This concept will apply to our context where there are open conflicts between Islam and Christianity culminating in the death of thousands of people. De Lubac gives us the grounds for openness to otherness based on the nature of the Christian faith. After all, as O'Sullivan has rightly observed, "the Christian faith obliges us to auscultate and dialogue with difference, because we can never let up on truth irrespective of its source."<sup>260</sup> Indeed, de Lubac identifies the Church with the spirit of openness. From our exposition so far, we have seen that de Lubac retrieved the teaching on explicit and

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<sup>257</sup> Henri de Lubac, *La Foi Chretienne* (Paris: Aubier, 1970), 245-249. See Susan K. Wood where she identifies a certain weakness in this Trinitarian aspect of de Lubac's ecclesiology. She notes: "De Lubac's contribution is a view of the Church in its participation in the immanent Trinity, in the intra-trinitarian relations of circumincession. Contrary to his treatment of the Spirit, however, de Lubac does not explicitly relate the Church to the economic activity of the Trinity, an omission particularly evident in his discussion of the mission of the Church. Since de Lubac's work on the Church does not purport to be a systematic ecclesiology, this is not to criticize what de Lubac failed to do so much as to highlight an element requiring explicit attention were such a systematic ecclesiology to be attempted," *Spiritual Exegesis*, 151.

<sup>258</sup> Simmonds, "The Mystical Body: Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology," in *T & T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, 178.

<sup>259</sup> Simmonds, 178.

<sup>260</sup> O'Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 125.



implicit Christianity from the Fathers of the Church and applied it to his context long before Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" and the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate*, a subject that we will explore in our next chapter.

## Chapter Three: The Paradigm Shift in the Understanding of the Unicity and Universality of Christ since Vatican II

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined the writings of de Lubac to support our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation. We established how de Lubac as a *ressourcement* theologian arrived at his conclusions principally by returning to the sources of theology, namely, Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and liturgy. Equally, we examined de Lubac's methodology of theology. On this, he was guided by two principles; the principle of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth. While we accept and adapt de Lubac's methodology, we do not necessarily accept his conclusions.

In *Catholicism*, de Lubac responds at length to those who consider that the Christian claim to be the perfect religion, the one Church into which God is uniting everyone, is dismissive of other religions.<sup>1</sup> De Lubac suggests that Christianity always had in view the salvation of the nations and not solely the salvation of those visibly united to the Church. For him, Catholicism does not mean compelling everyone to be Catholic. On the contrary, the Catholic vision of human unity, toward which the Church works constantly, is an eschatological one in service of all the nations. Thus, de Lubac affirms the need to respect non-Christian religions, even while also insisting upon the truth that only Christ fulfils the desires of humanity. He identifies the Church with the spirit of openness. De Lubac retrieves the teaching on explicit and implicit Christianity from the Fathers of the Church and applies it to his context long before Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" and the Second Vatican Council, a subject that we will explore in this chapter.

The third chapter begins by setting out the problematic: While non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church, as de Lubac makes clear, there is a range of views on how this takes place. Some claim that salvation is mediated through these religions (e.g. John Hick, Paul F. Knitter and Roger Haight). Others reject that possibility (Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Gavin D'Costa). Then there is the more nuanced, some would say ambiguous, approach of Jacques Dupuis. We will interrogate all the relevant Magisterial documents (*Lumen gentium* 16-17; *Nostra Aetate*; *Ad gentes* 7-8, *Dominus Iesus*, Notification on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis and

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<sup>1</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans., Lancelot C. Sheppard and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 217.

Notification on the book *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight); the views of many theologians; de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, Roger Haight, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D’Costa, Ilaria Morali and Jacques Dupuis. Examining these Magisterial documents and the writings of these theologians, especially Jacques Dupuis will show the complexity of this issue. It is like driving on a high way with only two lanes. You cannot go into the other lane without diverting from or abandoning your initial direction. These theologians serve as sign posts broadening our vision. Most importantly, it raises the question of Magisterial documents and how they work. Above all, we will be guided by a significant *Notification* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), which not only gives an answer to our problematic but also gives an explanation to Dupuis’s nuanced and ambiguous position on the possibility of salvation through other religions. The *Notification* asserts:

It is legitimate to maintain that the Holy Spirit accomplishes salvation in non-Christian also through those elements of truth and goodness present in the various religions; however, to hold that these religions, considered as such, are ways of salvation, has no foundation in Catholic theology, also because they contain omissions, insufficiencies, and errors.<sup>2</sup>

This Notification outlines clearly that it is through the Holy Spirit as well as those elements of truth and goodness present in the various religions that salvation is accomplished for them.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines three important documents of Vatican II (*Lumen gentium* 16-17; *Nostra Aetate*; *Ad gentes* 7-8), which interpret the teaching of the Magisterium that Christ is the sole Mediator of salvation and through Christ the Church and, how other non-Christian religions can be saved by the grace of Christ.

In the second section, we make a critical exposition of several influential theological developments since Vatican II. We will critically examine the positions of de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, Roger Haight, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D’Costa, Ilaria Morali and Jacques Dupuis. We will argue that the two leading views were “anonymous Christian” by Karl Rahner and “inclusive pluralism” by Jacques Dupuis. The chapter will highlight the significance of the two theories and how subsequent theologians responded to them.

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<sup>2</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, no. 8; See [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/.../cfaith.../rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20010124\\_dupuis\\_en.ht...](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/.../cfaith.../rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010124_dupuis_en.ht...) (Accessed March 3, 2019).

The third section focuses on recent Magisterial documents which clarified certain ambiguities and errors in certain writings with regards to the teaching of the Catholic faith in relation to other religions. These pronouncements are *Dominus Iesus*, Notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* and Notification on *Jesus Symbol of God*. We will highlight much later in the study that there is a difference between the two Notifications. While the Notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Dupuis sort clarifications on certain nuanced or ambiguous statements on the possibility of salvation being mediated through other religions, the Notification on *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight, in which he affirmed that there may be other incarnations, was outrightly rejected as going too far.

### **3.1.1 The Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 16-17, Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activities, *Ad Gentes* 7-8**

The focus here is on Vatican II documents, which serve as the authoritative interpretation in which non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church.

The most important texts under consideration are the constitution *Lumen Gentium* (16-17), the declaration *Nostra Aetate* (2), and the decree *Ad Gentes* (3, 9, 11). Jacques Dupuis posits that from each of these documents the Council develops three themes: (1) the salvation of people outside the Church; (2) the authentic values found in non-Christians and in their religious traditions; and (3) the Church's appreciation of these values and the consequent attitude which it takes toward the religious traditions and their members.<sup>3</sup> By examining each of these documents, we shall clarify that the thrust of the teaching of Vatican II is that non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church. These documents explain the various ways this can happen. We now examine *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997, 2001), 162.

### 3.1.2 *Lumen Gentium* §16

Article 16 of *Lumen Gentium* describes the relationship between the people of God with various non-Christian groups. The non-Christian groups, which are identified by article sixteen are: a) Jews; b) Muslims; c) peoples who are ignorant of the God of Jewish-Christian revelation but still believe in a God of providence and judgment; d) and then atheists, or rather, those who profess themselves to be without religion but in reality, seek and affirm absolute justice and peace, that is, absolute values.<sup>4</sup>

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (“Light of the Nations”)<sup>5</sup> is the centre piece of the work of the council Fathers of Vatican II. Aloys Grillmeier, opines that when *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the “people of God,” it does not mean here the mass of the faithful in contrast to the hierarchy, but the Church as a whole, with every group of its members. Indeed, it is a new view of the whole reality of the Church under the aspect of “people of God.”<sup>6</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak argues that “*Lumen Gentium* departs significantly from the dominant official ecclesiology of the recent past, which was marked by an emphasis on the institutional dimensions of the Church.”<sup>7</sup> For Kevin McNamara, the idea of the body of Christ had put the emphasis on the divine element in the Church by calling attention to the life of grace, which all receive from Christ the head.<sup>8</sup> In *Lumen Gentium*, the idea of the people of God complements that of the body of Christ by highlighting the historical and social aspects which belong to the Church in so far as it is a human reality.<sup>9</sup> Yves Congar is of the view that in bringing to light the historical and social dimensions of the Church, the concept of God’s people also raises the question of the relationship of the Church to the peoples of the earth and to the various religious groups, Christian and otherwise, with which it finds itself in daily association.<sup>10</sup>

The history of how the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* was written is long which our research does not intend to repeat. But, suffice it to say, that the first

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<sup>4</sup> Vatican II *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964. See *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Aloys Grillmeier, “The People of God,” in *Commentary on Vatican II*, Vol. I (West Germany: Burns Oates/Herder and Herder, 1967), 153.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak, “Vatican II,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 1074.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin McNamara, ed., *Vatican II: The Constitution on The Church: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 103.

<sup>9</sup> McNamara, ed., *Vatican II*, 103.

<sup>10</sup> Yves Congar, “The Church: The People of God,” in *Concilium*, Vol. I, no. 1, 12.

draft of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* was prepared by the pre-conciliar Theological Commission headed by Cardinal Alfred Ottaviani and distributed to the Fathers on November 23, 1962.<sup>11</sup> It maintained the traditional teaching of many theologians and of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. The traditional view emphasized the Church as a hierarchical society rather than as being both a mystery and the whole people of God. However, it did not explicitly cite the axiom *extra ecclesia nulla salus*, “outside the Church no salvation”, in the draft. The decision by the Theological Commission to omit the formula showed its sensitivity to the demands of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue but it left no doubt about the necessity of the Church for salvation.<sup>12</sup> The first draft of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* was examined by the Council Fathers from December 1 to 7, 1962, and it met with serious criticism for its triumphalism, its lack of inner unity, and its incompleteness.<sup>13</sup>

The second draft of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* was prepared by an expanded Theological Commission and issued in 1963, in the interval between the first and the second sessions of the Council.<sup>14</sup> The section dealing with the necessity of the Church for salvation was distinctly re-worked. The text asserted:

The holy council teaches with sacred scripture and tradition that the church is an institution necessary for salvation and that therefore those men, who while knowing the Catholic Church to be established by God through Jesus Christ as necessary and who nevertheless refuse to enter her or to remain in her, cannot be saved. For that which revelation affirms about the necessity of baptism (cf. Mk 16, 16; Jn 3, 5) is without doubt and by the same reason valid concerning the Church, which men enter through baptism as through a door... He, however, who does not live in faith, hope, and charity, but while sinning remains in the bosom of the church – indeed in its body not in its heart – is not saved, though he belongs to the church.<sup>15</sup>

This second draft is more scriptural in orientation. The text bases its teaching on the words of scripture: “The council teaches with sacred scripture and tradition.” Unlike the first draft, the second draft refers explicitly to the scriptural revelation of the necessity of baptism and thereby strives to provide greater support for the teaching of the necessity of the Church for salvation. A significant contribution of the second draft is that it abandoned the traditional terminology

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Hünemann, “Lumen Gentium,” *Herders Theologischer Kommentar*, ii, 269-563. See Gérard Philips, “History of the Constitution,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, 105-37.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome P. Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation* (Minnesota: St. John’s University Press, 1976), 38

<sup>13</sup> The comments of Bishop Emile de Smedt reveal the sentiments of many of the Fathers. *Acta*, Vol. I, Pars IV, 142-144.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Grootaers, “The Drama Continues between the Acts: The ‘Second Preparation’ and its Opponents,” in *History of Vatican II*, 359-514, 391-412. See *Acta*, Vol. II, Pars I, 215-281.

<sup>15</sup> Grootaers, “The Drama Continues between the Acts,” 220.

of attachment to the Church through desire for baptism and the Church. The baptismal terminology of explicit or implicit desire is no longer deemed appropriate to express the necessity of the Church for the salvation of people outside the Church. Although, the Council's intent was to ground its teaching about the necessity of the Church for salvation on scripture and tradition, it referred to scripture and tradition in a limited way. The Council restricted itself to two biblical arguments, omitting entirely references to the history of the doctrine. One of such arguments deals with the unique mediatorship of Christ himself: "For Christ, made present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique Way of salvation" (1 Tim 2:5).<sup>16</sup> Vatican II wishes to avoid any derogation of the person of Christ, and declares in no uncertain terms that Christ is the unique mediator and way to salvation. If Christ is necessary for salvation, so is his one body, the Church, for the two are intimately united.<sup>17</sup>

*Lumen Gentium* 16 also makes an important comment on the Jews. The brief statement on the Jews is significant because it lays the theological foundation for the Council's Declaration on the same subject. *Lumen Gentium*, asserts that the Jews have a very special relationship with the Church. They are the first people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born according to the flesh as St Paul recalls in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom 9:4-5).<sup>18</sup> The promises and preparatory covenants entered into by God with Abraham and Moses will be fulfilled eventually in the Church. In view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of their fathers (Abraham, Moses) to God, who does not regret the gifts or the special vocation that he gave them.<sup>19</sup> The grace of God is still active and fruitful among them, and their corporate acceptance of the kingdom, which, as St Paul assures us, is still God's will in their regard and will one day become a reality.<sup>20</sup> McNamara posits that this positive evaluation of the situation of the Jewish people in the New Testament times reacts strongly against the theological view which would see their role as pre-eminently one of witnessing to the wrath of God, in contrast to the Church the sign of God's love. It invites Christians to repent of the wrongs inflicted on the Jews and to Israel by Christians in the past. Above all it calls to mind the natural ties of blood and affection which

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<sup>16</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 11:29.

bound Christ to his own people and proposes Christ's own attitude as the only model for the Christian in his or her relationship with the Jews.<sup>21</sup>

Islam is the next religion referred to by *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>22</sup> Historically, this is the first time that an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church is teaching explicitly on Islam.<sup>23</sup> The Council draws attention to the common bonds between Muslims, Christians and Jews. All alike trace their spiritual ancestry from Abraham, to whose faith they profess allegiance, worshipping one merciful God who will judge all men/women at the last day. For McNamara, it follows from this that Islam is not only an instrument in God's hands for the salvation of those who sincerely adhere to it, but has a close spiritual and moral affinity with the Church, which gives it a special place among the great religions of the world.<sup>24</sup> The practical consequence of this in terms of the relationships which should exist between Christians and Muslims are drawn out in the Council's Declaration on the non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*.

The third group which *Lumen Gentium* examines are peoples who are ignorant of the God of Jewish-Christian revelation but still believe in a God of providence and judgment. *Lumen Gentium* based its teaching on St Paul's encounter with the Athenians before whom he preached that they were in search of the unknown God. "Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since he gives all men life and breath and all things (Acts 17:25-28), and since the Saviour wills all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4)."<sup>25</sup> God is close to them and their search is not in vain. This is because on the natural plane, God is the giver of life and all other blessings. However, on the plane of grace, God is the Saviour, who wills that all men be saved and affords them suitable helps to this end. For those who through no fault of their own are without knowledge of the gospel and the Church, access to God is therefore possible, provided they seek him with a sincere heart and try to carry out his will as known through the voice of conscience. In this way, they can, under the influence of grace, attain eternal salvation.<sup>26</sup> The Council here clearly testifies to the fact that the saving grace of Christ is at work among all people. There is but one plan of salvation for all people; all are

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<sup>21</sup> McNamara, *Vatican II: The Constitution on The Church*, 154.

<sup>22</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, no. 107. The pope had anticipated by a few months the positive teaching on Islam found in *Lumen Gentium*. Pope Paul VI wrote of Muslims, "whom we do well to admire on account of those things that are true and commendable (vera et probanda) in their worship". AAS 56 (1964), 609-59; at 654.

<sup>24</sup> McNamara, *Vatican II: The Constitution on The Church*, 155.

<sup>25</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.



called to the beatific vision and are given an opportunity to reach it. The Council does not explain how those who have no explicit knowledge of the God of revelation, who are unaware that God has spoken to human beings in a historical self-disclosure, can reach the faith which according to the teaching of Christ is absolutely necessary for salvation. How can they commit themselves in humble acceptance of God's Word if that Word has not reached their ears? This is a problem which will increasingly engage the attention of theologians in the future.

Finally, the article refers to atheists. The principles outlined above in regard to the salvation of the adherents of the non-Christian religions apply also to atheists. *Lumen Gentium* remarks:

Nor divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace.<sup>27</sup>

*Lumen Gentium* is insisting here that even if atheists do not recognize the existence of God and are without religion they can, nevertheless, by dedicating themselves to such ideals as peace, justice and truth, place themselves in a right relationship to their fellow men and to the whole of reality and, sooner or later, enter into God's friendship. The Council affirms that for everything that is good and true, points to the gospel and prepares the way for it. All genuine human values are in fundamental harmony with Christ and his grace and seek their true fulfilment in the life of the people of God.<sup>28</sup> Here, the Council re-echoes the idea with an ancient and honoured tradition in Christian thinking. There is a striking similarity with the words of St Justin Martyr in the second century. Justin argued that because the pagan philosophers had some share in the Logos (Word) of God, they were not denied all access to the truth. However, Christians have been given the Logos in its fulness in the person of Christ, from which it follows that "whatever has been spoken aright by any man belongs to us Christians."<sup>29</sup> Thus, "section 16 of chapter 2, with its positive regard for Jews, Muslims, and others, prepared the way for *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II's Declaration on the Church's relation to non-Christian religions (28 October 1965) and also for a key doctrinal principle in *Ad Gentes*, the Decree on the missionary activity of the Church (7 December 1965)."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 157.

<sup>29</sup> *Apologia*, 2:13.

<sup>30</sup> Gerald O'Collin, "Ressourcement and Vatican II," 386.

### 3.1.3 Lumen Gentium §1

Article seventeen speaks of the “mission” of the Church in its total sense of preaching the Gospel in word, sacrament, witness and service to the whole human community, Christians and non-Christians alike. The understanding here is quite different from what we read in the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, which is concerned with one aspect of that total mission, namely, “evangelization and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the distinction is between the “mission of the Church,” on the one hand and, on the other hand, “the missions.”<sup>32</sup>

In *Lumen Gentium*, the purpose of mission is to make the Church fully present to all peoples and nations.<sup>33</sup> The effect of the Church’s missionary work is that whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men and women or in the rites and customs of peoples are not only preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up, and perfected for the glory of God.<sup>34</sup> Gerald O’ Collins posits that the terminology of ‘sown in the heart and mind of human beings’ deftly recalls what St Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Theophilus of Antioch, Athenagoras and other early Christian authors wrote about ‘seeds of the Word’ (*logos spermatikos*) being sown everywhere and not least in the knowledge of God displayed by classical Greek philosophers and others.<sup>35</sup> According to Justin Martyr, those who live by the word are already Christian even though they have not heard of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Tertullian expresses the same notion when he talks about “the naturally Christian soul.”<sup>37</sup> For Augustine, the one true religion existed “from the very beginning of mankind” and that “the saving grace of this religion... has never been refused to anyone who was worthy of it.”<sup>38</sup> *Lumen Gentium* when describing the missionary activity of the Church, refers to the “good that is found sown” not only in the hearts and minds of people, but also in their “rites and customs.” Francis A. Sullivan is of the view that the term “rite” undoubtedly refers to non-Christians’ religious practices.<sup>39</sup> *Lumen Gentium* goes on to say that through the missionary work of the Church, the good that is found in such rites and customs “not only are preserved from destruction, but are

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<sup>31</sup> Vatican II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Study Edition* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981), 679.

<sup>33</sup> McBrien, *Catholicism: Study Edition*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Gerald O’ Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Justin, *I Apologia*, 46; *II Apologia*, 10,13; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1, 13; 5, 87, 2; idem, *Protreptikos*, 6, 68, 2ff.; Origen, *Commentarium in Joannem*, I, 39.

<sup>37</sup> *Apologia*, 17, 4-6.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *Retractationes*, 1, 13, 3; *Epistola* 102, 2

<sup>39</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 165.

purified, raised up, and perfected.”<sup>40</sup> The implication is that this enables all people to come to their full spiritual development through the love of Christ and to bring to perfection the genuine personal values that are to be found among them, together with whatever is worth preserving in their native cultures and religious practices.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, all Christians without exception are obliged to play their part in the missionary work of the Church, each according to the place assigned to him or her. In the end, the whole world will be reunited with Christ, the head of the entire creation, share in the life of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1.4 *Nostra Aetate*

This is the conciliar document which treats explicitly of the non-Christian religions. The *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christians, Nostra Aetate* recognizes the presence of elements of divine origin in other religions, especially, Judaism and Islam.<sup>43</sup> *Nostra Aetate* makes the general assessment of religions and the Church’s consequent attitude toward them. *Nostra Aetate* affirms:

Likewise, other religions to be found everywhere strive variously to answer the restless searching of the human heart by proposing “ways” which consist of teachings, rules of life and sacred ceremonies.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men...

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.<sup>44</sup>

In the quotation above, *Nostra Aetate* is asserting that the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions since they are often reflecting a ray of that Truth which enlightens all persons. Hence, the Church encourages dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions in order to promote common spiritual and moral values.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17.

<sup>41</sup> McNamara, *Vatican II: The Constitution on The Church*, 158-9.

<sup>42</sup> McNamara, *Vatican II*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965.

<sup>44</sup> *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2. See J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 1021-22. Subsequently ND.

<sup>45</sup> McBrien, *Catholicism*, 678.

The text opens on the basic statement that all nations and peoples form one community and that all humans are oriented to the same final end which is God, “whose providence, manifest goodness, and designs of salvation extend to all until the elect are united in the Holy City.”<sup>46</sup> It acknowledges, first of all, that the whole human community comes from the creative hand of the one God, and that variations in religious faith and expression are a reflection of the diversity that characterizes humankind itself.<sup>47</sup> In *Nostra Aetate*, “there is a distinction between the two religions which, in different degrees, are based on biblical revelation, namely Judaism and Islam, and the other religions.”<sup>48</sup> The *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christians* recognizes the presence of elements of divine origin in other religions, especially, Judaism and Islam. In addition, *Nostra Aetate* “singles out Hinduism and Buddhism for special mention, as religions which have instilled the lives of people with a profound religious sense.”<sup>49</sup> This is a significant positive acknowledgment given that both Hinduism and Buddhism “had existed centuries before the coming of Christ himself.”<sup>50</sup> After a summary description of Hinduism and Buddhism, seen as the most developed religions of this kind, the text goes on: “So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men [women] by outlining a programme of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.”<sup>51</sup>

*Nostra Aetate* then makes a profound statement on the relationship of the Church to Jews. It recounts the many basic elements that the Church has in common with the Jews. The declaration posits that since there is such a close union between Christians and Jews, we must pursue the way of mutual understanding and respect. Specifically, we must eschew the notion that Jews are not repudiated or accursed by God.<sup>52</sup> Every form of persecution is to be condemned, and so, too, every kind of discrimination based on race, colour, condition of life, or religion.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; 3; 4.

<sup>49</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

<sup>50</sup> O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 96.

<sup>51</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 5.

### 3.1.5 Decree on the Church's Missionary Activities, *Ad Gentes* 7-8

We shall appraise the understanding of “mission” in *Ad gentes*. We shall highlight that *Ad gentes* affirms the Church as missionary in its very essence. Our examination of *Ad gentes* will focus on the fact that the beginning of a dialogical relationship with other religions does not put an end to missions.

The primary concern of the Decree of the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes* is “evangelization and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups, where it has not yet taken root.”<sup>54</sup> Equally, “through preaching and the celebration of the sacraments, of which the holy Eucharist is the centre and summit, missionary activity makes Christ present, who is the author of salvation” for all people.<sup>55</sup> *Ad Gentes* highlights the fact that the beginning of a dialogical relationship with other religions does not put an end to missions. Furthermore, *Ad Gentes* affirms that the Church is missionary in its very essence: it is sent by the Lord to preach the gospel. This missionary activity of the Church has a Trinitarian foundation. According to *Ad Gentes*:

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

The Council relates the task of preaching the gospel to the missions of the Word and the Spirit which themselves originate in God's Trinitarian life. The “love” and “goodness” of God the Father give rise to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit. Through those divine missions, “God in his great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in his life and glory.”<sup>57</sup>

The decree draws attention to the younger Churches of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, where the Gospel had not penetrated until recently. It mandates missionaries not to impose an alien cultural reality. However, they were to recognize and preserve “whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God... And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men and women, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost.”<sup>58</sup> Continuing the dialogical perspective of the Council,

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<sup>54</sup> Vatican II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 7 December 1965, Art. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 2. Other works on the origin of the Church's mission in the mystery of the Trinity, see Brechter, “Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity”, 113-16; James B. Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery: The Historical-doctrinal Genesis of 'Ad Gentes' 1, 2-5* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1988); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine to Today's Mission* (London: Edinburgh Press, 1963).

<sup>58</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 9.

*Ad Gentes* insisted that other religions should not be left out, however important the proclamation of the gospel is for Christian authenticity. *Ad Gentes* asserts:

So, although God in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6), the Church, nevertheless, still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize. And so, today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity.<sup>59</sup>

Vatican II recognizes that God can lead men and women to saving faith even though they have no contact with the gospel or the Church. From the quotation above, we observe that the fathers of the Council drew three conclusions; 1) the necessity of the Church, 2) the necessity of mission, and 3) the action of God leading people to faith and baptism.<sup>60</sup> Here, we observe that the pastoral principle is rooted in the theological principle of the incarnation.<sup>61</sup> Most significantly, the decree emphasizes that “the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the people of God.”<sup>62</sup>

How can we sum up the references to non-Christian religions in the documents of Vatican II? In the first place, the fathers of Vatican II did not cite the axiom, “outside the Church no salvation” in the theological context in which people of other religions were excluded from salvation through Christ and the Church. This represents a doctrinal advancement. It highlights the interpretation that the salvation of non-Christians is possible by the grace of Christ through the Church. However, Paul F. Knitter posits that in as much as Vatican II forms a watershed in Roman Catholic attitudes toward other faiths, we cannot deny a residual ambiguity in its understanding of just how effective the truth and grace within the religions are and, especially, how far Christian dialogue with them can go.<sup>63</sup> For Knitter, the ambiguity stems from the same tension between God’s salvific will and the necessity of the Church that is evident throughout history of Catholic thought.<sup>64</sup> In the same vein, Knitter posits that “although the Council has said some very new and positive things about the religions, it still maintains that ‘the Church is necessary for salvation,’ and that ‘it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the

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<sup>59</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 61-62.

<sup>61</sup> McBrien, *Catholicism*, 679.

<sup>62</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1985), 124.

<sup>64</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name? 124.*

means of salvation can be found.”<sup>65</sup> The Fathers of Vatican II were clearly drawing on settled doctrinal position on the presence of grace outside the visible Church. After all, “the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally and officially acknowledged the presence of grace outside its visible limits.”<sup>66</sup> What is apparent is that the Council does not explicitly state that the religions are ways of salvation.

Vatican II affirms that the positive elements in non-Christian religions can be recognized as preparation for the gospel. Along with its positive attitude toward the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, the Council continues to insist on the necessity of preaching the gospel to those who have not yet heard it.<sup>67</sup> However, Francis A. Sullivan has pointed out that “Vatican II provides no support for the idea that, given the presence of positive elements in the non-Christian religions, there is no further urgency about Christian missionary endeavour.”<sup>68</sup> Worthy of note is that while Vatican II recognized the positive elements in non-Christian religions, it did not provide all the answers. What Vatican II did not answer is whether it is right to go beyond acknowledging the presence of some positive elements in non-Christian religions and recognizing those religion themselves as mediating salvation to those who belong to them.<sup>69</sup> The quest for clarification on this ambiguity has led to intense debate among many theologians after the Council. One of the most significant contribution was made by Karl Rahner.

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<sup>65</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 124.

<sup>66</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Earlier we have seen that this is the key idea of Vatican II’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes* as well as of *Lumen Gentium* 17. See the error of the Jansenists (DzH 2305) and of Quesnel (DzH 2426).

<sup>68</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 167.

<sup>69</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 168.

### 3.2 Karl Rahner's (1904 – 1984) “Anonymous Christian”

We shall examine the theology of Karl Rahner on “anonymous Christian.”<sup>70</sup> We shall highlight that through the theory of “anonymous Christian,” Karl Rahner suggests that the divining and forgiving grace of salvation is mediated to the entire human race throughout history through the unsurpassable event of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

In the 1960s and 1970s Rahner’s writings on religious pluralism gained wide appeal and his thoughts enjoyed popular exposure through public sermons and radio addresses.<sup>71</sup> In a lecture given in Eichstätt (Bavaria), Karl Rahner affirmed the reality of religious pluralism which should be incorporated into the totality and unity of the Christian understanding of human existence.<sup>72</sup> For Rahner, Christianity and other religions are faced today with an enemy which did not exist for them in time past, namely, the lack of religion and the denial of religion in general.<sup>73</sup> Rahner suggests that “a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution to the question about the Christian position with regard to the religious pluralism in the world of today.”<sup>74</sup> For Rahner, the solution rests in his views on the universality of grace and salvation, which he expressed in his theory of “the anonymous Christian.” This clarification leads Rahner to explain the relationship between the Church and those who are not part of it. Rahner distinguishes between what he refers to as “an implicit and anonymous Christianity,” on the one hand, and, on the other hand, “the fullness of Christianity.” According to Rahner, “the fullness of Christianity” consists in the conscious profession of the Church’s faith, as a result of hearing the Gospel, of celebrating the sacraments, and of living an explicit Christian life that knows that it is related to Jesus of Nazareth. Anonymous Christianity is implicit. Writing in 1976, Rahner explained the meaning of the expression in this way: “Such a person has this real and existentiell relationship merely implicitly in obedience to his orientation in grace towards the God of absolute, historical presence and self-communication.”<sup>75</sup> Rahner insists that the term is not a label to be pin on to non-Christians but a technical term to be used among Christian theologians in their reflection on the relationship between Christianity and non-Christians.

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<sup>70</sup> Karl Rahner, “Anonymous Christian,” in *Theological Investigations*, trans. Karl-H and Boniface Kruger, Vol. 6 (London: Longman & Todd), 390-98; “Observations on the Problem of the ‘Anonymous Christian,’” 280-94.

<sup>71</sup> Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “Rahner and Religious Diversity,” 235.

<sup>72</sup> Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” *Theological Investigations*, trans. Karl-H, Vol. 5 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 114.

<sup>73</sup> Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” 116.

<sup>74</sup> Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” 116.

<sup>75</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans., William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 306.



According to Rahner, there is no grace for salvation but the grace of Christ, of which the Church of Christ is the tangible, historical presence in the world. Hence, Christianity is the absolute religion destined for all of humanity, after the coming of which all religions are objectively abrogated. The salvation of the individual requires that the person respond to divine revelation with an act of supernatural faith, and in some real sense this faith must be ultimately directed to Christ as the mediator of salvation.<sup>76</sup> Rahner's contention is that God's salvific will embraces every human being without exception. Since God's salvific will is universal, he must offer his saving grace to everyone, and since there is not salvation without faith, which has to be a personal response to divine revelation, Rahner concludes that the universal offer of grace must include the revelation necessary to ground a response of faith. For Rahner, faith is not anonymous. Besides, Rahner opines that the divining and forgiving grace of salvation is mediated to the entire human race throughout all of history through the unsurpassable event of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This grace is universal whether they are explicitly aware of that fact or not. The grace that saves is the grace of Christ, and so all those who are open to the mystery of their lives and live out a fundamental yes to that mystery are themselves "Christian," in the sense that they live by Christ's grace.<sup>77</sup> This involves his notion of grace as God's self-communication to the human spirit. This divine self-communication, as offered to human freedom, and prior to being accepted, already effects a change in the recipients' unreflexive consciousness, and gives them a supernatural capacity of responding to the divine offer. "At this point, they may have no explicit concept of God, and know nothing about Christ; and yet God is revealing himself to them in the very offer of his grace, and their free positive response to God revealing himself has the nature of faith".<sup>78</sup> Rahner succinctly writes:

The grace of God has always been there ahead of our preaching; a man is always in a true sense a Christian already when we begin to commend Christianity to him. For he is a man, already included in God's general will for salvation, redeemed by Christ, with grace already living and working in his innermost heart at least as the proffered possibility of supernatural action.<sup>79</sup>

In this quotation, Rahner is referring to the fact that the grace-filled condition of the person can remain in the more general realm of inarticulate consciousness without being expressed or interpreted in a distinct fashion. It is this situation which Rahner calls "anonymous

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<sup>76</sup> Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," *Th. Inv.* 16, 199-224.

<sup>77</sup> Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," *Theological Investigations*, trans. K.-H. and B. Kruger, Vol. 6 (New York: Seabury, 1974), 390-98; "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian'," *Th. Inv.*, trans. D. Bourke, Vol. 14, (New York: Seabury, 1976), 280-94.

<sup>78</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 171.

<sup>79</sup> Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 179-181.

Christianity.<sup>80</sup> According to Rahner, the boundary between “the fullness of Christianity” and “an implicit and anonymous Christianity is fluid.”<sup>81</sup> He expresses this view when he wrote:

A person can already possess sanctifying grace and so be justified and sanctified, be a son of God and an heir to heaven, be positively ordered – and this by pure grace – to supernatural and eternal salvation, even before he explicitly professes the Christian faith and is baptized.<sup>82</sup>

Rahner explains in scholastic terms that the implicit orientation to God is a gift of grace. For Rahner, a person is not denied salvation on account of not hearing the Gospel. By maintaining this view, Rahner articulates the essential relationship between the Church and those who are not part of it. Crucially, Rahner highlights and protects the uniqueness and universality of Christ. He is expressing the view that there is no salvation apart from Christ but, at the same time, no-one is necessarily excluded from this salvation.

The theory of “anonymous Christian” by Rahner did not go without criticism as it was considered by some theologians to be upholding Christian imperialism in relation to non-Christian religions.<sup>83</sup> Henri de Lubac was one of the theologians whose perspective differed from Rahner’s use of the term “anonymous Christianity.”<sup>84</sup> De Lubac admits that there is theological justification for speaking of individuals as “anonymous Christians.” However, he objects to the term “anonymous Christianity” on the grounds that this would suggest that the non-Christian religions would constitute an “anonymous Christianity.” For de Lubac, this would mean that the Christian revelation would simply make explicit what was already present in the non-Christian religions “anonymously.” As de Lubac sees it, this would ignore the startling newness of the revelation brought by Christ, and to reduce the significance of explicit Christianity to merely putting a label on a jar that already contained the substance of all that Christianity has to offer.<sup>85</sup>

De Lubac’s response to Rahner is Christological. He posits that the grace of God is universal: “The grace of Christ is universal and no soul of good will lacks the concrete means of being saved – in the full sense of the word”.<sup>86</sup> As de Lubac sees it in *Catholicisme*, there is

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<sup>80</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 86.

<sup>81</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 306. See Karl Rahner, “Chrétiens anonymes,” in *Études* 20, 15 (mars 1970), 77-93.

<sup>82</sup> Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 81.

<sup>83</sup> Brien O. McDermott, *Word Become Flesh: Dimension in Christology* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 284.

<sup>84</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l’Église* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne 1967), 152-63.

<sup>85</sup> De Lubac, de Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l’Église*, 156.

<sup>86</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 181.

no question but that salvation is brought about through the grace of Christ, but no-one is excluded from its influence. He goes as far as insisting that even pagans had their hidden saints.<sup>87</sup> De Lubac opines that everyone is connected to Christ in the understanding of the relationship between Christ and humanity. Writing in *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Église*, de Lubac argues:

Everyone, whether Christian or not, and whether he is “in a state of grace” or not, whether or not he is oriented to God, and whatever his knowledge or ignorance, has an inamissible organic link to Christ.<sup>88</sup>

De Lubac's conclusion is anchored on his understanding that man is created in the image and likeness of God. He understands all humanity as connected to Christ, by virtue of creation, not in an external way, but organically. De Lubac maintains that this organic link is incapable of being lost. Writing further, de Lubac expresses the closeness of his thought and Rahner's position on non-Christians. In strong Christological language, de Lubac asserts: “We are obliged to believe that the light of the Word illumines all people coming into this world and that, in a thousand anonymous forms, the grace of Christ can be everywhere at work.”<sup>89</sup> What de Lubac expresses here is close to that of Rahner. The difference lies in the language used in explaining the term “anonymous Christianity.” De Lubac does not apply the type of philosophical depth of Rahner in describing his interpretations. His language is more biblical and is rooted in the Fathers of the Church. A clear example of this is when de Lubac writes:

Let us say, then, borrowing the language of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church, that every soul is naturally Christian, not because it possesses already an equivalent or, as it were, a first stage of Christianity, but because the image of God shines in the depths of this soul; or rather, because it is itself this image, and that, burning to be reunited with its Model, it can be so only through Christ.<sup>90</sup>

In this quotation, de Lubac is describing his understanding of “image.” For de Lubac, the soul is the image of God and is yearning to be reunited with its Model. This is possible only through the mediation of Christ. De Lubac is highlighting that there is a pre-Christian character in the human person by virtue of his or her creation. This anticipates or is ordered to the “fullness of Christianity,” as expressed by Rahner. However, for de Lubac, there is no such thing as an anonymous Christianity because Christianity is of her nature explicit. In the same vein, de Lubac objected to the description of non-Christian religions as “ways of salvation”. For him,

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<sup>87</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 181.

<sup>88</sup> De Lubac, *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Église*, 128.

<sup>89</sup> De Lubac, “Le fondement théologique de missions,” (coll. ‘La sphère et la croix’) (Paris: Seuil, 1946), republished in *Théologie dans l'Histoire*, Vol. II, 174.

<sup>90</sup> De Lubac, “Le fondement théologique de missions,” 197.

this would mean being led to believe that various religious systems, which contradict one another in essential matters would nonetheless be bearers of salvation, positively willed by God. Conversely, he posited that we must hold that there is but one divinely willed way of salvation, namely through the gospel of Christ.<sup>91</sup>

Rahner's understanding of "anonymous Christianity" is different from de Lubac's interpretation. For Rahner, the term means the "being Christian" of those who are living the grace of Christ without explicit Christian faith. Nonetheless, Rahner acknowledged that the term Christianity could also be understood as de Lubac saw it. Rahner contends that because of this ambiguity, he had no objection if others preferred not to speak of "anonymous Christianity" but "anonymous Christian" as explained by de Lubac.<sup>92</sup> The views of de Lubac and Karl Rahner were by no means not the only ones. While some theologians echo similar thoughts, others expressed divergent interpretations. We will now analyse several of these theologians, namely, Hans Küng, John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, Roger Haight, Jacques Dupuis, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D'Costa and Ilaria Morali.<sup>93</sup> It is imperative to examine their views because it will help clarify our problematic: Is there something of salvific merit in other religions?

Theologians have developed three methods in order to answer this fundamental question. The first is the inclusivist view. It is represented by Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner and Gavin D'Costa. They reject the possibility of salvation through other religions. The second is the pluralists view. The Pluralists theologians claim that salvation is mediated through these other religions. The protagonist of this school of thought is John Hick. Others who share the same claim are Hans Küng, Paul F. Knitter and Roger Haight. The third view is more nuanced,

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<sup>91</sup> De Lubac, *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Église*, 148-49.

<sup>92</sup> Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian," 281-292.

<sup>93</sup> Some important theologians who have contributed significantly to this discourse include: Wolfgang Beinert, "Die alleinseligmachende Kirche. Oder: Wer kann gerettet werden?" *Stimmen der Zeit* 115 (1990), 75-85, 264-78; Yves Congar, "Non-Christian Religions and Christianity," in *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development* (Documenta Missionalia 5) Rome, 1972, 133-45; "Les religions non bibliques sont-elles des médiations de salut?" in *Essais oecuméniques*, Paris, 1984, 271-96; Johannes Feiner, "Particular and universal saving history," in *One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, ed. H. Vorgrimler (London, 1968), 163-206; Piet Fransen, "How can non-Christians find salvation in their own religions?" in *Hermeneutics of the Councils and Other Studies*, Leuven, 1985, 321-60; Heinrich Fries, "Das Heil in Christus," in *Heil in den Religionen und im Christentum* (St. Ottilien, 1982), 212-42; Walter Kasper, "Are Non-Christian Religions Salvific?" in *Documenta Missionalia* 5, 157-68; Joseph Ratzinger, "Christianity and the World Religions," in *One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, 207-36; Otto Semmelroth, "No Salvation Outside the Church?" in *The Church and Christian Belief* (New York, 1966), 103-32; "Révélation et salut hors de l'Église visible", *Spiritus* (1969), 350-64; Bernard Sesboué, "Karl Rahner et les 'Chrétiens anonymes,'" *Études* 361 (1984), 521-36; Gustave Thils, "Quelli che non hanno ancora ricevuto il Vangelo", in *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, ed. G. Barauna (Firenze, 1965), 668-78; Hans Waldenfels, "Theologie der nichtchristlichen Religionen. Konsequenzen aus 'Nostra aetate,'" in *Glaube im Prozess*, ed. E. Klinger (Frieburg, 1989), 751-75.

some would say ambiguous, approach of Jacques Dupuis. These different points of view are very important sign-posts and broaden our vision of the complexity of what we mean by non-Christian can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church. We want to give as full a panorama as possible of the work of the different theologians. We will follow the order of publication because it will give us a better vision of the development of these ideas. Equally, it would lead us to an appreciation of the Magisterial interventions in the forms of declarations and notifications on the same issues.

### 3.2.1 Hans Küng

This segment focuses on Hans Küng's critique of Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christian." We shall highlight the fact that for Hans Küng the notion of "anonymous Christian" entails that all that is good and valuable in other world religions is already somehow present in Christianity. Küng would argue that when encountering other religions, Christian theology should be theocentric rather than ecclesiocentric.

Hans Küng's perspective on the salvation of non-Christians came in the form of the criticism of Karl Rahner's notion of "anonymous Christian." Writing in his *On Being a Christian*,<sup>94</sup> Küng posits that through the term "anonymous Christian," Rahner and theologians who agree with him, "have swept away the whole of good-willed humanity with an elegant gesture across the paper-thin bridge of a theological fabrication into the back door."<sup>95</sup> Küng argues that the notion of "anonymous Christian" entails that all that is good and valuable in other world religions is already somehow present in Christianity. He proposes that when encountering other religions, Christian theology should be theocentric rather than ecclesiocentric.<sup>96</sup> As Paul Knitter observes, "such an approach recognizes the mysterious activity of God, not the Church, within the world outside Christianity."<sup>97</sup> What is clear is that Hans Küng did not make the distinction, which Rahner and de Lubac had made, and summarily dismissed the notion of the "anonymous Christian."<sup>98</sup> Although Rahner never dignified Küng with a reply on his objection to the theory of "anonymous Christian," he responded to a different conclusion. Küng had argued that "it is impossible to find anywhere in the world a sincere Jew, Muslim or atheist, who would not regard the assertion that he is an 'anonymous

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<sup>94</sup> Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).

<sup>95</sup> Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 98.

<sup>96</sup> Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 98.

<sup>97</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 126. See "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, Joseph Neuner, ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 37-47.

<sup>98</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 176.

Christian' as presumptuous.”<sup>99</sup> For Küng, “to bring the partner to the discussion into our own circle in this way closes the dialogue before it has even begun.”<sup>100</sup> Rahner’s reply is that the term is intended to express a specifically Christian understanding on how non-Christians can be saved. Equally, Rahner admits that it may not be an appropriate term for use in inter-religious dialogue. Similarly, he is aware of the ambiguity involved in describing as “anonymous Christian” people who have no conscious wish to be Christians. Be that as it may, Rahner highlights the ambiguity that is found in other terms which are commonly used in Christian discourse, such as the use of the term “sin” in “original sin.” Rahner was prepared to substitute the expression “anonymous Christian” with another term if a better term expresses equally well the truth which the concept is intended to express.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.2.2 John Hick

We shall discuss the theological views of John Hick on the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions. Hick maintains that if it is granted that salvation is in fact taking place not only within the Christian but also within the other great traditions, it seems arbitrary and unrealistic to go on insisting that the Christ-event is the sole exclusive source of human salvation.

John Hick has been described as “the most radical, the best-known, and therefore the most controversial of the proponents of a theocentric model for Christian approaches to other religions.”<sup>102</sup> Hick writes:

(It) involves an equally radical transformation in our conception of the universe of faiths and the place of our own religion within it...[It]demands] a paradigm shift from a Christianity-centred or Jesus-centred to a God-centred model of the universe of faiths. One then sees the great world religions as different human responses to the one divine Reality, embodying different perceptions which have been formed in different historical and cultural circumstances.<sup>103</sup>

Hick advocates a “Copernican revolution in theology,” whereby Christianity, instead of being the centre of the religious universe, would, like the other religions, be centred rather on God. He posits that Jesus is to be interpreted as one of the most significant expressions of the divine,

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<sup>99</sup> Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 98.

<sup>100</sup> Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 98.

<sup>101</sup> Rahner, “Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church,” *Theological Investigations*. Vol. 12, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press), 162-65.

<sup>102</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, 147.

<sup>103</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 131. Hick’s theoretical interpretation of the diverse religious manifestations and experiences of the Real is found in several writings. See, “On Grading Religions,” *Religious Studies*, no. 17 (1981), 451-67; *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 233-96

yet in no way exhaustive or definitive for any but Christians.<sup>104</sup> This way of thinking will enable Christians to appreciate the value of other religions, when they recognize the mythic character of their own incarnation language.<sup>105</sup> Hick acknowledges that Christianity has made great progress moving away from the old exclusivism to inclusivism.<sup>106</sup> For Hick, “the Christian mind has now for the most part made the move from an intolerant exclusivism to a benevolent inclusivism.”<sup>107</sup> Hick contends that despite the new inclusive attitude towards other religions, Christians still affirm “Christianity’s unique finality as the locus of the only full divine revelation and the only adequate saving event.”<sup>108</sup> According to Hick, this would suggest that non-Christians can be saved because, unknown to them, Christ is secretly “in a way united” with them. This saving truth unknown to them is known in the Church, which is God’s instrument in making redemption known.<sup>109</sup> Hick posits that to abandon this claim to an ultimate religious superiority is, therefore, to pass a critical point, entering new territory from which the whole terrain of Christian truth is bound to look different. Christianity would be seen in a pluralistic context as one of the great world faiths, one of the streams of religious life through which human beings can be savingly related to the ultimate Reality that Christians know as the heavenly Father.<sup>110</sup> He is of the view that to cross this theological Rubicon is the inevitable next step. Hick argues that if it is granted that salvation is in fact taking place not only within the Christian but also within the other great traditions, it seems arbitrary and unrealistic to go on insisting that the Christ-event is the sole and exclusive source of human salvation. Again, Hick contends that “when it is acknowledged that Jews are being saved within and through the Jewish stream of religious life, Muslims within and through the Islamic stream, Hindus within and through the Hindu streams, and so on, can it be more than a hangover from the old religious imperialism of the past to insist upon attaching a Christian label to salvation within these other households of faith?”<sup>111</sup> Hick acknowledges that to move from Christian inclusivism to pluralism, although in one way seemingly so natural and inevitable, sets Christianity in a new and to some an alarming light in which there can no longer be any a priori assumption of overall superiority. If Christianity is to continue to hold on to its claim of being

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<sup>104</sup> John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>105</sup> John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

<sup>106</sup> John Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds. (London: SCM Press, 1987), 22.

<sup>107</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 22.

<sup>108</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 22.

<sup>109</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 22.

<sup>110</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 22.

<sup>111</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 22-23.

a more favourable setting for salvation and transformation than other traditions, then it must be shown by historical evidence. But an “arbitrary superiority-by-definition no longer seems defensible, even to many Christians.”<sup>112</sup>

John Hick’s generic idea of salvation is one of the most controversial aspects of his theory of religious pluralism. Hick’s theory is a rejection of the traditional inclusive position of the Church since Vatican II. The Church’s view affirms that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God and the Saviour of the whole world. Sullivan opines that “what Hick denies is not merely the universal role of the Church, but the universal role of Christ, in the divine plan of salvation.”<sup>113</sup> According to Hick, Jesus Christ is but one of several agents of God’s plan, and consequently the Christian religion is but one of several equally valid ways of salvation. Clearly, Hick’s theory is incompatible with Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God. When Hick refers to “the myth of God incarnate,” he means that Christian belief in the incarnation and the divinity of Jesus is a mythic. It is based on this that he refers to “the myth of Christian uniqueness.” As far as Hick is concerned, neither of these Christian beliefs is any longer tenable.<sup>114</sup>

John Hick has made a significant contribution to the understanding that salvation is mediated through other religions. What might we make of his assertion that: “The Christian tradition is now seen as one of a plurality of contexts of salvation...within which the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to God-Reality-centredness is occurring”?<sup>115</sup> Hick is suggesting that the “paths” to salvation differ, but the ultimate end is common to all. However, this view goes against the “traditional Christian thinking which is often reluctant, even in recent years, to see in the other religious traditions valid “paths”, “ways”, or “channels” through which the goal of union with the God of Jesus Christ may be reached”.<sup>116</sup> Jacques Dupuis opines that not even Vatican II with its openness to the positive values contained in those traditions, ventured to call them “ways” of salvation.<sup>117</sup> However, it may have been – at least partly – implied in the Council’s recognition of elements of “truth and

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<sup>112</sup> Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” 23.

<sup>113</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 170.

<sup>114</sup> Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 168-69. Knitter points out that “Hick speculates that had Christianity moved eastward into India instead of westward into the Roman Empire, Jesus most likely would have been interpreted as a *Bodhisattva*, as the one who had realized the fullness of nirvana and lived out his life trying to show others the way to this same experience.” Knitter, *No Other Name?* 254.

<sup>115</sup> Hick, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 22.

<sup>116</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 183.

<sup>117</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 183.



grace” contained in them “as a sort of secret presence of God”.<sup>118</sup> In the same vein, the International Theological Commission in its document titled “Christianity and the World Religions”, expressed extreme caution and apparent reluctance to recognize some “saving functions” in the other religious traditions. The document affirms succinctly that:

Given [the] explicit recognition of the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the religions, *one cannot exclude the possibility* that they exercise as such a certain salvific function, that is, despite their ambiguity, they help people achieve their ultimate end. In the religions is explicitly thematized the relationship of man with the Absolute, his transcendent dimension. *It would be difficult to think* that what the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of persons taken as individuals would have salvific value, and think that what the Holy Spirit works in the religions and cultures would not have such value.<sup>119</sup>

Again, the document asserts:

The religions can therefore be, in the terms indicated, a means (*mezzo*) helping the salvation of their followers; but they cannot be compared (*equiparare*) to the function that the Church realizes for the salvation of Christians and those who are not.<sup>120</sup>

The two quotations above are interconnected. These statements while admitting the presence of the Spirit in the religions, which is affirmed in recent official Church teaching, are much more reserved in drawing positive conclusions. At the same time, we agree with Dupuis’s observation in the light of the first quotation that “it would be difficult to think that what the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of persons taken as individuals would have salvific value, and think that the same Holy Spirit works in the religions and cultures would not have such value.”<sup>121</sup> What is not in doubt is that the International Theological Commission does not seem to authorize such a drastic distinction.<sup>122</sup>

The documents of the Church from Vatican II onwards do not support the pluralistic view of John Hick. These documents insist that while other religions might be affirmed to have elements of “truth” and “goodness,” they can only be seen as part of God’s plan in so far as they are preparations for the gospel, but not in themselves as means of salvation.<sup>123</sup> This is not to suggest that non-Christians are denied salvation or that their adherents cannot find genuine holiness and wisdom in their traditions. The implication of John Hick’s assertion that other

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<sup>118</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 9.

<sup>119</sup> International Theological Commission, “Christianity and the World Religion,” *Origins* (1997-1998): 149-66. See [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/.../cti\\_1997\\_cristianesimo-religioni\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/.../cti_1997_cristianesimo-religioni_en.html) (Accessed February 14, 2019).

<sup>120</sup> International Theological Commission, “Christianity and the World Religion,” no. 86.

<sup>121</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 185.

<sup>122</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” § 84.

<sup>123</sup> Gavin D’Costa, Paul F. Knitter & Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 35.

religions are means of salvation at an equal level to Christianity has led to the emergence of two nuanced and delicate positions. The first upholds the ancient orthodox faith of the Catholic Church. The second positively engages with the new context, whereby the religions are seen as other than schismatic and heretical cultural configurations.<sup>124</sup> For the Pluralists, like John Hick, dialogue is a major preoccupation. However, they argue that in order to make this dialogue possible, “it is necessary for Christians to get rid of any claim of superiority and absoluteness”.<sup>125</sup> According to the Pluralists, “it is necessary to consider all the religions as having equal value.”<sup>126</sup> They opine that “one claim of superiority is to consider Jesus to be the sole saviour and mediator of all men [women].”<sup>127</sup>

The Pluralists argue that abandoning this claim is essential in order for the dialogue to take place. It is this view that Catholic theology has to confront. As the International Theological Commission has rightly observed, the Catholic theology of religions “in no way undervalues or does not appreciate the other religions when it affirms that everything true and worthy of value in the other religions comes from Christ and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>128</sup> On the contrary, “it is the best way that the Christian has of expressing his appreciation for these religions.”<sup>129</sup> Again, The International Theological Commission posits that the basic difference between the two starting points (the plurality-of-religions school and Catholic theology and the Magisterium) is found in the position taken regarding the theological problem of truth and at the same time regarding the Christian faith.<sup>130</sup> The Commission is of the view that the teaching of the Church on the theology of religions presents it is argument from the centre of the truth of Christian faith. This takes into account, on the one hand, the Pauline teaching of the natural knowledge of God and at the same time expresses its confidence in the universal action of the Spirit.<sup>131</sup> Besides, it sees both lines anchored in the theological tradition. Moreover, “it values the truth, the good and the beauty of the religions from the inmost depths of the truth of faith itself, but it does not attribute in general the same validity to the truth claim of other religions”.<sup>132</sup> In the Pluralists quest to restore unity among religions, they seek to eliminate aspects of one’s own self-understanding. In addition, the Pluralist view seeks to gain unity by

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<sup>124</sup> D’Costa, Knitter & Strange, *Only One Way?* 35.

<sup>125</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 93.

<sup>126</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 93.

<sup>127</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 93.

<sup>128</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 94.

<sup>129</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 94.

<sup>130</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 96.

<sup>131</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 96.

<sup>132</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 96.

denying any value to [religious] differences, which are regarded as something threatening; it believes that at least these must be eliminated as particularities or reductions proper to a specific culture. However, “to do so would lead to indifference, that is to say, to not taking seriously either one’s own truth claim or the truth claim of another”.<sup>133</sup> It is in the light of heated theological debate on this issue after the Council that the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) under Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, issued a specific declaration on this issue: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, *Dominus Iesus*.<sup>134</sup> It acknowledges that while the religions may contain truth and goodness moved by the Spirit, nevertheless:

It is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>135</sup>

*Dominus Iesus* is here reaffirming the teaching of the Church that it is contrary to the faith to insist that there is something of salvific merit in other constituted religions in the same way as the Church. It for the same reason that the other religions cannot be seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her. The declaration is not in favour of any form of pluralism. Similarly, “it shows why the other religions cannot be understood as a ‘means of salvation’ as this term is uniquely applied to the Church precisely because of its Christological foundations”.<sup>136</sup> We will elaborate further on this in a later section of this chapter. This is because we would like to give a panorama of the views of other theologians so that we can have a better appreciation of the timely interventions of the Magisterium in the forms of declarations or notifications.

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<sup>133</sup> International Theological Commission, “*Christianity and the World Religion*,” no. 96.

<sup>134</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, *Dominus Iesus*, 2000. See [www.vatican.va/roman.../rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman.../rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html) (Accessed February 15, 2019).

<sup>135</sup> CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 21.

<sup>136</sup> D’Costa, *Only One Way*, 33.

### 3.2.3 Paul F. Knitter on Liberation Theology of Religions and the uniqueness of Christ

We shall focus on Paul F. Knitter's rejection of the traditional interpretation of the Christian teaching on other religions which he views as "absolutist." We shall critically examine his suggestions for Christians to revamp or even reject the traditional understanding of Jesus Christ's final, definitive, normative voice.

Paul F. Knitter proposes what he refers to as "a genuinely pluralistic interreligious dialogue-beyond both exclusivism and inclusivism."<sup>137</sup> He opines that the method of liberation theology can also help resolve the even more knotty problem of the uniqueness of Christ. Knitter contends that in order to avoid pre-established absolutist positions that prevent a genuinely pluralistic dialogue, Christians must revamp or even reject their traditional understanding of Jesus Christ as God's final, definitive, normative voice.<sup>138</sup> Knitter sees in the theological method of liberation theology, especially Latin in America, as advancing a convincing case for the possibility of a theocentric, nonnormative reinterpretation of Christ.<sup>139</sup> At the heart of the method of liberation theology and Christology is praxis. "The doing, or praxis, that liberation theologians are talking about is basically the effort to confront and transform the evil that clings to the human condition."<sup>140</sup> This evil today is witnessed most evidently and destructively in injustice and oppression. Leonardo Boff remarks that "only in and through the process of conversion and practical change do we have access to the God of Jesus Christ."<sup>141</sup> Knitter suggests that it is pertinent for our understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus to listen to the call of liberation theology for a primacy "of the critical element over the dogmatic" or "of orthopraxis over orthodoxy."<sup>142</sup> He agrees with Gutierrez, who believes that the subject of liberation theology is not theology, but liberation. It means "the overcoming of social inequalities among men [women]... all that depersonalizes him [her] – physical and moral misery, ignorance, and hunger – as well as the awareness of human dignity."<sup>143</sup> Knitter maintains that by submitting their cherished beliefs to the test of praxis, Christians are better

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<sup>137</sup> Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191. See also Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1995); *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1996); Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes, eds., *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1997).

<sup>138</sup> Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191.

<sup>139</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 192-193.

<sup>140</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 193.

<sup>141</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1978), 279.

<sup>142</sup> Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 44-47.

<sup>143</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: S C M Press Ltd, 1974), 1-19.

able to recognize how much such beliefs, for example, in the exclusivity of salvation in Christ are possibly nurtured more by the desire to maintain power and privilege than by the desire to promote truth and freedom. In submitting orthodoxy to the constant criticism of orthopraxis, liberation theologians clear the ground for a more fertile dialogue. Knitter argues that to maintain dialogue, it is not necessary that all partners agree on certain universal truth – for instance, whether there is one saviour/incarnation or many. For him, the mutual starting point will be how Christians and others can struggle, together, against those things that threaten their common humanity. Only in the praxis of such struggle can clarity on universal truths emerge. This praxis-based theology has many implications for our understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in relation to other religions. Knitter suggests four ways where this is visible.

Firstly, liberation Christology clarifies what are the conditions for the possibility of claiming any kind of exclusive or inclusive uniqueness for Jesus.<sup>144</sup> He agrees with Jon Sobrino that the interpretation of the universality of Jesus can equally be applied to his uniqueness and finality. Sobrino had written that: “his [Jesus’] universality cannot be demonstrated or proved on the basis of formulas or symbols that are universal in themselves: e.g., dogmatic formulas, the kerygma as event, the resurrection as universal symbol of hope, and so forth. The real universality of Jesus shows up only in its concrete embodiment.”<sup>145</sup> Indeed, Knitter posits that Christian conviction and proclamation that Jesus is God’s final or normative revelation cannot rest only on traditional doctrine or on personal experience. On the contrary, such uniqueness can be known and then affirmed only ‘in its concrete embodiment,’ only in the praxis of historical involvement.<sup>146</sup>

Secondly, when Christians look at such praxis, at such concrete embodiment, there is reason to admit that not all the conditions for the possibility of claiming finality or normativity for Jesus have been fulfilled. Knitter accepts Ruether’s position that “by restoring the kingdom to the centre of the gospel, liberation theology also throws into question much of the language of finality that the Christian Church has been wont to use of Jesus.”<sup>147</sup> Knitter is of the view that “the concrete data from praxis, that of Jesus and of the Church, is not sufficient, to establish any kind of absolute finality for Jesus.”<sup>148</sup> Despite the fact that Jesus, in himself, realized a final and normative anticipation of that future kingdom, the kingdom itself has not yet been

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<sup>144</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 195.

<sup>145</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1978), 9-10.

<sup>146</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 195-96.

<sup>147</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196. See also Reuter, *Change the World*, 23.

<sup>148</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196.

realized in time. This position will still be difficult to satisfy the required criteria from praxis. Hence, Knitter questions whether Christians have worked with other religions to such a degree that they can know, with certainty, that there is no other like Jesus. Similarly, he queries whether the practices of other religions have been extensive enough to make the universal claim that Jesus' revelation surpasses and is, therefore, normative for these other faiths.<sup>149</sup>

Thirdly, Knitter asserts that if the method of liberation Christology shows why normative claims for Jesus are not currently possible, it also makes clear why they are not necessary. Knitter highlights the fact that for liberation theology, the one thing necessary to be a Christian and to carry on the job of theology is commitment to the kingdom vision of liberating, redemptive action. According to Knitter what Christians know on the basis of their praxis is that the vision and power of Jesus of Nazareth is a means for liberation from injustice and oppression, that it is an effective, hope-filled, universally meaningful way of bringing about God's kingdom. He believes that not knowing whether Jesus is unique, whether he is inclusive or normative for all others, does not interfere with commitment to the praxis of following him. Such questions may be answered in the future.<sup>150</sup>

Fourthly, Knitter observes that "liberation Christology allows, even requires, that Christians recognize the possibility of other liberators or saviours, other incarnations."<sup>151</sup> Knitter argues that if liberating praxis is the foundation and norm for authentic divine revelation and truth then Christians must be open to the possibility that in their dialogue with other believers they may encounter religious figures, whose vision offers a liberating praxis and promise of the kingdom equal to that of Jesus.<sup>152</sup> For Knitter, such saviours would have to be recognized and affirmed. After all, their existence would not jeopardize the universal relevance of Jesus' vision or lessen one's commitment to it.<sup>153</sup>

We can surmise that Knitter questions Jesus' uniqueness only if it means "only."<sup>154</sup> He is not questioning it if it means 'distinctive.' When Knitter holds on to term 'truly,' he is affirming that both the person and the work of Jesus are distinct, for they contain something that is not found elsewhere in the same way, to the same degree, with the same focus. Knitter asserts that

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<sup>149</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196.

<sup>150</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196.

<sup>151</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196.

<sup>152</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196.

<sup>153</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 196-7.

<sup>154</sup> Paul F. Knitter, "The Meeting of Religion: A Christian Debate," in *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World*, eds. Gavin D' Costa, Paul Knitter & Daniel Strange (London: SCM Press, 2011), 72.

there are many ingredients in the message of Jesus for which all the “one and only” language of the New Testament can make sense. Moreover, no other saviour saves like Jesus. At the same time, there are other saviours, who may bring people ‘to have life and have it more abundantly’ in different ways. Knitter posits that “in holding to the distinctiveness of Jesus, Christians can be open to the distinctiveness of Buddha or Muhammad or Confucius.”<sup>155</sup> What is significant most for Knitter is that “God may be revealing other ‘distinctive’ and universally relevant truths in other religions, and these religions might enhance or clarify or correct the way we have understood the message of Jesus. However, whether that is the case can be known only if we engage those other religions in authentic dialogue and co-operations.”<sup>156</sup>

### 3.2.4 Roger Haight’s Jesus: Symbol of God

We shall discuss what Roger Haight means when he suggests that the normativity of Jesus does not exclude a positive appraisal of religious pluralism, and that other world religions are true, in the sense that they are mediations of God’s salvation. I will critique Haight’s position once we have dealt with the official Church documentation, especially the Notification issued by the CDF under Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the book *Jesus Symbol of God*.

Roger Haight affirms from the theological perspective a positive construal of religious pluralism.<sup>157</sup> He suggests “the thesis that the normativity of Jesus does not exclude a positive appraisal of religious pluralism, and that Christians may regard other world religions as true, in the sense that they are mediations of God’s salvation.”<sup>158</sup> For Haight, this will involve making global judgments about other religions. According to him, some theologians insist that one cannot judge other religions except *a posteriori*, after studying them, or entering into dialogue with their representatives, or participating in them. Conversely, Haight is of the view that: “Christian theology is obliged to interpret and judge other religions on the basis of its norm, Jesus Christ, in the same way that it is obliged to interpret all reality.”<sup>159</sup> He posits that the task of Christian theology is to interpret all reality in the light of Christian symbols. It entails that theological evaluation of other religions is an assessment on the basis of norms of Christian theology and should not be confused with more nuanced judgments based on close

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<sup>155</sup> Knitter, “The Meeting of Religion: A Christian Debate,” 72.

<sup>156</sup> Knitter, “The Meeting of Religion: A Christian Debate,” 72.

<sup>157</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 411.

<sup>158</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 411.

<sup>159</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 411.

participatory analysis. This will guide the attitude that Christians should bear not only toward religious pluralism, but also other religions.

To knit all these ideas together, Haight advocates “an incarnational Logos Christology.”<sup>160</sup> It is imperative to note that an incarnational Logos Christology does not undermine the autonomous legitimacy of other religious mediations of God. Haight avers that “the symbol of Logos refers to God’s immanence to created reality; it was recognized at Nicaea that God as Logos is God and nothing less.”<sup>161</sup> Indeed, the symbol of incarnation, referring to God’s intelligent presence and power within Jesus, encourages the idea of God being near and available to all human beings. Haight makes it clear that the incarnational Logos Christology depicts Jesus Christ as revealing the immanent, saving presence of God to all human existence. Therefore, it leads the Christian to expect God’s revelatory presence in other religious meditations and traditions. While this does not canonize all religious forms, it provides an *a priori* impulse in Christian experience for a positive openness toward and an appreciation of other religions. Thus, “the Christian expects that the one whom they know as God is also present to and at work in other religions. Other religions are judged valid in principle by Christians on the basis of their religious experience of God as Logos or God’s Word in Jesus.”<sup>162</sup>

A Spirit Christology is another approach that Haight applies to show its correlation with the demands of the new consciousness of Christians regarding other religions.<sup>163</sup> Haight explains that on the one hand, it accounts for the normativity of Jesus for humankind generally, and, on the other hand, as the Jewish and Christian scriptures testify, God as Spirit has been present and at work in the world for human salvation from the “beginning,” without a causal connection to the historical appearance of Jesus.<sup>164</sup> This is because Jesus empowered by God as Spirit has been present and at work in the world for human salvation from “the beginning” without a causal connection to the historical appearance of Jesus.<sup>165</sup> Haight opines that Jesus is constitutive and the cause of the salvation of Christians because he is the mediator of Christian awareness of life in the Spirit. But Jesus is not constitutive of salvation universally. According to Haight, a Spirit Christology recognizes that the Spirit is operative outside the Christian

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<sup>160</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 440.

<sup>161</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 440.

<sup>162</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 441.

<sup>163</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 456.

<sup>164</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 456.

<sup>165</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 456.



sphere and is open to other mediations of God.<sup>166</sup> Roger Haight holds a pluralist view of salvation. Like John Hick, who is the protagonist of this view, salvation can be mediated through other religions.

Under Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a *Notification* on the views of Roger Haight in the book *Jesus Symbol of God* was issued because it was judged to contain serious doctrinal errors regarding fundamental truths of faith. The key areas that were identified were concerning the pre-existence of the Word, the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, the salvific value of the death of Jesus, the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus and of the Church, and the resurrection of Jesus and the use of an inappropriate theological method. We shall return to this later in the chapter when we examine the specific content of the Notification.

### 3.2.5 Jacques Dupuis' Inclusive Pluralism

We shall examine Jacques Dupuis's theory of "inclusive pluralism." We shall evaluate his interpretation which means upholding both the universal constitutive character of the Christ event in the order of salvation and, the positive saving significance of the religious traditions within the single manifold plan of God for humankind.

The theological reflections on Christianity and other religions by Jacques Dupuis (1923-2004) are best articulated in two of his publications; *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* and, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*.<sup>167</sup> Dupuis' publications on the relationship between Christianity and other religions is of enormous significance since they have not only elicited a lot of reviews, but they have also led to an investigation of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, which culminated in a notification published on January 24, 2001 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).<sup>168</sup> Gerald O'Collins, has drawn attention to the fact that Dupuis addresses a central question: how can Christians profess and proclaim faith in Jesus Christ as the one redeemer of all humankind, and at the same time recognize the Spirit at work in the world's

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<sup>166</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 456.

<sup>167</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997); *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002).

<sup>168</sup> CDF, "Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 1997) by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J.," *Acta apostolicae sedis* 94 (2002) 141-45; ET, *Origins* 30 (2001) 605-8. See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20010124\\_dupuis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010124_dupuis_en.html) (Accessed January 14, 2019).

religions and cultures – as was done by Pope John Paul II? Besides, from a Christian perspective, what is the place in God’s providence for the other religions, some of which predate the birth of Christ (e.g., Hinduism), and what beneficial contribution do they make toward the salvation of their followers? As revealer and redeemer, Jesus is unique and universal, but in practice the visible paths to salvation have remained many. What might the various religious traditions mean in the one divine plan to save humanity?<sup>169</sup>

Dupuis proposes what he calls a “pluralistic inclusivism” or an “inclusive pluralism.”<sup>170</sup> This view “upholds both the universal constitutive character of the Christ event in the order of salvation and the positive saving significance of the religious traditions within the single manifold plan of God for humankind.”<sup>171</sup> The view of Dupuis has nothing in common with the “pluralistic paradigm” we saw earlier with John Hick. It avers that the Christian faith and doctrine can combine the faith-affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as universal Saviour and the theological understanding of a positive role and significance in the divine plan for humankind of the other religions.<sup>172</sup> For Dupuis, God has manifested and revealed Godself in saving words and deeds throughout the entire history of humankind since creation. In the same vein, God has made various covenants with humankind in history, before making a “new covenant” with it in Jesus Christ.<sup>173</sup> Dupuis opines that these different covenants in Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, are in God’s providence directed toward the “new” covenant in Jesus Christ, but they are not thereby provisional, nor have they ever been abolished or revoked. For Dupuis, they remain valid and operative in their relationship to the Christ event in the overall framework of God’s design for humankind. After all, God has spoken “in many and various ways” to humankind before speaking his decisive word “through the Son” (Heb 1:1), through the one who is the Word. Dupuis concludes that all human beings are “peoples of God,” and that they all live “under the arc of the divine covenant”.<sup>174</sup>

According to Dupuis, the Jesus Christ event must be seen in the overall framework of God’s design running through the entire history of humankind. For him, the event is “unquestionably the centre, apex, high point, and interpretive key of the entire historic saving process; as such,

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<sup>169</sup> Gerald O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” *Theological Studies*, September 2013, Vol. 74, No. 3, 632-54. See O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis and Religious Pluralism,” in *Christology: Origins, Developments, Debates* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015), 109-129.

<sup>170</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>171</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>172</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 263.

<sup>173</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 254.

<sup>174</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

it has universal saving significance.”<sup>175</sup> However, Dupuis observes that the Jesus Christ event must never be isolated from the entire process, as though by itself it represented and exhausted God’s entire saving power. On the contrary, “the historic saving event of Jesus Christ leaves room for a saving action by God, through his Word and his Spirit, that goes beyond even the risen humanity of the incarnate Word.”<sup>176</sup> With this in mind, Dupuis writes:

The universal inclusive presence over the centuries of the Christ event through the risen humanity of the Jesus of history become “metahistoric,” the universal operative presence of the Word of God, and that of the Spirit of God: all three elements are combined and together they represent the totality of God’s saving action toward human beings and peoples.<sup>177</sup>

Here, Dupuis is emphasizing the Trinitarian nature of God’s saving action toward all human beings and peoples. God’s manifestation and self-communication have taken place in different ways throughout history. Dupuis insists that at every step, God has taken the initiative in the encounter between God and human beings. This is why it seems that the world’s religious traditions are “ways” or “routes” of salvation for their followers. For Dupuis, they are such because they represent “ways” traced by God himself for the salvation of human beings. In addition, he argues that it is not human beings who have first set out in search of God through their history; rather God has set out first to approach them and to trace for them the “ways” over which they may find him.<sup>178</sup> Dupuis contends that if the world religions are in themselves “gifts of God to the peoples of the world,” the foundation for a “religious pluralism in principle” as understood here need not be sought far away.<sup>179</sup>

Dupuis affirms that the Trinitarian and Pneumatological types of Christology makes it possible to overcome not only the “exclusivist” but also the “inclusivist” paradigm, without, however, resorting to the “pluralist” paradigm, which is based on the negation of “constitutive” salvation in Jesus Christ. Hence, one arrives at a position which combines what must be retained from Christological inclusivism with what may be said theologically with regard to a certain pluralism of the religions in God’s reign. Dupuis avers that the inclusive efficacy of the Christ event through the risen humanity of Jesus, the universal “illumination” by the Word of God, and the equally universal “enlivening” by the Spirit make it possible to discover in other saving figures and traditions, truths and grace not made explicit with the same force and clarity

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<sup>175</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>176</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>177</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>178</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>179</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

in the revelation and manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. He contends that in the whole history of God's relations with humankind, there is more truth and grace than available and discoverable in the Christian tradition alone. This leads Dupuis to suggest a possible complementarity between the Christian tradition and the other religious traditions.

It is opportune here to mention that Dupuis himself is admittedly critical of the pluralists view of salvation. He describes his view as "inclusive pluralism," which, while having nothing in common with the pluralist paradigm of the "pluralist theologians," attempts to show how the Christian faith and doctrine can combine the faith-affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as universal Saviour and the theological understanding of a positive role and significance in the divine plan for humankind of the other religious traditions.<sup>180</sup> Dupuis opines that the Christian identity must be preserved in all its integrity in the process of encountering and entering into dialogue with the other religious traditions. He maintains that there is no dialogue in a void or in a flux of personal religious persuasions. However, according to him, "the sincere affirmation of the Christian identity need not entail exclusivist statements by which any positive significance in God's eternal design for humankind, assigned to other traditions by God himself, is a priori denied."<sup>181</sup> For Dupuis, "absolute and exclusive statements about Christ and Christianity, which would claim the exclusive possession of God's self-disclosure or of the means of salvation, would distort and contradict the Christian message and the Christian image."<sup>182</sup> Dupuis insists that our one God is "three," and the communion-in-difference which characterizes God's inner life is reflected and operative in the one plan which Father, Son, and Spirit have devised for their dealings with humankind in revelation and salvation. For him, the plurality of religions finds its ultimate source in a God who is Love and communication.

The complementarity which Dupuis refers to is mutual complementarity, whereby an exchange and a sharing of saving values, a dynamic interaction, can take place between Christianity and the other traditions, such that it can result in mutual enrichment.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, the mutual complementarity between the Christian tradition and the other religious traditions as sources of divine truth and grace is *asymmetrical*.<sup>184</sup> By this, he means that the acknowledgment of additional and autonomous values of truth and grace in the other traditions does not cancel out the unsurpassable transcendence of God's revelation and self-

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<sup>180</sup>Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255.

<sup>181</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 263.

<sup>182</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 263.

<sup>183</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 257.

<sup>184</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 257.

communication in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Besides, such transcendence is based on the personal identity of Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God made man. Jesus Christ is personally, “the fullness” of revelation and the accomplishment of the mystery of human salvation. While other religious traditions can find, and are absorbed or dispossessed – the reverse is not true: God’s self-manifestation and self-giving in Jesus Christ are not in need of a true completion by other traditions, even though they are interrelated with the other divine manifestations in the overall realm of God’s self-revelation to humankind, and can be enriched by mutually interacting with other religious traditions. Dupuis argues that the other religious traditions are oriented toward the mystery of Jesus Christ in whom they can find their fullness. However, as *Nostra Aetate* has posited on other religions, the Church “has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlighten all men [women].”<sup>185</sup> This is why we have argued all along that in line with the thinking of Vatican II and, in particular, *Dominus Iesus* that “the Holy Spirit accomplishes salvation in non-Christians also through those elements of truth and goodness present in the various religions; Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 263. however, to hold that these religions, considered as such, are ways of salvation, has no foundation in Catholic theology.”<sup>186</sup> As important as these non-Christian religions are, they are not seen to have something of salvific merit in themselves for the Christian.

O’Collins has pointed out some important changes that have taken place in Dupuis’ writings between his 1997 *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* and his 2002 *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*.<sup>187</sup> One of the most important changes is Dupuis’ qualification of his language about the “complementarity” between Christianity and other religions by calling it “asymmetrical complementarity.”<sup>188</sup> Another notable change is that Dupuis dropped the terminology of the “Logos *asarkos*” (the Word of God in himself and not, or not yet, incarnated) and the “Logos *ensarkos*” (the Word precisely incarnated) and spoke rather of “the Word as such” and “the Word as incarnate.”<sup>189</sup> Most importantly, Dupuis introduced some of the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople (680/81)<sup>190</sup> and St.

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<sup>185</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

<sup>186</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 8.

<sup>187</sup> O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” 634.

<sup>188</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 255-58.

<sup>189</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144-46.

<sup>190</sup> Heinrich Denzinger and P. Hunermann, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationem de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. 43<sup>rd</sup> (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 548.

Thomas Aquinas<sup>191</sup> to support his position about the actions of Christ's divine nature and human nature being "distinct" but inseparable.<sup>192</sup> Dupuis' clarification is firmly rooted in the Christological dogma of the Council of Chalcedon (451).<sup>193</sup> For Dupuis, Chalcedon teaches that the two natures of Jesus Christ, the human and the divine, while being "inseparable," remain "distinct." The same argument applies to the two "actions" or "operations" as was later explained by the Third Council of Constantinople.<sup>194</sup> Dupuis insists that "notwithstanding the personal identity, there is neither 'confusion' nor 'change' between the divine action of the Word and the human action of Jesus Christ."<sup>195</sup> He disagrees with historical monophysitism which conceived the union of both natures and actions in such a way as to allow the human nature to be absorbed by the divine. What resulted from this view was that the human being and doing of Jesus Christ lost its human integrity, authenticity, and specificity. However, Dupuis cautioned against an "inverse monophysitism," that is, a way of reducing the divine nature on the part of the human; while the human nature of Jesus becomes united to the divine Word, the divine attributes and the divine actions of the person of the Word would be lessened, or, at least, reduced in some way and made commensurate with the human nature. Against this "inverse monophysitism," a clear affirmation of the permanent integrity of the divine nature and of the action of the Word, and of their continuing "distinction," is needed. It is from this permanent integrity and continued "distinction" of the divine action of the Word that the possibility of a continuing action of the Word as such is derived, distinct from that which takes place through the humanity of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>191</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3, q.16, a. 10.

<sup>192</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144.

<sup>193</sup> Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, "Chalcedon," in *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed., Cornelius Ernst (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 71: "The fourth Ecumenical Council assembled between October 8<sup>th</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup>, A.D. 451, during the pontificate of Pope Leo I. At the council the following Christological dogma was formulated: "Jesus Christ, God's Logos made Man, is a single Person in two natures, which exist in this one Person without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation (DzH 302). The dogma was defined against Nestorianism, which alleged that there are two persons in Christ, and against the strictly Monophysite doctrine of Eutyches (that two natures in Christ coalesce in one)".

<sup>194</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144.

<sup>195</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144.

### 3.2.6 Responses to Jacques Dupuis

We shall focus on the different reactions by theologians to the theology of Jacques Dupuis on religious pluralism. Since there have been many over the years, only three are examined, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D’Costa and Ilaria Morali.

Jacques Dupuis’ contribution to the relationship between Christianity and other religions has been immense, leading to so many reactions by different theologians, some positive and others negative. In a 2013 article in the *Theological Studies*, Gerald O’Collins evaluated seven authors who have written about Jacques Dupuis’ theology of religions.<sup>196</sup> He noted that the literature and documentation on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* are vast, with Dupuis himself reviewing twenty that appeared in English and twenty-seven in French.<sup>197</sup> In all, there have been over one hundred reviews in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages, as well as articles in journals and chapters in books dedicated, in whole or in part, to a critical evaluation of Dupuis’s views.<sup>198</sup> The thrust of this research does not permit us to examine all these reviews. Suffice it to say, we will look at three theologians whose insights will give us a general overview of the reactions to Dupuis, namely, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D’Costa and Ilaria Morali.

### 3.2.7 Terrence Merrigan on the Church’s Mediation in Dupuis

Terrence Merrigan not only wrote a review on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* but also contributed to the body of works [Frestschrift] in his honour.<sup>199</sup> He examined Dupuis’s work as it concerns the precise role of the Church “with respect to the salvation of those who do not belong to her.”<sup>200</sup> Merrigan asks how does the Church mediate salvation to non-Christians? To answer this question, he refers to Dupuis’s perspective that the Church is an effective instrument of salvation for its own members, but for others exercises only “moral” and “final” causality by interceding for them. This position implies acknowledging an intrinsic mediatory value in non-Christian religions for the salvation of their

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<sup>196</sup> O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” *Theological Studies*, September 2013, Vol. 74, no. 3, 632-653.

<sup>197</sup> O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” 633.

<sup>198</sup> O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” 633.

<sup>199</sup> Terrence Merrigan, “Jacques Dupuis and the Redefinition of Inclusivism,” in *Many and Diverse Ways*, 60-71. For his review see, “Exploring the Frontiers: Jacques Dupuis and the Movement ‘Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism’”, *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998), 338-59; Comité de redaction, “‘Tout récapituler dans le Christ’: A propos de l’ouvrage de J. Dupuis, *Vers une théologie chrétienne du pluralisme religieux*”, *Revue thomiste* 98 (1998), 591-630.

<sup>200</sup> Merrigan, “The Appeal to Congar in Roman Catholic Theology of Religions: The Case of Jacques Dupuis”, in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 427-57.

followers.<sup>201</sup> Dupuis had cited Yves Congar in defending his views on the Church's mediatorial role. However, Merrigan questioned whether Dupuis and Congar agree in attributing the Church's mediation of salvation to those "outside."<sup>202</sup> In Merrigan's close examination of what Dupuis drew from Congar, he was able to identify divergent views. Congar defended a universal role for the Church in mediating salvation "efficiently." Writing in 1971, Congar "declined to conclude that other religions are divinely legitimated *in themselves* and *as such*. Their value derives from the persons who live them"<sup>203</sup> On the other hand, Dupuis took a contrary view. Dupuis expresses his position succinctly when he remarks:

It is then said that, though non-Christians are saved due to the sincerity of their subjective religious life, their religion has for them no objective salvific value. However, the dichotomy on which this restriction is based is seriously inadequate. Subjective and objective religion can be distinguished; they cannot be separated.<sup>204</sup>

For Dupuis, "it is theologically unrealistic to maintain that, though non-Christians can be saved, their religion plays no part in their salvation."<sup>205</sup> Moreover, no concrete religious life is purely natural, no historical religion is merely human. Writing on the exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Dupuis insists that non-Christians religions should be seen not "merely as expressions of human aspirations towards God but [also] as embodying for their followers a first, though incomplete, approach of God to human beings."<sup>206</sup> Merrigan observes that the divergence between Congar and Dupuis is the association of the mediation of salvation with the sacramental nature of the Church. However, the Church is an instrument of salvation for non-Christians, who do not and never will belong to her.

### 3.2.8 Gavin D'Costa a Strong Critique of Dupuis

In this sub-section, I shall analyse Gavin D'Costa's three major criticism of Jacques Dupuis. D'Costa observed that Jacques Dupuis is: 1) A Rahnerian; 2) A Pluralist theologian; 3) Breaks the link between Christology and ecclesiology in his writing.

Gavin D'Costa's reaction to Jacques Dupuis came in the form of two published works; the first, a lengthy review of Dupuis's *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism and Christianity* and the second, *World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of*

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<sup>201</sup> O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate", 635-36.

<sup>202</sup> Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 436-39.

<sup>203</sup> Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 439-57.

<sup>204</sup> Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 439-57.

<sup>205</sup> Merrigan, "The Appeal to Congar," 453.

<sup>206</sup> Jacques Dupuis, "Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI," *Vidyajyoti* 40 (1976), 218-30.



*Religions*.<sup>207</sup> In his review of Dupuis's *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, D'Costa raises three principal concerns: Firstly, he opines that "Dupuis is basically a Rahnerian." D'Costa argues that on the salvific merit of non-Christians, Dupuis "carries on from where Rahner left off".<sup>208</sup> Secondly, D'Costa linked the views of Dupuis (later called "inclusive pluralism" by Dupuis himself) with those of Paul Knitter, regardless of the fact that Dupuis vehemently distanced himself from Knitter's pluralist paradigm.<sup>209</sup> Thirdly, D'Costa argues that Dupuis held that both Christ and the kingdom "can be severed" from the Church", which would suggest that Dupuis "breaks the link between Christology and ecclesiology."<sup>210</sup> O'Collins had drawn attention to the fact that the strong language about "severing" and "breaking" the link between the kingdom of God and the Church seems quite incompatible with what Dupuis wrote about the Church as sacrament of the kingdom.<sup>211</sup> Dupuis contends that although the Church is not identical with the kingdom, it remains the efficacious sign of the reign of God already present in history.<sup>212</sup> With regards to "breaking the link between Christology and ecclesiology" (or between Christ and the Church), Dupuis affirms that Christ remains the head of the Church, with his reign extending beyond the Church: "The kingship of Christ extends not only to the Church but also to the whole world."<sup>213</sup> According to O'Collins, the main area of disagreement between D'Costa and Dupuis is in the extent of the Church's mediatorial activity.

On the mediatorial activity of the Church, specifically, the meditation of salvation through liturgical prayers for all people, D'Costa appeals to Francis Sullivan, who had proposed "the instrumental causality" being at work when the Church prays for all people.<sup>214</sup> On the other hand, Dupuis had appealed to Yves Congar who argued that "the causality involved is not of the order of efficiency but of the moral order and finality."<sup>215</sup> To buttress his

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<sup>207</sup> Gavin D'Costa, *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 910-14; *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 19-23.

<sup>208</sup> D'Costa, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 910, 911.

<sup>209</sup> D'Costa, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 914.

<sup>210</sup> D'Costa, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 911, 912.

<sup>211</sup> O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate", 640-41.

<sup>212</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 353-56.

<sup>213</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 344.

<sup>214</sup> Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?* 158-9. Sullivan here cites LG 8 which states: "Just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the communal structure of the Church serve Christ's Spirit who vivifies it, by way of building the body".

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 350-51. See Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 210-11. Sullivan also refers to LG 10 which asserts: "The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that though all the works of Christian men they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (cf. 1 Pet.2:4-10) ... The ministerial priest, by the sacred power of Christ he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in

point on this question, D'Costa cites no. 6 of the CDF's notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* which asserts: "It must be firmly believed that the Church is sign and instrument of salvation for all people."<sup>216</sup> O'Collins agrees with D'Costa for insisting against Dupuis that it is through instrumental causality that the Church's liturgical prayers mediate salvation. Moreover, merely moral or final causality do not describe adequately what such prayers involve.<sup>217</sup>

Writing in 2010, D'Costa includes Dupuis among theologians he categorized as pluralists. While examining "pluralist arguments", specifically, the writing of Knitter, D'Costa opines: "[Knitter's] emphasis on the Spirit as a way of endorsing other religions as God-given and inspired, without having to have an anonymous Christ present, is to be found in the works of (Roger) Haight, (Georges) Khodr, Knitter, and, with a twist, Dupuis".<sup>218</sup> However, O'Collins has observed that the use of the expression "twist" rather than, for example, "with a small variation" in a theological context attributed to Dupuis is a grave misrepresentation of what he wrote in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. Dupuis posits strongly and persistently that there cannot be separation between "the universal presence and activity of the Word and the Spirit."<sup>219</sup> According to Dupuis, the activity and the presence of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are distinguishable but never separable. Dupuis cites Irenaeus, who insisted that God saves "with two hands" which are "paired", "the Word and the Spirit."<sup>220</sup> For Dupuis, the metaphor of God's two hands means that, "while they are united and inseparable, they are also distinct and complementary in their distinction."<sup>221</sup>

On Dupuis's links to the pluralist theologians, D'Costa claims he "is found guilty of ambiguity on this point in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's notification on his book."<sup>222</sup> Again, O'Collins argues that the literal sense of "guilt" belongs to one's deliberate and deliberately malicious intentions. O'Collins affirms that the CDF explicitly refrained from any judgment about Dupuis's intentions. On the contrary, the CDF simply presented the

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the name of all people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise their priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of holy life, abnegation and active charity."

<sup>216</sup> CDF, Notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, no. 6.

<sup>217</sup> O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate," 642.

<sup>218</sup> Gavin D'Costa, "Pluralist Arguments", in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Survey*, ed. Karl J. Becker and Ilara Morali (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2010), 329-44, at 337.

<sup>219</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 367.

<sup>220</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 7, 4.

<sup>221</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 178-79; See his *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* on "the combined action of God's Word and of his Spirit," 321.

<sup>222</sup> D'Costa, "Pluralist Arguments," 583, no. 65.

teaching of the Church so as to counter “erroneous or harmful opinions” that “could be derived from reading the ambiguous statements and insufficient explanations found in certain sections of the book.”<sup>223</sup> Those sections of the book were never named, asserts O’Collins.

D’Costa claims that Dupuis “makes too sharp a distinction between the *Logos asarkos* and *ensarkos*, which was also raised by the CDF.”<sup>224</sup> This ambiguity was apparent in his *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, but it was clarified in *Christianity and the Religions*. In *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Dupuis distinguished the *Logos asarkos* (the Word of God as such and not, or not yet, incarnated) from *Logos ensarkos* (the Word of God precisely as incarnated). To avoid confusion among his readers from imagining that he was “doubling” the *Logos* and speaking of two “Logoi” or “Words” (one *asarkos* and the other *ensarkos*), Dupuis gave a further explanation. In his new clarification, Dupuis made a distinction in terms of “the action of the Word-to-be incarnate (*Verbum incarnandum*), that is, the Word before the incarnation,” and “the action of the Word incarnate (*Verbum incarnatum*), either in the state of kenosis during his human life or after the resurrection in the glorified state.”<sup>225</sup> Thus, Dupuis distinguished between the action of the Word of God “before the incarnation” and “after the incarnation and resurrection,” and, even more briefly, the Word “as such” and “as incarnate.”<sup>226</sup> Here, Dupuis is simply following in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas where he distinguishes between Christ as “Subsistent subject” or divine agent, on the one hand and, on the other hand, Christ “as (*secundum quod*) man”. As man, Christ is a creature, is not eternal, and begins to exist.<sup>227</sup> For D’Costa, Dupuis needed to be clear in his distinction between the Word “before” and the Word “after” the incarnation, or between the Word “as such” and the Word “as incarnate.”<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The CDF notes in the preface to the notification that: “The present Notification is not meant as a judgment on the author’s [Dupuis] subjective thought, but rather as a statement of the Church’s teaching on certain aspects of the above-mentioned doctrinal truths, and as a refutation of erroneous or harmful opinions, which, prescind from the author’s intentions, could be derived from reading the ambiguous statements and insufficient explanations found in certain sections of the text. In this way, Catholic readers will be given solid criteria for judgment, consistent with the doctrine of the Church, in order to avoid the serious confusion and misunderstanding which could result from reading this book”. See also Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 434-438.

<sup>224</sup> D’Costa, “Pluralist Arguments,” 583.

<sup>225</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 140.

<sup>226</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144-145.

<sup>227</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 16, a. 10.

<sup>228</sup> O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” 646.

### 3.2.9 Ilaria Morali on the Ambiguities in the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis (2010)

We shall examine Ilara Morali's positive affirmation of the contributions of Jacques Dupuis to the discourse on the relationship between Christianity, other religions and non-religions. She insists that Dupuis should be given credit for his contributions to inter-religious dialogue.

Ilaria Morali's contribution to the debate on the writings of Dupuis came in the form of positive affirmation of his work. Her starting point on Dupuis's work is that the Notification issued by the CDF did not condemn him. Conversely, she avers that it recognized Dupuis's "intellectual honesty," and most importantly, expressed no judgment on his "subjective thought."<sup>229</sup> For Ilaria, "it would be an error to reduce or even to associate too closely" the views of Dupuis with those of authors like Knitter and Hick, the way D'Costa has done. Ilaria contends that "Dupuis's method of argumentation, and his tenacious desire to remain firmly anchored in the faith, set him light years apart from the pluralists, who are much less concerned than he about keeping their thought within the confines of orthodoxy."<sup>230</sup> Ilaria refers to *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* where Dupuis proposes what he called "inclusive Christocentrism." Through the use of this term, Dupuis disagreed with "most pluralist authors." Dupuis instead held on to the concept of Christocentrism and Theocentrism suggesting that they do not constitute "two different and (even) opposite points of view, but together constitute the very character of Christian theology, which 'is theocentric insofar as it is Christocentric, and vice versa'."<sup>231</sup> Be that as it may, Ilaria agrees with the CDF that three positions defended by Dupuis in his *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, do "admit to some ambiguity." The ambiguities she identifies as (a) the interpretation of Christ's uniqueness, (b) the way of understanding the saving action of the Spirit, and (c) the salvific value of religions."<sup>232</sup> However, these ambiguities did not stop Morali from acknowledging that Dupuis's work is: "Worthy of appreciation. He must be given credit for having sought to delineate, in harmony with the data of faith, a way *toward* a theology that could somehow incorporate the achievements of the *praxis* of interreligious dialogue, of which he was a first-

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<sup>229</sup> Ilaria Morali, "Salvation, Religions, and Dialogue with Roman Magisterium," 138.

<sup>230</sup> Morali, "Overview of Some Francophone and Italian Trends," in *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>231</sup> Morali, "Overview of Some Francophone and Italian Trends," 326. See also Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), 92, 104-10; Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 186-189.

<sup>232</sup> Morali, "Overview of Some Francophone and Italian Trends," 326.

hand witness for thirty years in India.”<sup>233</sup> Having studied the views of a few selected authors on their contributions to the debate of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions and their salvation, we turn to the response of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. We restrict ourselves in this study to three documents, namely, *Dominus Iesus* and, the two notifications to Jacques Dupuis’s *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* and the notifications to Roger Haight’s *Jesus Symbol of God*.

### **3.3 *Dominus Iesus* a Reaffirmation of Vatican II**

We examine the response of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church to all the various views by theologians. We shall highlight that *Dominus Iesus* is a reaffirmation of Vatican II. It is consistent with Vatican II’s understanding of the Church’s nature, identity and mission.

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* was published 6, August 2000 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Two statements by the declaration generated a lot of reactions. According to the first: “Ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery are not Churches in the proper sense.”<sup>234</sup> The second statement asserts: “If it is also true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.”<sup>235</sup> These two positions have led to different interpretations. With regards to the first statement, it is interpreted as putting down other Churches and ecclesial communities. As for the second statement, it is interpreted as denigrating non-Christian religious traditions. This has led many to conclude that the Declaration is an untimely setback for ecumenical initiative and inter-religious dialogue. Our contention is that the Declaration, rather than being seen as a contradiction of Vatican II and an obstacle to ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, reveals that it is rather consistent with the Vatican II understanding of the Church’s nature, identity and mission.

The Declaration is crystal clear about its aim. The words of the Declaration are instructive here about its purpose which it affirms

Is not to treat in a systematic manner the question of the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain

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<sup>233</sup> Morali, “Overview of Some Francophone and Italian Trends,” 579, no. 97.

<sup>234</sup> *Dominu Iesus*, no. 17.

<sup>235</sup> *Dominu Iesus*, no. 22.

open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous.<sup>236</sup>

It is clear from these words that the purpose of *Dominus Iesus* is more doctrinal than systematic. The purpose can be better appreciated if one views it from the perspective of the Lonerganian distinction between the functional specialty of doctrines, which is the statement of doctrine and the functional specialty of systematics, which is the explication of doctrine.<sup>237</sup> With this observation in mind in respect to *Dominus Iesus*, the purpose is more doctrinal than systematic. Indeed, the Declaration does not propose any new doctrine. What it sets forth has been taught in previous documents of the Church's Magisterium, and these are being proposed to reiterate "certain truths that are part of the Church's faith." A close reading of the citation of sources of the Declaration reveals largely that the teaching of Vatican Council II would have been well represented. It is on this basis that we contend that *Dominus Iesus* represents the doctrinal positions of Vatican II. Equally, it is a reaffirmation and not a repudiation of Vatican II. One way of showing its links with Vatican II is by examining its English title: "On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church." This points out two fundamental preoccupations of the Declaration, namely, what the Church says about herself in relation to other Churches and ecclesial communities, and what the Church says of her Lord. The best hermeneutical principle in the accurate reading of the document is such that what is said of the Church is derived from what is said of Christ. Essentially, Ecclesiology is presented as a derivative of Christology, and a further examination of the document shows its inseparable link with an underlying theology of revelation. This presents us with three layers of reading *Dominus Iesus*: a theology of revelation, a Christology, and an Ecclesiology. The Second Vatican Council proposed a theology of revelation and an ecclesiology but did not dedicate a document to Christology. However, the Christology of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon are taken for granted. It is noteworthy that in the course of setting forth its doctrine on divine revelation, the Second Vatican Council makes its Christological position known.

What does *Dominus Iesus* say about the theology of revelation? The underlying theology of revelation is a reaffirmation of the theology of revelation of Vatican II's *Dei verbum*. On revelation, *Dei verbum* remarks: "By this revelation then, the deepest truth about

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<sup>236</sup> *Dominu Iesus*, no. 3.

<sup>237</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 125-6; 127-33; 133-6. See Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 481- 92.

God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ, who is at the same time the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.”<sup>238</sup> Reaffirmation *Dominus Iesus, Dei verbum* asserts that given the fullness of revelation in Christ

The Christian dispensation therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further and new public revelation before the glorious manifestation our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Tim 6:14 and Tit 2:13).<sup>239</sup> Through the instrumentality of his humanity – that is through his words, deeds and entire history – Jesus fully and definitively reveals God’s salvific ways because his person is the divine Person of the Incarnate Word who is “true God and true man.”<sup>240</sup>

*Dominus Iesus* is simply reminding its readers that in line with Vatican II’s theology of revelation, the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ demands an obedience of faith in which the human creature is to fully submit his or her intellect and will to God.<sup>241</sup> With this interpretation in mind, the Declaration goes on to distinguish between theological faith and belief in the other religions. It argues that theological faith, which is the acceptance in grace of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God is not identical with belief in other religions, which is religious experience in the form of the human quest for the Absolute.<sup>242</sup> Failure to recognize this distinction leads to the reduction and even disappearance of the differences between Christianity and other religions.

In connection with the theology of revelation of Vatican II, or any theology of Christian revelation, *Dominus Iesus* does not propose any new doctrine. It recognizes the sacred writings of other religions. *Dominus Iesus* on the one hand posits that “there are some elements in these texts which may be *de facto* instruments by which countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God”.<sup>243</sup> On the other hand, the Declaration recognizes the traditional teaching of the Church that “reserves the designation of inspired texts to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, since these are inspired by the Holy Spirit”.<sup>244</sup> What is emphasized here is that while the tradition of the Church does not deny that the text of other religions are sacred texts, it explicitly denies that they are inspired texts. Indeed, *Dominus Iesus* acknowledges the

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<sup>238</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 5. See, Vatican II, *Dei verbum*, no. 2.

<sup>239</sup> Vatican II, *Dei verbum*, no. 4; cited in *Dominus Iesus*, no. 5.

<sup>240</sup> Vatican II, *Dei verbum*, 4. Cited in *Dominus Iesus* 6; See Council of Chalcedon, *Symbolum Chalcedonense*: DzHS 301; Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54.3.

<sup>241</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 5.

<sup>242</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, no. 13.

<sup>243</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 8. Other Magisterial texts include, Council of Trent, *Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*: DzH 1501; Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, cap. 2: DzH 3006; Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 11.

<sup>244</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 8.

spiritual riches of these sacred texts of other religions as ways by which God makes himself present in many ways to individuals and to entire peoples, “even when they contain gaps, insufficiencies and errors”, and as receiving their elements of goodness and grace from the mystery of Christ”.<sup>245</sup>

It is apparent that the doctrine of the fullness of revelation in Christ and the doctrine of the unicity and universality of the salvific mystery of Jesus Christ provide mutual support for each other. Moreover, to acknowledge the uniqueness, and to affirm his unicity and uniqueness is to affirm that there is fullness of revelation in him. Christ is unique because “no one knows the Father except the Son and whosoever the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt 11:25). Again, Christ is unique because “no one has seen God... and he alone has revealed him” (Jn 1:18). It is because Christ reveals the Father in a way no one ever did, and it is because this revelation is for salvation that we can say he is the Saviour of the world. Hence, there is no salvation in anyone one else. According to Nicaea, Jesus is able to reveal the Father in such fullness because he is one with the Father. The creedal definition avers:

The Son of God, the Only-Begotten born from the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, born, not made, of one in substance with the Father.<sup>246</sup>

Similarly, the creedal pronouncement of Chalcedon confesses that the:

One and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man...the same one in being with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity... begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born from Mary the Virgin Mother of God.<sup>247</sup>

It is vitally important to note that *Dominus Iesus* is not only an affirmation of Vatican II's theology of revelation in *Dei verbum*, it re-appropriates the Christology of Nicaea, which affirms the divinity of Christ. In the same vein, it reinstates the Chalcedonian Christological doctrine of one Person-two natures. This is a significant theological development because the denial of the teaching of Vatican II on the fullness of revelation in Jesus is contradicted by the consideration of Jesus as a particular, “finite, historical figure, who reveals the divine not in an exclusive way, but in a way complementary with other revelatory and salvific figures,”<sup>248</sup> in which case Jesus would be one medium of divine revelation among many other media. This

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<sup>245</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris mission* 55 and 56; and Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 53.

<sup>246</sup> DzH, 125.

<sup>247</sup> DzH, 301

<sup>248</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 9.



position which is common in much of contemporary theology, is considered by *Dominus Iesus* to be “in profound conflict with the Christian faith.” A further implication of this contradiction of the Christian faith is the neo-Arian position which contradicts the doctrine of Nicaea by denying the divinity of Christ. The Declaration points out that the separation of the Word from Jesus Christ, another common feature of contemporary Christology, would introduce or reintroduce the Nestorian two-Person Christology that was repudiated by Chalcedon. To counter this way of thinking, *Dominus Iesus* cites John Paul II’s *Redemptoris missio*:

To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith... Jesus is the Incarnate Word, a single and indivisible person... Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth; In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts – especially the spiritual treasures – that God has bestowed on people, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the centre of God’s plan of salvation.<sup>249</sup>

From the quotation above, we discern that by virtue of the incarnation, the action of the Word as such cannot be separated from the action of the Word made man without compromising the Christian faith. What this implies is that the operations of the two natures are the operations of one subject, the single person of the Word, in communion with his Spirit.<sup>250</sup> *Dominus Iesus* refers to St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians to maintain its teaching on the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Christ in one salvific economy of the One and Triune God. According to Paul: “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:5-6). Again, in Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the sole mediation of Christ is taught: “God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (Tim 2:4-6). Clearly, the theology of revelation of Vatican II is the starting point and guiding principle of the Christological positions of *Dominus Iesus*, Christological positions which are not new, in so far as they simply repeat Nicaea and Chalcedon. For our study, we can say that the Church recognizes her faith in the creedal statements of the three Councils and, therefore, considers any contradiction of these creedal statements to be “in profound conflict” with her faith. Since our concern is with non-Christian religions and people of no religion, we will not go into details of what the Declaration

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<sup>249</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 6; cited in *Dominus Iesus*, no. 10.

<sup>250</sup> St. Leo the Great, Letter to the Emperor Leo I, *Promississe me memini*: DzH 318: “... *in tantam unitatem ab ipso conceptu Virginis deitate et humanitate conserta, ut nec sine homine divina, nec sine Deo agerentur humana*”. See also DzH 317. Cited in *Dominus Iesus*, no. 10.

says about other “ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery.”<sup>251</sup> This would entail an exposition that is in the realm of the Church’s self-understanding in relation to other Christian churches. Since our focus and subject is not ecumenism but dialogue with people of other religions, we will make a bird’s eye examination of what *Dominus Iesus* means when it posits: “If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.”<sup>252</sup> This statement is in the realm of inter-religious dialogue.

The statement of *Dominus Iesus*, which insists that followers of other religions are *objectively speaking* in a gravely deficient situation is to be seen against the background of the words of the Nicæan-Constantinopolitan Creed. Accordingly, the Church professes faith in Jesus Christ, “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one in substance with the Father.” Again, we observe that *Dominus Iesus* points to a movement from Christology to other religions in relation to salvation supported by the teaching of Vatican II which affirmed:

The Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way to salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door.<sup>253</sup>

The position of *Dominus Iesus* is that Christ is the one Mediator, who is indispensable for salvation, the Church that is mysteriously united to him has, in God’s plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being. The Declaration echoes John Paul II’s distinction between a mysterious relationship and a formal relationship between Christ and his Church. In the first place, a human being may be related to Christ and the Church in a way that we cannot objectively grasp. Such an experience cannot be classified as a formal relationship with Christ and his Church but a mysterious relationship. This is possible because the salvific grace, which God bestows on such persons is “in ways known to himself.”<sup>254</sup> For *Dominus*

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<sup>251</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 17.

<sup>252</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, no. 22.

<sup>253</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 14. Cited in *Dominus Iesus* 20. See *Ad gentes* 7 which affirms that: “The reason for missionary activity lies in the will of God, ‘who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, himself a man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all’ (1 Tim 2:4-5), ‘neither is there salvation in any other’ (Acts 4:12).”

<sup>254</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris mission*, no. 10; Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, no. 7.

*Jesus*, the grace that makes this possible comes from Christ's sacrifice on the cross and is communicated by the Holy Spirit.

When the Declaration talks about other religions in terms of those who are, objectively speaking, in a gravely deficient situation, it is making a comparison between them and those who are in a formal relationship with Christ by way of a formal relationship with the Church. However, the absence of this formal relationship is not necessarily the absence of any relationship. What is being denied is not the total absence of any relationship but the absence of a formal relationship because the followers of other religions are possible recipients of grace through a mysterious relationship.

### **3.3.1 Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis**

We have alluded to this *Notification* earlier. Here I shall examine in more details the *Notification* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF] on Dupuis's book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. We shall highlight that the CDF's *Notification* on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* was not a condemnation, but rather that it sorts clarifications in certain areas of his writing, where there might be ambiguity or might lead his readers to error.

Subsequent to the publication of the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis in 1997, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) started an investigation, which culminated in a notification published on January 24, 2001. The CDF clarified that "his (Dupuis's) book contained notable ambiguities and difficulties on important doctrinal points, which could lead a reader to erroneous or harmful opinions."<sup>255</sup> Critical areas of concern for the CDF included: "the interpretation of the sole and universal salvific mediation of Christ, the unicity and completeness of Christ's revelation, the universal salvific action of the Holy Spirit, the orientation of all people to the Church, and the value and significance of the salvific function of other religions."<sup>256</sup> The CDF stated clearly that the *Notification* is not meant as a judgment on the author's subjective thought, but rather as a statement of the Church's teaching on certain aspects of the above-mentioned doctrinal truths. Equally, it served as a refutation of erroneous or harmful opinions, which, prescinding from

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<sup>255</sup> CDF, "Preface," in *Notification on the Book Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J., 24 January 2001.

<sup>256</sup> CDF, "Preface."

the author's intentions, could be derived from reading the ambiguous statements and insufficient explanations.<sup>257</sup>

The first clarification is “on the sole and universal salvific mediation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>258</sup> The Notification on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis posits that Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, crucified and risen, is the sole and universal mediator of salvation for all humanity. Similarly, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary and only Saviour of the world, is the Son and Word of the Father. Accordingly, the unity of the divine plan of salvation is centred in Jesus Christ and the salvific action of the Word is accomplished in and through Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the Father, mediator of salvation for all humanity.<sup>259</sup> Indeed, it is contrary to Catholic faith not only to posit a separation between the Word and Jesus, or between the Word's salvific activity and that of Jesus, but also to maintain that there is a salvific activity of the Word as such in his divinity, independent of the humanity of the Incarnate Word.<sup>260</sup>

“On the Unicity and Completeness of Revelation of Jesus Christ,” the CDF insist that Jesus Christ is the mediator, the fulfilment, and the completeness of revelation.<sup>261</sup> It goes further to highlight that it is contrary to the Catholic faith to maintain that revelation in Jesus Christ (or the revelation of Jesus Christ) is limited, incomplete, or imperfect. The CDF restates the position of the Church in both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Dominus Iesus* by explaining that “although full knowledge of divine revelation will be had only on the day of the Lord's coming in glory, the historical revelation of Jesus Christ offers everything necessary for man's salvation and has no need of completion by other religions.”<sup>262</sup> Therefore, it is consistent with Catholic doctrine to hold that the seeds of truth and goodness that exist in other religions are a certain participation in truths contained in the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> CDF, “Preface.”

<sup>258</sup> CDF, “On the Sole and Universal Salvific Mediation of Jesus Christ,” no. 1.

<sup>259</sup> CDF, “On the Sole and Universal Salvific Mediation of Jesus Christ,” no. 2.

<sup>260</sup> CDF, “On the Sole and Universal Salvific Mediation of Jesus Christ,” no. 2. See John Paul II, *Redemptoris missionis*, no. 6; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 10.

<sup>261</sup> CDF, “On the Unicity and Completeness of Revelation of Jesus Christ,” no. 3. See Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, no. 2, no. 4; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 14-15, 92, AAS 91 (1999): 5-88; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 5.

<sup>262</sup> CDF, “On the Unicity and Completeness of Revelation of Jesus Christ,” no. 3. See *Dominus Iesus*, no. 6; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas Publications), 65-66.

<sup>263</sup> CDF, “On the Unicity and Completeness of Revelation of Jesus Christ,” no. 4. See *Lumen gentium*, no. 17; Vatican II, Decree on Mission *Ad gentes*, no. 11; Vatican II, Declaration on Relations with Non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate*, no. 2.

However, the CDF rejects the view that such elements of truth and goodness, or some of them, do not derive ultimately from the source-mediation of Jesus Christ.<sup>264</sup>

In reference to the universal salvific action of the Holy Spirit, the CDF insists that the Holy Spirit, working after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is always the Spirit of Christ sent by the Father, who works in a salvific way in Christians as well as non-Christians. Hence, the CDF restates the Church's traditional position that it is contrary to its teaching to hold that the salvific action of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the one universal salvific economy of the Incarnate Word.<sup>265</sup>

On the orientation of all human beings to the Church, the CDF affirms that the Church is the instrument of salvation for all people. It objects to the view which considers the different religions of the world as ways of salvation complementary to the Church. It clarifies that the Church's teaching, which is that the followers of other religions are oriented to the Church and are called to become part of her.<sup>266</sup>

On the value and salvific function of the Religious Traditions, the CDF maintains the position of Vatican II which remarks: "Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as preparations for the Gospel."<sup>267</sup> The CDF asserts vehemently that:

It is legitimate to maintain that the Holy Spirit accomplishes salvation in non-Christians also through those elements of truth and goodness present in the various religions; however, to hold that these religions, considered as such, are ways of salvation, has no foundation in Catholic theology, also because they contain omissions, insufficiencies, and errors regarding fundamental truths about God, man, and the world.<sup>268</sup>

Here again, we see that the *Notification* on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Dupuis does not deviate from tradition. The different religions are not viewed as means of salvation in the Christian sense. In the same vein, their scriptural texts are not considered to be

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<sup>264</sup> CDF, "On the Unicity and Completeness of Revelation of Jesus Christ," no. 4. See *Lumen gentium*, no. 16; *Redemptoris missio*, no. 10.

<sup>265</sup> CDF, "On the Universal Salvific Action of the Holy Spirit," no. 5; John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, no. 5.

<sup>266</sup> CDF, "On the Orientation of All Human Beings to the Church," no. 7. See Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, no. 13, no. 16; *Ad gentes*, no. 7; *Dignitatis humanae*, 1; *Redemptoris missio*, no. 10; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, 20-22; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 845.

<sup>267</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 16; *Redemptoris missio*, 29.

<sup>268</sup> CDF, "On the Value and Salvific Function of the Religious Tradition," 8.

complementary to the Old Testament, which is the immediate preparation for the Christ event.<sup>269</sup>

The *Notification* on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Dupuis goes to show the lasting significance and challenge of his views. Of great importance is that the CDF refrained from making a judgment on the book, a point earlier made by O'Collins.<sup>270</sup> We agree with Morali, who judges Dupuis's work to be worthy of appreciation.

### 3.3.2 Notification on the book “*Jesus Symbol of God*” by Roger Haight

We shall examine the notification by the CDF on Roger Haight's book *Jesus Symbol of God*. We shall highlight that unlike Dupuis, Haight's book was judged to contain serious doctrinal errors regarding certain fundamental truths of faith.

In 1999, Roger Haight, a Jesuit priest and professor of historical and systematic theology at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published a book *Jesus Symbol of God*.<sup>271</sup> The book was judged by the CDF to contain serious doctrinal errors regarding certain fundamental truths of faith. Some of the statements in *Jesus Symbol of God*, which were considered to be contrary to truths of divine and Catholic faith included: “The pre-existence of the Word, the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, the salvific value of the death of Jesus, the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus and of the Church, and the resurrection of Jesus. The negative critique included also the use of an inappropriate theological method.”<sup>272</sup>

The CDF raised concern about Haight's explanation that today theology must be done in dialogue with the postmodern world, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to establish a “critical correlation” between the data of faith, revelation and tradition, and the modes and qualities of postmodern thought, characterized in part by a radical historical and pluralistic consciousness.<sup>273</sup> Haight suggests that with regards to the validity of dogmatic, especially Christological, formulations in a postmodern cultural and linguistic context, which is different

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<sup>269</sup> CDF, “On the Value and Salvific Function of the Religious Tradition,” 8. See Council of Trent, Decree *De libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*, DzH 1501; First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* 2, DzH 3006; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, 8.

<sup>270</sup> O' Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: Ongoing Debates,” 649. See *Ibid.*, 189; 190.

<sup>271</sup> CDF, Notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the book, *Jesus Symbol of God*, (December 13, 2004; published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 7-8, 2005); Roger Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 507-514. [www.vatican.va/.../rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_200041213-notification-fr-haight\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../rc_con_cfaith_doc_200041213-notification-fr-haight_en.html) (Accessed February 7, 2019).

<sup>272</sup> CDF, “Introduction,” no. 2.

<sup>273</sup> CDF, “Theological Method,” no. 1.

from the one in which they were composed, these formulations should not be ignored, but neither should they be uncritically repeated, “because they do not have the same meaning in our culture as they did when they were formulated... Therefore, one has no choice but to engage the classical councils and to explicitly interpret them for our own period.”<sup>274</sup> The CDF points out that Haight’s interpretation does not convey the immutable meaning of the dogmas as understood by the faith of the Church, nor does it clarify their meaning, enhancing understanding. Instead, the Author’s interpretation results in a reading that is not only different from, but also contrary to, the true meaning of the dogmas. Furthermore, the CDF insists that “these methodological positions lead to a seriously reductive and misleading interpretation of the doctrines of the faith, resulting in erroneous propositions”.<sup>275</sup>

The CDF also raised concern about Haight’s interpretation of the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus and the Church. For Haight, Jesus is “normative” for Christians, but “non-constitutive” for other religious mediations.”<sup>276</sup> Besides, he argues that “God alone effects salvation and Jesus’s universal mediation is not necessary.”<sup>277</sup> According to our Author, “God acts in the lives of human beings in a plurality of ways outside of Jesus and the Christian sphere”.<sup>278</sup> For this reason, Haight opines that it is necessary to move beyond christocentrism to theocentrism, which “cuts the necessity of binding God’s salvation to Jesus of Nazareth alone.”<sup>279</sup> On the question of the universal mission of the Church, Haight is of the view that it is necessary for the Church to have “the ability to recognize other religions as mediators of God’s salvation on a par with Christianity.”<sup>280</sup> Moreover, he contends that it “is impossible in postmodern culture to think that [...] one religion can claim to inhabit the centre into which all others are to be drawn. These myths or metanarratives are simply gone.”<sup>281</sup> In response to these views, the CDF observed that Haight’s theological position fundamentally denies the universal salvific mission of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:4-6; Jn 14:16) and, as a consequence, the mission of the Church to announce and communicate the gift of Christ the Saviour to all humanity (cf. Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Eph 3:8-11), both of which are given

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<sup>274</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 16.

<sup>275</sup> CDF, “Theological Method,” no.1.

<sup>276</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 403.

<sup>277</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 405.

<sup>278</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 412.

<sup>279</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 417.

<sup>280</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 415.

<sup>281</sup> Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 333.

clear witness in the New Testament and have always been proclaimed as the faith of the Church, even in recent documents.<sup>282</sup>

In all, the *Notification on Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight has been judged by the CDF to contain some assertions, which have serious doctrinal errors contrary to the divine and Catholic faith of the Church. In the case of the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis, it was judged to contain ambiguities and difficulties on important doctrinal points, which could lead a reader to erroneous or harmful opinions. There is a vast difference between the two Notifications from the CDF, both under Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. One is more severe than the other because of their respective positions on the salvific merit of other religions. The CDF did not reject or condemn but only sort clarifications on some ambiguous statements on the part of Jacques Dupuis which might lead Christians to error in understanding other religions as mediating salvation like Christianity. This position is unacceptable since we have only one Mediator, the Christ. In the case of the *Notification* on the book *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight, the *Notification* by the CDF was more severe. Haight like other pluralist theologians, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter claims that salvation is mediated through these other religions. This assertion, contained in his book is judged to be of serious doctrinal error contrary to the divine and catholic faith of the Church. These *Notifications* assert the significance of doctrinal explanations being compatible with the teachings of scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, the teaching of the Ecumenical Councils, and the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen the consistency in the development of doctrine. The Second Vatican Council responded to Pope John XXIII's call for "a new order of personal relations" with people of other religions.<sup>283</sup> The aftermath of Vatican II was that the collective conscience of the Catholic Church underwent a sea change in its perspective on other faiths – not only Judaism but also Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and other world religions. Vatican II became the first council in the two-thousand-year history of the Church to speak positively of the religions, recognizing positive values in them. With positive texts in the documents of the council regarding other religious traditions like "seeds of the Word,"<sup>284</sup> "a ray of the Truth

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<sup>282</sup> CDF, "The Holy Trinity," no. 4.

<sup>283</sup> John XXIII, AAS 54 (1962): 785-95; trans. *Catholic Mind* 60 (December 1962): 48-52, at 50, 52.

<sup>284</sup> Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, no. 11, no. 15.



which enlightens all men and women,”<sup>285</sup> elements of “truth and grace,”<sup>286</sup> there could be no going back to a suspicious and often hostile past. Of great significance is that Vatican II never regarded the other religions as “ways” of salvation for their followers, it does that only in relationship with the Christ event of salvation. It strongly declared that Christ is the unique mediator and way to salvation. Adding that if Christ is necessary for salvation, so is his one body, the Church, for the two are intimately united.<sup>287</sup>

Despite the openness of the council, it did not represent the final word as we have seen in the theological reflections after the council. In a foreword to *De Lubac: A Guide to the Perplexed*, Avery Cardinal Dulles pointed out that: “The Second Vatican Council seems to bear many traces of de Lubac’s influence, notably in what it has to say on Christ as the centre of history, Scripture and tradition, the catholicity of the Church, the Church as sacrament, the theology of mission, religious freedom, the Jews, Buddhism, and Marxist atheism.”<sup>288</sup> He insists that even if de Lubac did not intervene on all these questions, his writings prior to the Council greatly influenced the assembled Fathers.

The chapter also highlights the innovative theological developments shortly before and after the Second Vatican II. Rahner introduces the concept of “anonymous Christian,” according to which, there is no grace for salvation but the grace of Christ, of which the Church of Christ is the tangible, historical presence in the world. He emphasizes that Christianity is the absolute religion destined for all of humanity, after the coming of which all religions are objectively abrogated. More than twenty years after Vatican II, Jacques Dupuis proposes “inclusive pluralism” in order to promote openness and inter-religious dialogue. These interpretations underwent a lot of scrutiny culminating in reactions from different theologians and notifications by the CDF as in the case of *Towards a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Dupuis and *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight. The notifications were reminders that when engaging with other religions, the Catholic faith is to be analysed and developed without ambiguity and contradiction of Sacred Scripture, the tradition of the Church Fathers and the teaching of Magisterium of the Catholic Church. How to interpret the unicity and universality of Christ in the context of a plural society like Nigeria will be the subject of our next chapter.

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<sup>285</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

<sup>286</sup> Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, no. 9.

<sup>287</sup> Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and The Promise of Salvation*, 42.

<sup>288</sup> David Grummet, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), viii.

## Chapter 4: The Points of Convergence in the Religious Context of Nigeria

### Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we provided a survey of responses to our problematic: While non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church, as de Lubac makes clear, there are a range of views on how this takes place. Our task in this chapter is to make an exposition of the nature of religious pluralism in Nigeria in the light of our problematic, which is that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation. We underscore the fact that de Lubac is an inclusive pluralist, who insists that all humanity is connected to Christ, by virtue of creation, not in an external way, but organically.<sup>1</sup>

This organic link is incapable of being lost. It is for this reason that all can speak something of the truth that is Christ, a reference to the Catholicity of Truth, a point we vehemently made in the second chapter of this research. Another Lubacian theme which will guide us to find common grounds especially with African Traditional Religion is de Lubac's "passion for the destiny of a common humanity; a keen sense of the greatness of God and his mystery".<sup>2</sup> This is based on the creation of the human person in the image of God. In this way, de Lubac anticipates Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* which sets the foundation for a Christian understanding of the Church's relationship to world religions: their common origin from God; their common destiny in God according to God's design of salvation for humankind.<sup>3</sup>

For our context, we identify three dominant religions in Nigeria; Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). While on the one hand, Christianity and Islam are religions of revelation and have revelatory texts in the Bible for Christians and Qur'an for Muslims, ATR, on the other hand, is not. However, followers of ATR have a religious sense. They have a strong belief in a Supreme deity and, at the same time, a belief in a multitude of deities presumed to be lesser in authority than the Supreme deity. Our intention is to find the communality and divergence between this non-revelatory religion and the revelatory ones, especially Christianity and Islam. As a result of the uniqueness of ATR, we will describe its features before finding common grounds with Christianity and Islam. We will point out the relevance of Henri de Lubac's argument that other religions and revelations are preparatory to Christianity by referring to his understanding of monotheism. Similarly, our interrogation of ATR will be in the light of de Lubac's writings on the Church as the locus of mysticism. We will show how de Lubac recognises that God acts in all people including followers of ATR.

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<sup>1</sup>Henri de Lubac, *Petite catéchèse sur Nature et Grâce* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1980), 10. English translation: *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Jacques Guillet, *La Théologie Catholique en France, de 1914 à 1960* (Paris: Mediasèvres, 1988), 33.

<sup>3</sup>Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965, no. 2.

Similarly, we will highlight what de Lubac intends, when he says that all salvation comes “through the church.” After all, for de Lubac, the only grace by which we are redeemed is the grace of Christ it is also in some sense the grace of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter we will highlight how on the basis of de Lubac’s understanding of the creation of the human person in the image of God the human person has the capacity for God. This includes not only the desire for God and the knowledge of God, but also the experience of union with God. Besides, our research will draw attention to how de Lubac’s theological principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth can be applied to enhance dialogue between these three religions in order to minimize conflict between them.

This chapter will examine Islam in considerable detail. It will highlight the fragmentations within it, emphasizing the extraordinary difficulty of going into dialogue with certain types of Islam like Boko Haram. The focus will be to demonstrate that one extreme group does not represent the whole of Islam in Nigeria. In addition, the chapter will analyse the writings of local Nigerian theologians, Marinus C. Iwuchukwu and Elochukwu E. Uzukwu. We will begin by examining Iwuchukwu who applies Jacques Dupuis’ “Inclusive Pluralism” in the context of inter-religious dialogue in Northern Nigeria. This will be followed by Uzukwu who refers to the African imagery of leadership with “large ears.” We see a close connection between this and de Lubac’s Principle of Auscultation. Applying it to our work means that listening “with large ears” ensures that the Christian identity is preserved in its integrity, while engaging in dialogue with other religions.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines ATR. It highlights the fact that African Traditional Religion is not a revelatory religion in the sense that we understand Christianity and Islam. It does not have an individual or persons, who founded the religion. It is a lived religion and has features that are both similar and different from Christianity and Islam. Investigating these points of convergence and divergence will go a long way in clarifying to our problematic, which is that there is no salvation apart from Christ, but, at the same time, no one is necessarily excluded from this salvation. This is because the grace of Christ is of universal application. We retrieve de Lubac’s writings on this view and apply his universal outlook of salvation to include worshippers of ATR. The section emphasizes that ATR is not only indigenous to Africa but has existed along both Christianity and Islam,

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<sup>4</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 130-131.

allowing them to thrive without much hostility. This points to the type of conciliatory attitude that is much needed in a religiously plural society like Nigeria.

The second section reviews Islam as a religion in northern Nigeria. We highlight the fact that Islam is not monolithic. Within Nigerian Islam, there are differing interpretations of doctrines and different attitudes to non-Muslims. We will draw attention to the extraordinary difficulty of going into dialogue with certain types of Islam like Boko Haram. Our contention is that one extreme group does not represent the whole of Islam.

The third section explores Nigerian Christianity in the midst of other religions. It focuses on the fragmentations within Christianity and how this lack of theological unity in approach leads to different attitudes towards people of other religions and no religions. Equally, we review the theological approaches of two Nigerian theologians, Marinus C. Iwuchukwu and Elochudwu E. Uzukwu who have offered their theological responses to the situation in Nigeria. We now begin with an exposition of the religious context of Nigeria.

#### **4.1 Religious Context of Nigeria**

Nigeria's current population is about 201, 021,495 as of Wednesday, July 10, based on the latest United Nations estimates.<sup>5</sup> This makes it Africa's most populous nation. It also makes Nigeria's population almost twice that of all West African countries combined. The country has a large number of ethnic groups (about 350) making it the highest in Africa. With the fairly even population between Christians and Muslims, there are equally different views on the religious affinities of the population. Although Christianity and Islam are nearly equally divided, the exact ratio is uncertain. According to the *CIA World Fact Book*, July 2018, the division is as follows: Muslims 51.6 %, Roman Catholic 11.2%, Other Christians 35.7%, Traditionalist .9%, Unspecified .5%.<sup>6</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in its survey indicates that the number of Christians in the population of Nigeria that is Christian is 80,510,000.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the variation, it is still true that Nigeria has both the largest number of Muslims and largest number of Christians in the region. The relative sizes of both the Muslim and Christian populations have made an accurate data a major bone of contention. As

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<sup>5</sup> *Worldometers*, "Nigeria Population", [www.worldometer.info/world-population/nigeria-population](http://www.worldometer.info/world-population/nigeria-population) (Accessed October 7, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> *CIA World Fact Book*, <https://www.cia.gov> (Accessed March 3, 2019). The figures are based on their 2013 estimates.

<sup>7</sup> *Pew Research Centre: Forum on Religion and Public Life*, [www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18global-religious-landscape-exec/](http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18global-religious-landscape-exec/) (Accessed July 7, 2019). See Religion in Nigeria [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nigeria) (Accessed July 17, 2019).

Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Mukhtar U. Bunza have observed: “What is not in doubt, however, is that in the nineteen states that make up the three northern geo-political zones of the country, Muslims are a majority, along with a significant Christian minority and a generous sprinkling of followers of African Traditional Religions.”<sup>8</sup> In the same vein, there are significant variations in the distribution of Muslims between these states. The states in the north-west zone have the highest percentage of Muslims in their total population, followed by the states in the north-east and the north-central zones in the descending order.<sup>9</sup> For Abiodun Alao, “the widely held assumption is that the religious division of the country also falls in line with Nigeria’s ethno-geographical divide, with the North being largely Muslims, the East being mostly Christians, and the West an admixture of Christians, Muslims and Traditional Religion adherents.”<sup>10</sup> Alao is of the opinion that “this assumption, while largely correct, is still somewhat simplistic. Although Muslim adherents dominate the Northern population, the region is far from being religiously monolithic. There are specific sections of Northern Nigeria that are largely Christian.”<sup>11</sup>

An important issue affecting all these religions in recent years is the challenge of religious pluralism resulting in competing doctrinal claims leading to proliferation and fragmentation. In the light of different understandings of revelation, our concern is to point out that while on the one hand, “Christianity proclaims Jesus Christ as the centre, summit, and fullness of all revelation,” on the other hand, “Christianity is good news about God’s saving designs for humanity as a whole.”<sup>12</sup> Certainly, it is not just good news for Christians. However, as Avery Cardinal Dulles remarks, “Christianity contains, therefore, an inbuilt tension between particularism and universalism.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it is not surprising to find some Christians saying that there is not revelation apart from Jesus Christ, and others saying that God reveals himself to every human being.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter, we acknowledge that there is positive value in all religions without relativizing the traditional claims of Christianity. We shall proceed with an examination of African Traditional Religion and, how in a lot of ways, it is a preparation for Christianity.

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<sup>8</sup> Abdul Raufu Mustapha & Mukhtar U. Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Abdul Raufu Mustapha (Suffolk, GB: James Currey, 2014), 54.

<sup>9</sup> Raufu & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” 54.

<sup>10</sup> Abiodun Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” in *Country Report*, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” 11.

<sup>12</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 177.

<sup>13</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 177.

<sup>14</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 177.

#### 4.1.1 African Traditional Religion: Structure and Features

The Africa that we are referring to is Africa south of the Sahara Desert or sub-Saharan Africa. Our examination of African Traditional Religion is only in the light of our problematic. It is in the light of this that we highlight some key features of ATR; 1) Belief in God or a Supreme being; 2) It is a lived religion; 3) Communion between the living and the dead and 4) Communal Life. These have themes are theological potential of meeting with the other Abrahamic faith (Gen 7:20; 21:18-21). Our examination is by way of comparison of the convergence and divergence between ATR, Christianity, and Islam. Suffice it to note that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are called “Abrahamic religions” because they are monotheistic religions that are closely related in their origins and their beliefs.<sup>15</sup> Although their beliefs differ in some important aspects, these religions have a common origin as expressed in their holy books – Torah, Bible, and Qur’an. It is our contention that on the basis of de Lubac’s understanding that all humanity is connected to Christ by virtue of creation, not in an external way, but organically and, by de Lubac’s passion for the destiny of a common humanity, we can extend the possibility of dialogue with believers of ATR.

What do we mean by African Traditional Religion? Joseph Omosade Awolalu, is of the opinion that “African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.) is the indigenous religion of Africans.”<sup>16</sup> It is the form of religion practised and embraced by the forebears of the present generation of Africans, going back many hundreds and thousands of years. John S. Mbiti suggests that “we speak of African traditional religions in the plural because there are about one thousand African peoples (tribes), and each has its own religious system,”<sup>17</sup> Researchers in the past have given negative reading to this religion describing it as “primitive,” “savage,” “magic” and lacking in either imagination or emotion.<sup>18</sup> It is not within the scope of this research to examine these views as it has been carefully analysed by other authors.<sup>19</sup> Since Africa is such a vast continent

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<sup>15</sup> John Hick and Edmund S. Meltzer, eds. *Three Faiths – One God: A Jewish, Christian, Muslim Encounter* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Omosade Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, ed., Jacob K. Olupona (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1991), 111.

<sup>17</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1.

<sup>18</sup> J. N. D. Anderson, ed., *The World’s Religions*, third edition (London: 1960), 9.

<sup>19</sup> There is enormous literature on the negative understanding of African Traditional Religion as misunderstood by early writers of the religion. These writers include: E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: E. T., 1915); J. Frazer, *Totemica* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1937); B. Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); E. O. James, *The Origin of Religion* (London: Unicorn Press, 1937); P. Radin, *Primitive Religion* (London: The Viking Press, 1937); R. Allier, *The Mind of the Savage* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1929). Also see E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: SPCK, 1954); A.C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion* (London: Penguin Books, 1942); W. Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, Vol. IV, Münster 1933.

with a large population (1,321,051,204) and ethnic groups, we limit our immediate context to Nigeria which is in West Africa. Mbiti describes this African indigenous religions in this way: “African Religion is the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers and mothers, that is men, women and children of former generations.”<sup>20</sup> For Mbiti, “they [forebears] formed religious ideas, they formulated religious beliefs, they observed religious ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community.”<sup>21</sup> There are five key characteristics of ATR which have convergence with Christianity and Islam; belief in God or a Supreme being; it is a lived religion; communion between the living and the dead; communal Life; the practice of prayer.

#### **4.1.2 Convergence between ATR, Christianity and Islam**

#### **4.1.3 Belief in God or a Supreme Being**

The post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* asserts that “Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world.”<sup>22</sup> This perspective was already commonly accepted by African scholars like John Mbiti who maintained that all African peoples believe in God so much so that they take this belief for granted.<sup>23</sup> It is also at the centre of African Religion and dominates all its other beliefs. David Westerlund has suggested that a close examination of the literature by leading African scholars like E. B. Idowu, J. S. Mbiti and Vincent Mulago point to the fact that there is a pyramidal picture of African religions with God, the creator, at the top, and under Him or Her a number of superhuman beings such as divinities and nature spirits.<sup>24</sup> These beings are thought of as “intermediaries” between God and human beings. Due to their intermediary role, God is clearly the highest and most important being, not only in areas where there is an elaborate cult of God but also in areas where the cult primarily concerns the intermediary

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<sup>20</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Second Edition (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa), 33.

<sup>23</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 45. Other detailed surveys of the concept of God in Africa include: E. W. Smith, ed., *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (London: Edinburgh Press, 1950); John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970); H. Sawyerr, *God: Ancestor or Creator? Aspects of Traditional Belief in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone* (London: Longman, 1970).

<sup>24</sup> David Westerlund, “ ‘Insiders’ and ‘Outsiders’ in the Study of African Religions: Notes on some Problems of Theory and Method,” in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, 17. See E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973); John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969); Vincent Molago, *La Religion Traditionelle des Bantu et leur vision du Monde*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kinshasa: Faculté de Theologie Catholique, 1980).

beings. Writing about his African heritage, Vincent Mulago notes that “God, who is the source of everything positive in our cultural patrimony, is at the same time the author of the Christian revelation”.<sup>25</sup> It is on this ground that we argue that the understanding of God in ATR is close to what we find in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Still, on the understanding of God in ATR, Mulago insists that “the Supreme Being, God, is at the summit. He is conceived as the original source of all life and of all the resources of life, the Father of mankind and of things, who covers for everything he has created with his divine providence.”<sup>26</sup> Mulago opines that “if it were not for prejudices and for ignorance of the technical terms indicating the Supreme Being in indigenous languages, there would have been no problem, since the idea of God among black Africans – at least among the Bantu we have been able to study – seems one of the purest ever encountered in the course of history.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Mbiti maintains that African Christians seem to accommodate Christianity readily into their traditional world-view. He posits that this is taking place particularly around the notion of God. For Mbiti, “African Christians give up certain ideas, beliefs and practices in their traditional life, and assimilate newer understanding of God’s dealing with men (and women) as proclaimed in Christianity.”<sup>28</sup> Through their encounter with Christianity, Africans acquire the vision for a new hope for men and women being united with God at the end of the ages, a concept foreign to ATR. Christianity seems to fulfil a great need in the African world view, which had no hope of rediscovering those lost gifts such as immortality, resurrection and the making of all things new again. Besides, there are many morals and ethics in Christianity which Africans find to be similar to their own traditional morals.<sup>29</sup>

According to Geoffrey Parrinder, “most African peoples have clear beliefs in a Supreme God, and others while less clear at least have some spiritual beliefs.”<sup>30</sup> Laurenti Magesa opines that in ATR, “the supremacy of God above all created order is the starting point.”<sup>31</sup> Magesa posits that “it is because of the place God occupies in the universal order of things that human beings can even speak of their own existence, let alone their tradition.”<sup>32</sup> Although there is a

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<sup>25</sup> Mulago, “Traditional African Religion and Christianity,” 129.

<sup>26</sup> Mulago, “Traditional African Religion and Christianity,” 130.

<sup>27</sup> Mulago, “Traditional African Religion and Christianity,” 130. See M. Pauwels, *Imana et le culte des Manes au Ruanda* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Sciences Coloniales, ARSC, 1958), 58.

<sup>28</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 189.

<sup>29</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 189-90.

<sup>30</sup> Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 40.

<sup>32</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, 40.



strong sense of God, there is no record of the origin of the concept of God in ATR. This is because the religion has largely been an oral one for a long time. However, Mbiti has suggested three possible explanations of its origin.<sup>33</sup>

Firstly, people came to believe in God through reflecting on the universe. For Mbiti, belief in God may have arisen from people's reflections concerning the universe. This is because most African peoples believe the universe to have been created. They realized at an early stage of their development that the vast and complex universe must have been created by someone whom they identified as God.<sup>34</sup>

The second possible reason given by Mbiti for the belief in God is that African people realized their limitations and weaknesses. They realized how limited their powers and knowledge were when it came to crucial issues like death, calamity, and the forces of nature (such as thunderstorms, earthquakes, mighty rivers and great forests), which they could not control, or could control only in a small way. This led them to conclude that there must be someone greater than themselves and greater than the world. They regarded this person to be God.<sup>35</sup>

The third factor that might have led to the belief in God in ATR according to Mbiti is that people observed the forces of nature. They speculated on the powers of weather, storms, thunder and lightning, and the phenomena of night and day, together with the expanse of the sky with its sun, moon and stars. Similarly, they reflected on their dependence on nature. All these realities led them to believe that there is a God.<sup>36</sup>

Emmanuel Bolaji Idowu like Mbiti posits that there is an unmistakable basic pattern that stands out when it comes to the concept of God in Africa; God is real to Africans; God is unique; God is absolute controller of the universe; and God is One, the only God of the universe.<sup>37</sup> Idowu cites Baudin who remarks that "in these religious systems, the idea of a God is fundamental ... there is the abundant testimony of the existence of God ... the blacks [Africans] have not lost the idea of the true God."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 45.

<sup>34</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 45-46.

<sup>36</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 46.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 149-161.

<sup>38</sup> P. Baudin, *Fetishism and Fetish Worshippers*, 1885, 9ff in *Ibid.*, 149.

Apart from the awareness of the existence of God in ATR, there is interaction between God, humanity and the rest of creation. It is not surprising that God is conceived as Father or mother, highlighting the positive qualities of fatherhood or motherhood. Magesa notes that “these are not abstract qualities within African Religion. They are qualities ‘in relationship.’”<sup>39</sup> This underscores the fact that God is in relationship, or even better, in communion, with humanity and the entire world.<sup>40</sup> These metaphors or anthropomorphic attributes are used to depict the status of God.

It is obvious that ATR has a profound sense of the sacred. They are constantly searching for God because they have a religious sense. Their search for God or the Supreme being is similar to St. Augustine’s reflection when he comments: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”<sup>41</sup> While a religious sense or a sense of the sacred is still strong in ATR, the same cannot be said in some parts of the Christian world. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger echoed this sentiment when he lamented in the preface to the 1988 edition of *Catholicism* about the situation in Catholic Europe: “Sacraments are often seen merely as celebrations of the community where there is no more room for the personal dialogue between God and the soul – something many greet with condescending ridicule.”<sup>42</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* asserts that the desire for God is written in the human heart, because man and woman is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will human beings find the truth and happiness, which they never stop searching for.<sup>43</sup> The *Catechism* refers to Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes* which remarks:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Lib 1, 1-2, 2.5,5 (CSEL 33, 1-5). See Augustine, *Confessions*, trans., Sarah Ruden (New York: The Modern Library, 2017), 3: “In yourself you rouse us, giving us delight in glorifying you, because you made us with yourself as our goal, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”; Psalms 48:1; 96:4; 145:3; 147:5.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Preface,” in Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 27, no. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 19 § 1.

Vatican II highlights the fact that in many ways, throughout history down to the present day, human beings have given expression to the quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviours: in prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call the human being a religious being:

From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “in him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>45</sup>

The quest for God is not peculiar to only Christians but to the whole of humanity. This is clearly the case in ATR. Christianity and Islam believe in one God. This God is a supreme being who is transcendent, omniscient, omnipotent, all good, and creator of all that exists. It is opposed to atheism (belief in no God), polytheism (belief in many gods), and pantheism (belief that God is inseparable from the world).<sup>46</sup> This description of monotheism stems from the historical forms it took in the great religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, where we find the notion of God, which is expressed most explicitly and clearly in monotheistic terms.<sup>47</sup> Christianity and Islam from their early formative years have written scriptural texts, the Bible and the Qur’an which attest to the existence of God (Deut. 6:4 and Q 21:46). Belief in the one God is the first and the main article of faith in both religions. For Cafer Yaran, a philosopher of religion, Islam is an uncompromising, pure, monotheistic religion. God is one and unique, the creator of everything in heaven and on earth.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the Christian Bible in Deuteronomy proclaims: “Yahweh our God is one” (Dt. 6: 4).<sup>49</sup> In the same vein, the Nicene Creed professes belief in one God as revealed in the Bible. God is unique; there is only one God in nature, substance, and essence, the creator of heaven and earth. Islam and Christianity both believe in God’s providence, mercy, forgiveness, life after death, judgement, heaven (paradise), and hell.

The oneness of God is clearly articulated in the Quran when it writes: “Our God is One and it is to Him we submit in Islam.”<sup>50</sup> We referred earlier in chapter three that the Second Vatican Council documents *Nostra Aetate* (no. 3) and *Lumen Gentium* (no. 16) affirmed that

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<sup>45</sup> Acts 17:26-28.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Jensen, “Monotheism,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds., Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 674.

<sup>47</sup> Heinz Robert Schlette, “Monotheism,” in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (London: Burns & Oates, 1975), 979.

<sup>48</sup> Cafer S. Yaran, *Understanding Islam* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2007), 22-23.

<sup>49</sup> David Burrell, “Dialogue between Muslims and Christians as Mutual Transformative Speech,” in *Criteria of Discernment in Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 93.

<sup>50</sup> Q 21:46.

Muslims profess the faith of Abraham and worship the one true, merciful God, the creator of the universe. This implies that Christians and Muslims are united in important theological concepts of faith. Their perspectives on the transcendent God challenges them to cooperation and freedom in interreligious dialogue. For John Paul II, Abraham is the model common to both faiths of loyal submission to God and respect for each other.<sup>51</sup> For both Christians and Muslims, speaking of one and the same God is not an abstraction but rather a tangible faith experience for all who try to understand each other in religious dialogue.<sup>52</sup> After all, Christians and Muslims share a common belief in God, prophets, revelation and moral responsibility.

#### **4.1.4 African Traditional Religion is A Lived Religion**

In the first place, African Traditional Religion like Christianity and Islam is a lived religion. It permeates all the aspects of life. According to Mbiti, “there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life.”<sup>53</sup> African Traditional Religion is identified wherever there are Africans. He describes it in this way:

Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament.<sup>54</sup>

This passage is asserting the fact that religion plays a pivotal role in every aspect of the lives of Africans. It plays a key role not only in the life of the individual but also the community. It is African Religion, which gives its followers a sense of security in life. Within that religious way of life, Africans know who they are, how to act in different situations, and how to solve their problems. But as far as it goes, it has supplied the answers to many of the problems of this life. Because it provides for them answers and direction in life, people are not willing to abandon it quickly, otherwise they would feel insecure afterwards unless something else gave them an additional or greater sense of security. When Africans are converted to other religions, they often mix their traditional religion with the one to which they are converted. In this way, they think and feel that they are not losing something valuable but are gaining something from both religious systems.

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<sup>51</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Muslims and Christians Adore the One God”, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Holy See Rome), 5 May 1999.

<sup>52</sup> Bauschke, “A Christian View of Islam,” 147.

<sup>53</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2.

Laurenti Magesa draws attention to the fact that unlike Christianity and Islam, “in African Traditional Religion, the centrality of the human person in the universal order is indicated by the religious practice it fosters.”<sup>55</sup> The explanation of how this happens is given by Charles Nyamiti who maintains that

African religious behaviour is centred mainly on man’s life in this world, with the consequence that religion is chiefly functional, or a means to serve people to acquire earthly goods (life, health, fecundity, wealth, power and the like) and to maintain social cohesion and order.<sup>56</sup>

Nyamiti is here asserting the fact that in ATR, the whole of creation is intended to serve and enhance the life of the human person and society. In Christianity and Islam, the human person is not the centre of the religion. It is God who is the centre. Christianity acknowledges that there is a relationship between God and humanity. At the centre of creation, through Christ, is the human being. However, creation concerns the entire cosmos. This perspective is buttressed by the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* which asserts that the world is where humanity works out its history as “the theatre of human history.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.1.5 African Traditional Religion as a Community Religion**

According to John Mbiti, the chapters of African religions “are written everywhere in the life of the community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people.”<sup>58</sup> It is because the community plays a key role in African Traditional Religion that we can say that “to be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community.”<sup>59</sup> An individual is expected to remain attached and faithful to the community. Breaking this bond would mean breaking away oneself from his or her roots. Being without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society, and African peoples do not know how to exist without religion. Initiation into African Traditional Religion is by birth since the religion is identified with every distinctive ethnic group. It is not a missionary religion since it does not have preachers or set out to make converts into it. Since it is rooted in tribal settings, it becomes difficult for people outside the culture to adjust or adopt the religious life of other African peoples. This explains

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<sup>55</sup> Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *The Scope of African Theology* (Kampala: Gaba Publications, 1973), 20.

<sup>57</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2.

why people in Europe and Asia are slow to convert to African Religion because it is far removed from their cultural and geographical experience.

Islam, like African Traditional Religion, has a strong sense of community. Muslims, individually and the community or *jama'a* as a whole are expected in their daily lives to reenact the lifestyle of the Prophet and his Companions. They are to emulate and behave exactly as did the earliest Muslims (*al-salaf*), not just in ritual but even in mundane details too.<sup>60</sup> The details of this lifestyle are documented in the Holy Qur'an and, from what the Prophet said (*hadith*) and what He did (*sira*). Murray Last, opines that "these together constitute the Sunna, which is the 'way' Muslims should follow without any deviation throughout their lives".<sup>61</sup> Besides, there is the awareness of diversity in Islamic societies.

We discern this from the teaching of Islam on peace. Islam preaches a universal message of peace by submission to God, a way of life for Muslims and peace towards others. It acknowledges that humans are created by God in a state of harmony and peace and, therefore, peace shall be the eschatological destiny of all.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Islam encourages Muslims to live in peace in the *Ummah* (community) and peace in society.<sup>63</sup> This entails living in peace with one another and extending peace to those in the wider community.<sup>64</sup>

It is pertinent to add here that the interpretation of Islam as a religion of peace is nuanced among Islamic scholars. One group quotes Qur'anic texts asserting that Islam is committed to Jihad, war and violence, and, thus, the claim that Islam is a religion of peace is untrue.<sup>65</sup> Another group maintains that the Islamic principle of peace goes back to the Qur'an, which promotes non-violence.<sup>66</sup> Exploring the full extent of this debate is outside the scope of this research but it gives us insight into the nature of the Islamic community for which our method, through de Lubac's Principle of Auscultation allows us to listen to.

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<sup>60</sup> Murray Last, "From Dissent to Dissidence: The Genesis & Development of Reformist Islamic Groups in Northern Nigeria", in *Sect & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, ed., Abdul Raufu Mustapha (Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2014), 19.

<sup>61</sup> Last, "From Dissent to Dissidence," 19.

<sup>62</sup> Q 10:25.

<sup>63</sup> Imam Zaid Shakir, "The Concept of Peace and Justice in Islam," 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Shakir, "The Concept of Peace and Justice in Islam," 2011.

<sup>65</sup> Kamran Sayed Mirza, "An Exegesis of Islamic Peace", 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Ayse S. Kadayifci-Orellana, "Among Muslims, Peace Building Takes on Its Own Distinct Forms," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 35, no. 4 (2007). <http://www.thecmcg.com/index.php/?archives/6-Among-Muslims,-peace-building-takes-on-its-own-distinct-forms.html> – 43k (Accessed December 9, 2019).

In Christianity, the Church is “the community founded by Jesus Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit as the final sign of God’s will to save the human family.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, this universal concept of community is one that can be a source of dialogue between African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity.

#### 4.1.6 Communion between the living and the dead

One area of agreement between African Traditional Religion and Christianity is in the understanding of belief in existence and in interaction between the living and the dead which is the basis of the veneration of ancestors and of the deceased in general. Mulago points out that “with the veneration of ancestors, we associate the cult of heroes. In certain ethnic groups, we also encounter the worship of genies and of earth spirits.”<sup>68</sup> Saint John Paul II recognizes that the positive nature of the veneration of ancestors in African Traditional Religion is similar to the Christian interpretation. Writing in *Ecclesia in Africa* on the positive values of African culture, the Pope asserts:

*The sons and daughters of Africa love life. It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of their ancestors. They believe intuitively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them. Is this not in some way a preparation for belief in the Communion of the Saints?*<sup>69</sup>

Saint John Paul II affirms with all the Synod Fathers that the veneration of ancestors in African cultures is a truly providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel. He mentions specifically the Church’s belief in the Communion of the Saints. Pope Benedict XVI continues along the same trajectory in *Africae Munus* when he remarks that:

The Church lives daily alongside the followers of Traditional African Religions. With their reference to ancestors and to a form of mediation between man and Immanence, these religions are the cultural and spiritual soil from which most Christian converts spring and with which the continue to have daily contact.<sup>70</sup>

Pope Benedict acknowledges the spiritual values in African Traditional Religion, which prepare converts for the reception of the Christian faith. He goes a step further than his predecessor Pope John Paul II by suggesting that it is worth singling out knowledgeable individual converts, who could provide the Church with guidance in gaining a deeper and more

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<sup>67</sup> Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, eds., “Church,” in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 41-42.

<sup>68</sup> Mulago, “Traditional African Religion and Christianity,” 130.

<sup>69</sup> Saint John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 33-34.

<sup>70</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Africae Munus* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011), 27. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_e](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_e) (Accessed September 13, 2019).

accurate knowledge of the traditions, the culture, and the traditional religions. This would make it easier to identify points of real divergence. Benedict's suggestion agrees with our key principles which we have taken from de Lubac, "The Principle of Auscultation" and "The Catholicity of Truth." It is necessary to auscultate the content of African Traditional Religion to be able to make clear distinctions between values, which conform to the Christian faith, on the one hand and, on the other hand, to discard those magical elements which are at odds with Christian teaching. This way, we can arrive at the truth, which is universal as highlighted in our examination of the principle of the Catholicity of Truth.

#### **4.1.7 Prayer in African Traditional Religion**

Prayer is raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.<sup>71</sup> It is an act of worship to God which is common to ATR, Christianity, and Islam. Prayer is found in all African societies. In ATR, prayer may be said privately, individually, or communally. It can be said in public meetings and for public needs.<sup>72</sup> Although anybody can pray to God at any time and in any place, other people may pray for others. Those who can pray for others include priests (both men and women), rain-makers, chiefs, kings, and sometimes medicine men and women, who pray for the general public or for private individuals who ask their assistance.<sup>73</sup> For John S. Mbiti, these prayers include praise, thanksgiving, declaration of the of affairs in which the prayers are offered, and requests.<sup>74</sup> The prayers are centred around the most important needs of the people and the community.

Muslims and Christians, too, have their forms of prayer. In the Qu'ran, all prayers are addressed to the merciful God and (Qu'ran) contains some beautiful names of God. Most significantly, the Qu'ran instructs Muslims to worship God five times in a day (Q 2:238-239; 11:114; 13:14-15). The Bible emphasizes the importance of prayer. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray always.<sup>75</sup> For Christians, the foundation of prayer is humility. Those who humble themselves will be exalted.<sup>76</sup> The followers of ATR, Christians, and Muslims can have an enriching spiritual encounter when they share their spiritual wealth. We agree with Thaddeus Byimui Umaru that mutual togetherness in prayer services, pastoral care, and praying for peace

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<sup>71</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2559.

<sup>72</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 61.

<sup>73</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 61.

<sup>74</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 61.

<sup>75</sup> Luke 18:1; Matthew 4: 10; 6: 7-15.

<sup>76</sup> Luke 18: 9-14.



and be starting point for building a lasting spiritual friendship. Following in the tradition of Abraham, Muslims and Christians can pray to the one God, for one another, and for all people, since they are all created by the one God.

#### **4.1.8 African Traditional Religion and Tolerance of Christianity and Islam**

The main features of ATR are similar all across the African continent. There is no gain saying that the oldest form of religion in Nigeria is ATR. Every ethnic group in Nigeria at some point had a traditional religion other than Islam or Christianity. In Nigeria, both Islam and Christianity have been accommodated by traditional religions as can be seen by the presence of adherents of these religions in very many households today. Though the toleration that indigenous religion displayed in accommodating both religions accounted for the spread of these faiths, Islam and Christianity did not do much to reciprocate these gestures. Hassan Matthew Kukah posits that “their propagators, fired by zeal, rather sought to destroy or, at most, cut these traditional religious beliefs and political systems down to size.”<sup>77</sup> A vivid example is the historical account of Badagry, South West Nigeria, the first town in Nigeria to receive Christian missionaries. Jacob Festus Adeniyi Ajayi, remarks that “there was no open hostility or persecution” of Christian missionaries. However, the hold of the traditional religion on the people was very firm.<sup>78</sup> Ajayi contends that the indigenous population “welcomed missionaries not because they wanted Christianity but because they were weak and poor and hoped that the missionaries could attract some trade back to the town.”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, in Igbo land, South East of Nigeria, the missionaries maintained that they had brought the light of salvation to the Nri people. However, M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu gives us the account of what happened in these words:

Nri people welcomed Western education but resented the method adopted by the Catholics. According to the elders, converts were encouraged to flout authority of the *ozo* men, burn their ritual objects, break the taboos and reveal the secret of the ritual mask... The encouragement of the destruction of traditional objects of worship spread out all over Igboland. In this operation, the educated Christians who were mostly teachers and pastors, were used. They condemned the traditional title system, marriage, rituals, songs, arts, and labelled them “things of Satan”.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993), ix.

<sup>78</sup> J. F. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria* (London: Longmans Green, 1965), 34.

<sup>79</sup> Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, 34.

<sup>80</sup> M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony* (Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1981), 175.

In this quotation, we observe that although the missionaries were welcomed for non-religious reasons by their host communities, they in return encouraged the destruction of indigenous religious places of worship and objects. While the early encounter was beneficial to the missionaries, the violation and desecration of some important places of worship and religious symbols of ATR began a process of mass decline of this form of religion. The same can be said of the encounter between Islam and traditional African societies.

Islam arrived at the fringes of northern Nigeria in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This did not lead to mass conversions because many of the local population, the Maguzawa, continued to practise their traditional religion. The Maguzawa people, for example, did not stop offering sacrifices to different spirits (*iskoki*), located in different places, the sky, forest, hills and bodies of water. It was only after the Jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Islam was forced on the majority of the people through conquest. We agree with Awolalu that “Christianity and Islam, when they came in contact with traditional religion, caused a disruption and a division. Both divided the community into two camps, the converts (either Christians or Muslims) who looked down upon the old traditional religion and the loyal adherents of the traditional religion.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the arrival of Islam and Christianity has changed very much the outlook of the people, so much so that there is little remembrance of the religious climate that preceded them. According to John Cardinal Onaiyekan, we must recognize two facts:

First, there are still a good number of our people who live according to the religion of their forefathers and they still maintain the practices and the rituals of the *Nigerian Traditional Religion* (NTR). Secondly, and more importantly, every Nigerian, whether he is Christian or Muslim, retains within him [or her] some basic elements of the Traditional Religions of our people.<sup>82</sup>

For Onaiyekan, there are many aspects of our traditional religion that are reflected in both Christianity and Islam. Our faith in God, our belief in a set of moral norms, the conviction that there will be sanction in another world, the necessity of prayer and sacrifice in our lives; all these are basic elements of our traditional religions which we have carried over into our newly acquired creeds.<sup>83</sup> In traditional religions, culture, customs, traditions and religion go hand in hand.

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<sup>81</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria”, in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, 115.

<sup>82</sup> John Cardinal O. Onaiyekan, *Seeking Common Grounds: Inter-Religious Dialogue in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013), 87.

<sup>83</sup> Onaiyekan, *Seeking Common Grounds*, 87.

#### 4.1.8 Revelation and Reason in Christianity and ATR

The truth about God which is known through natural reason is similar to the Christian understanding. According to St Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), there are two ways of accessing the truth about God, one is through revelation, the other is by means of natural reason.

Thomas makes this distinction in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

There is a twofold mode of truth in what we profess about God. Some truths about God exceed all the ability of the human reason. Such is the truth that God is triune. But there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like. In fact, such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of natural reason.<sup>84</sup>

St Thomas affirms that the human being has the ability to discover the truth about God even apart from revelation. The tradition of the Catholic Church has always maintained this position. Vatican I (1870), asserts that God can be known by the natural light of human reason and by another way which is supernatural.<sup>85</sup> “The same Holy Church, our Mother, holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things can be known with certainty from created things by the natural light of human reason.”<sup>86</sup> This position is consistent with scripture. St Paul, in his letter to the Romans, makes a similar claim:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.<sup>87</sup>

St Paul draws our attention to the fact that the wonder of creation opens us to the mystery of God.

In his work on natural theology, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, de Lubac focuses on the place of the cosmos in the process of coming to know God. The import of his thought is that being human and living in the world inevitably puts us in touch with God. He expresses it like this: ‘The creator God shows himself to us through his works as in a book.’<sup>88</sup> In describing the works of God as a book in which we read its author, de Lubac is taking up a traditional image for

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<sup>84</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 3, 2. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1975), 63.

<sup>85</sup> *Dei Filius*, DzH 3004.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Eadem sancta mater Ecclesia tenet et docet, Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse.’ DzH 3004. See also *Dei Verbum* § 6.

<sup>87</sup> Romans 1: 19f.

<sup>88</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1966, being the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of: *De la connaissance de Dieu*, Éditions du Témoignage chrétien, 1945), 14.

creation as found, for example, in the writings of St Bonaventure (1217-1274): ‘The universe is like a book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker.’<sup>89</sup> He also uses the image of the two books, one written within and the other without: ‘Accordingly, there are two books, one written within, and that is (inscribed by) God’s eternal Art and Wisdom; the other written without, and that is the perceptible world.’<sup>90</sup> The external book is readily accessible to us but the internal book can only be read with the help of a Mediator. Hence St. Bonaventure suggests a third book which uniquely can be read within and without, viz., Christ, the eternal Wisdom: ‘He is called the Book *within and without* for the restoration of the world.’<sup>91</sup>

Our access to God, then, has two sources: revelation and creation. In both cases human reason comes to bear on the truths under reflection. It is the same reason irrespective of whether the subject is theology or physics. The difference is that in the case of theology the scope is greater; we are not confined to the kind of evidence that would be acceptable in a science laboratory. But there must be a note of caution. This natural knowledge of God is often obscured and disfigured by error. Attention is drawn to this caution in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

This knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: ‘By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear (Heb 11: 3).’<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium* Chapter 11, 2, English translation by José de Vinck (New York: Tournai, 1963), 104.

<sup>90</sup> Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium*, 101.

<sup>91</sup> Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium*, 102.

<sup>92</sup> CCC 286.

## 4.2 Differences between African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity

### 4.2.1 Divine Revelation

The great monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity and Islam profess to derive their fundamental vision not from mere human speculation, but from God's own testimony through historically given divine revelation.<sup>93</sup> This is not the case with African Traditional Religion, which does not have any historically given divine revelation. The Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* succinctly remarks that

It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will (cf. Eph. 1:9). His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph. 2:18; 2 Pet. 1:4).<sup>94</sup>

*Dei Verbum* insists that revelation is the self-communication of God. According to Karl Rahner, "a self-communication of God as personal and absolute mystery to man as a being of transcendence signifies from the outset a communication to man as a spiritual and personal being."<sup>95</sup> For Rahner, "what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way it is a communication for the sake of knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love."<sup>96</sup> Rahner contends that the "divine self-communication means that God can communicate himself in his own reality to what is not divine without ceasing to be infinite reality and absolute mystery, and without man ceasing to be a finite existent different from God."<sup>97</sup> Indeed, revelation is "a process which God initiates and which we recognize and accept because of our radical capacity to be open to the presence and action of God in our history and in our personal lives."<sup>98</sup> Commenting on the first chapter of *Dei Verbum*, de Lubac posits that

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<sup>93</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1982), 3.

<sup>94</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* no. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1976). English translation *Foundation of Christian Faith*, trans., William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 116. Rahner explains "God's self-communication" further in this way: "God is revealed as communicating himself in absolute and merciful presence as God, that is, as the absolute mystery. The historical mediation of this transcendental experience is also revealed as valid, as bringing about and authenticating the absolute experience of God. The unique and final culmination of this history of revelation has already occurred and has revealed the absolute and irrevocable unity of God's transcendental self-communication to mankind and of its historical mediation in the one God-man Jesus Christ, who is at once God himself as communicated, the human acceptance of this communication and the final historical manifestation of this offer and acceptance." See Karl Rahner, "Revelation", in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed., Karl Rahner (London: Burns & Oates, 1975), 1461-1462.

<sup>96</sup> Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 117-118.

<sup>97</sup> Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 119.

<sup>98</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Study Edition* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981), 234.

Christ is the fullness of revelation because, in him, God is revealed.<sup>99</sup> For de Lubac, the revelation which finds its apogee in Christ is turned towards the Father. Indeed, Jesus is the Word who speaks, carries out his work and mission in obedience to the Father.<sup>100</sup> Although, African Traditional Religion does not have any historically given divine revelation, de Lubac's Trinitarian Christology points out that the Church and, through her, all humanity is called to participate in this community. This comes about in the Trinitarian process through Christ, in the Spirit, towards the Father.<sup>101</sup> Here, we refer to our earlier remarks about Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christians."<sup>102</sup> Rahner's inclusive perspective, allows him to see all humans being offered the opportunity for participation in the grace of Christ. Moreover, all humanity is "included" in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Islam like Christianity has a clear teaching on divine revelation. The Holy Qu'ran employs different expressions for Divine Revelation. They are: *Tanzil* (Q46:2; Q2:185; Q44:3; & Q97:1; *Rûh* (Q15:29; Q21:91; Q32:9; Q38:72; & Q42:52); *Wahî* (Q4:163; Q41:12; Q16:68; & 8:12), and *Ilham* (Q91:8). Vatican II declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christians, *Nostra Aetate* acknowledges this when it calls upon the Church to esteem Muslims: "They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men (women)."<sup>103</sup> In Islam, the purpose of God's revelation of his divine will is for humans to know this will and learn to live by it.<sup>104</sup> It is this divine will which contains the message communicated by God through his Prophet. The Prophet on his part conveys and translates it into a model for all to practise.<sup>105</sup> Mahmut Aydin opines that the divine will is revealed for guidance through God's prophets in the holy books who invite and enable humanity to live in peace with God and other human beings.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, revelation is about God's truth and the disclosure of his will to humanity. This leads Thaddeus Byimui Umaru to surmise that "both Christianity and Islam value the precious revelation of

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<sup>99</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, no. 2. See De Lubac, *La Révélation divine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 44.

<sup>100</sup> John 10: 25, 32, 37; 17:4; John 12: 49f; John 17:26.

<sup>101</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* no. 2 refers to Ephesians 2:18 and 2 Peter 1:4.

<sup>102</sup> See supra, chapter 3, 123.

<sup>103</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3. Pope Benedict XVI reaffirms this statement when addressing the Church in Africa: "I call upon the Church, in every situation, to persist in esteem for Muslims, who 'worship God who is one, living and subsistent; merciful and almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity". See Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Africae Munus*, no. 94.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas B. Irving, Ahmed Khurshid, and Ahsan M. Muhammad, *The Qur'an: Basic Teachings* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1996), 2-3.

<sup>105</sup> Irving, Khurshid and Muhammad, *The Qur'an: Basic Teachings*, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understanding of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council* (Washington, DC: The Council in Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002), 29.

God within their spiritual experience.”<sup>107</sup> Umaru contends that while it is believed in both religious traditions that God has spoken to humankind in various ways (such as through the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the Qur’an), it is equally important to note that Christianity and Islam differ in the ways God has revealed himself.<sup>108</sup> This, however, is not the focus of this study.

#### 4.2.2 Sacred Scriptures

African Traditional Religion has no scriptures or holy books like what we have in Christianity with its Holy Bible and Islam with its Qur’an. Yet, we can say that it is written everywhere for those who have eyes to see. The religion permeates every aspect of people’s lives and can be found in their riddles and proverbs, songs and dances, rites and ceremonies, myths and folk-tales, shrines and sacred places and their artistic design.<sup>109</sup> James Mbiti affirms that African Traditional Religion has no religious founders, no reformers, no preachers, no theologians or missionaries to change it, improve it, or take it overseas to other continents.<sup>110</sup> The protagonists of research in African Tradition Religion were mostly Christian ministers who used Christian categories to explain traditional religion. African Traditional Religion emerged naturally because “people simply assimilate whatever religious ideas and practices are held or observed by their families and communities.”<sup>111</sup> In addition, Mbiti observes that although a great number of beliefs and practices are to be found in any African society, these have not been formulated into a systematic set of dogmas, which a person is expected to accept. It is for this reason that there are no creeds to be recited. Conversely, the creeds are written in the heart of the individual, and each one is himself a living creed of his own religion.<sup>112</sup> For Mbiti, African Traditional Religions “evolved slowly through many centuries, as people responded to the situations of their life and reflected upon their experiences”.<sup>113</sup>

Adherents of traditional religions were mostly influenced by nature and their ability to reflect on the universe. Natural and environmental features like mountains, rivers, deserts and forests – change of the seasons, the powers of nature (such as earthquakes, thunderstorms and

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<sup>107</sup> Thaddeus Byimui Umaru, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Nigeria: A Socio-Political and Theological Consideration* (UK: Xlixix, 2013), 116.

<sup>108</sup> Umaru, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Nigeria*, 116.

<sup>109</sup> Kekong Bisong, “Editorial,” in *Nigerian Journal of Theology*, June 2008, Vol. 22, vii.

<sup>110</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 4. See Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 16.

<sup>111</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 3.

<sup>112</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 16.

volcanoes), calamities, epidemics, diseases, birth and death, and major historical events like wars, locust invasions, famines, migrations, all gave grounds for spiritual reflection.<sup>114</sup> With such a complex history, it is difficult to find a systematic exposition of the understanding of salvation or of a saviour who is a mediator of salvation as we have it in Christianity. We are faced here with the difficulty of finding a perfect example within one cultural context given the myriads of cultural groups in Nigeria and the continent. But, as we have argued earlier that most of the cultures share similarities, it is possible to draw from a few examples in order to elaborate our position. E. G. Parrinder was right when he observed that there is a great homogeneity in the religious sphere, that the resemblances between African peoples and religions are far more important than the differences.<sup>115</sup> In the same vein, E. B. Idowu posits that there is “a common Africanness about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa”.<sup>116</sup> It is apt at this juncture to take examples from different peoples in the African continent in order to make an exposition of the concept of saviour and salvation in African Traditional Religion.

The sacred scriptures for Christianity and Islam are the Bible and the Qur’an. Both are based on the conviction that the existence of the world and the final meaning and value of all that it contains ultimately depend on a personal God who, while distinct from the world and everything in it, is absolute in terms of reality, goodness, and power.<sup>117</sup> On sacred scripture, Dei Verbum asserts:

The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 16.

<sup>115</sup> E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), 11.

<sup>116</sup> E. B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 103f. See D. Westerlund, *African Religion in African Scholarship: A Preliminary Study of the Religious and Political Background*, Studies published by the Institute of Comparative Religion at the University of Stockholm 7 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985), 48.

<sup>117</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, no. 11.



It is apparent that the sacred writings inspired by God and expressing the Jewish and Christian faith is normative for all time. For Christians, “sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>119</sup>

The most important book for Muslims is the Qur’an. It contains the eternal word of God transmitted by an angel to Prophet Muhammed. Muslims believe that the words of the Qur’an were directly dictated from an eternal origin, which is not influenced by the Prophet. For Muslims, the Qur’an is God’s final supreme word, which is not dependent on any previous revelation. Thus, it is normative, unique, and immutable.<sup>120</sup> The focus of the message of both the Bible and Qur’an is the transformation of the whole of humanity so as to adhere to God’s injunctions for the promotion of justice, peace, and harmony in society, which is inclusive of followers of African Traditional Religion.

#### **4.2.3 Salvation in African Traditional Religion**

The concept of a mediator of salvation as we have it in Christianity is rare and does not exist in most African Traditional Religions. Commenting on the structure of African Traditional Religion, Mbiti remarks: “Its main contribution is to make people deeply sensitive to the invisible world, which dovetails with the physical world, and to help them to communicate both horizontally with one another and vertically with God and the invisible world”.<sup>121</sup> In ATR, there is “a strong belief in a Supreme deity and at the same time a belief in a multitude of deities presumed to be lesser in authority than the Supreme deity.”<sup>122</sup> Equally, there is an awareness that God saves his people among many communities in Africa. The God referred to here is not understood in the Trinitarian sense of Christianity but as a Supreme Being. What is apparent is that there is an awareness of salvation through an examination of the attributes, names, and expressions, which describe God as saving men or women from physical danger, afflictions, distress, and troubles.<sup>123</sup> In his study of the concept of salvation among many different groups in African societies, Mbiti posits that God’s salvific act is described in his works, name and prayers in African Traditional Religion.<sup>124</sup> Mbiti affirms the claims of A. M. Lugira that among the Ganda people, there is the notion in which “God saves

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<sup>119</sup> Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, no. 9. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 80.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph Kenny, *West Africa and Islam* (Ibadan, Nigeria: AECAWA Publication, 2000), 47-49.

<sup>121</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 201.

<sup>122</sup> Jacob K. Olupona, “Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion,” in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, ed., Jacob K. Olupona (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1991), 27.

<sup>123</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa* (London: S.P.C.K, 1970), 69.

<sup>124</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69.

the afflicted according to his will.<sup>125</sup> With regard to the Lunda Luena belief, “God takes keen interest in human activities, saving the innocent, protecting the weak, and punishing the guilty.”<sup>126</sup> The Bavenda express protection from natural disaster in terms of salvation when they assert that “I have been saved by God.”<sup>127</sup> Among the Ila people, there is the understanding that God repairs the damage that human beings have inflicted on themselves and put things straight for them once more. It is for this reason that he is called the “Deliverer of those from trouble.”<sup>128</sup> Similarly, God’s role as one who saves and protects his people is observed in the names and the forms of prayers in some African communities. Mbiti observes that among the Abaluyia, God is described as “One who saves, helps, or steers.”<sup>129</sup> The Banyarwanda have a name for God which means “it is only God who can save a man.”<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the Burundi have names and descriptions of God which include: “There is a Saviour” and “Only he (God) can keep our lives.”<sup>131</sup> One of the names of God among the Akan people means: “He upon whom you call in your experience of distress: A Consoler or Comforter who gives salvation.”<sup>132</sup> Indeed, God is unique and does not share his equality or powers with any deity. Emmanuel Bolaji Idowu makes this clear with an illustration from Edo mythology. In this regard Idowu writes:

In Edo mythology, there is a story that Olakun (the archdivinity) who is the beloved son of Osanobwa (the Supreme God) and was, therefore, vested with all the attributes and glory due to his position, once challenged his Father to a display of splendour and majesty. In accordance with African practice, he chose an open market-place for the display. When the appointed day arrived, the Father sent his messenger to tell Olokun that he was ready and that Olokun should meet him at once at the appointed venue. Olokun dressed himself in what he considered to be an excellent regalia and came out of his room. Imagine his chagrin when he saw that the Father’s messenger was dressed identically as he! ‘This will not do,’ he thought. He therefore went back into the room and changed his regalia. When he came out again, he found that the messenger had changed identically as he. In the long run, he made a total of seven trials of regalia in order to go out and meet his Father; but each time he was frustrated because the messenger of the Father was identically dressed as he. In the end, he had to give up the attempt, admitting that it was impossible for him to go out and compete with his Father

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<sup>125</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69. See A. M. Lugira, *Ganda Art* (Kampala: Osasa Publication, 1970).

<sup>126</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69. See P. Gulliver and P. H., *The Central Nilo-Hamites* (London: Routledge, 1953), 85.

<sup>127</sup> H. A. Junod, *The Life of South African Tribe*, Second Edition (London: Forgotten Books, 1927).

<sup>128</sup> E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, Vol. I, (London: Hard Press Publishing, 1920), 203-207.

<sup>129</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69.

<sup>130</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69.

<sup>131</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 69.

<sup>132</sup> J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God* (London: Cass, 1944), 55.

since he could not beat even his messenger in such a display. The Father's messenger was Chameleon!<sup>133</sup>

This account is one of the rarest accounts of a Supreme God in African Traditional Religion who has a son. The account reminds us of two doctrines which threatened the early Church and were rejected, namely, Gnosticism and Arianism.<sup>134</sup> The Gnostics exaggerated the role of knowledge (*gnosis*) in salvation and insists that such saving knowledge is available to only a select few. In addition, they denied the goodness of creation and of the material order.<sup>135</sup> The Gnostics believe that Christ descended as a heavenly revealer. They challenged the common Christian emphasis on “Jesus” and the crucifixion as the means of salvation.<sup>136</sup> Arianism is named after Arius, a priest of Alexandria who held that “the *Logos* is not eternal like the Father but, rather, that he received his being immediately from the Father, though not from the Father's substance, before the beginning of time”.<sup>137</sup> Unlike the Christian understanding in which the Son (Jesus Christ) is of one divine nature with the Father and is therefore equal with the Father, the God from Edo mythology is like the Arian interpretation, unique and incomparable.<sup>138</sup> It is for this reason that Idowu writes without hesitation that “the uniqueness of Deity [God] is one reason why there are no images – graven or in drawing or in painting – of him in Africa,”<sup>139</sup> The African concept of God has no likeness or comparison. In the same vein, Mbiti asserts about the Shilluk people:

The Shilluk have *Nyikang*, the chief hero who founded the nation and established its kingship. His ancestry is traced to a man who came from heaven or from a special creation of God, and his mother has attributes of the crocodile...*Nyikang* is now regarded as semi-divine or divine, has ten shrines, receives sacrifices and prayers, is intimately associated with God, and acts as the intermediary between God and the people.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 152.

<sup>134</sup> DzH 125-6; 452. See J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith*, eds. Jacques Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 2001), no. 601.

<sup>135</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 1244-5.

<sup>136</sup> PHEME PERKINS, “Gnosticism” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 422.

<sup>137</sup> Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, “Arianism” in *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed., Cornelius Ernst (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 36.

<sup>138</sup> “Against Arius, the Symbol of faith of the Council of Nicaea affirms the strict divinity of the Son of God, ‘one in being with the Father’; against the gnostic and docetist currents which undermined the realism of Christ's humanity and Arius who reduced it to human flesh, the Council stresses the reality and completeness of Christ's humanity: ‘He became flesh and was made man’”. See Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith*, no. 601.

<sup>139</sup> Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith*, no. 601.

<sup>140</sup> Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, 126. See E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*, (Cambridge: 1948).

In this quotation, Mbiti is affirming the position of John Middleton which claims that in ATR God “is the ultimate fountain-head of all power and authority, of all sanctions for orderly relations between men (women).”<sup>141</sup> For the Shilluk, the chief hero who founded their nation and established its kingship is regarded as having semi-divine qualities but is never confused as being God. From the aforementioned examples, it is obvious that due to the multiplicity of ethnic groups and uniqueness of each of them, the understanding of salvation is not universal to all human beings as we have in Christianity but is limited to particular tribal backgrounds and history. It is indisputable that ATR encountered other religions like Islam and Christianity. These meetings have affected its future development in both positive and negative ways.

What is crystal clear is that the understanding of salvation in ATR can be observed in two ways. The first is salvation in this life, and secondly, salvation after this life. This reminds us of the the Christian theology of realized and unrealized eschatology.<sup>142</sup> Salvation after life is the same for all people including followers of ATR. However, when alive, salvation can be attained by the followers of ATR and other non-Christian religions because of their implicit faith. For the Christian, an explicit and enriching faith is required.

#### **4.2.4 Impact of Religious Pluralism on African Traditional Religion**

Currently, Nigeria can be described as a religiously pluralist society with African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity being the dominant religions. Other religions include, *Hinduism* whose spread in Nigeria is mainly by immigration of Hindus from India and of *Hare Krishna Missionaries*. There is *The Grail Movement* with Nigeria as its African hub, inspired by the work of Abd-ru-shin, principally *In the Light of Truth: The Grail Message*. Besides, there is a rising number of people who do not profess any religion. This is common among those in the academic community or people who have studied or lived in countries in Europe and in America. The meeting of these religions comes with its own challenges. While these religions are equally important, the key concern of this section of the research is how the dominant religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity influence or affect African Traditional Religion. We begin with the meeting of Christianity and ATR.

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<sup>141</sup> John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 27.

<sup>142</sup> Zachary Hayes, *What are they Saying about the End of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 7. See Rudulp Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academy Press, 1957); C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (London: NISBET, 1941), 6.

#### 4.2.5 The Meeting of Christianity with African Traditional Religion

The encounter between Christianity and African Traditional Religion can be said to have two significant consequences, positive and negative. In the first place, the meeting of both religions has been one of growing awareness and mutual respect for the other. In the early days of Christianity in Nigeria, just like in other parts of the continent, Christian missionaries and African converts to Christianity condemned African Religion in the worst terms possible. With the passage of time, it became clear that in reality Christianity and African Religion have many features which do not conflict. It is upon these that Christianity seems to be building, in its rapid spread in Africa. In this sense, Mbiti opines that “African Religion and Christianity have become allies, at least unofficially. One has prepared the ground for the accommodation of the other.”<sup>143</sup>

A concrete example of how the Church in Africa has been influenced by ATR can be traced to the first African Synod and the publication of the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*.<sup>144</sup> Pope John Paul II highlights that the fact that “future of the world and of the Church passes through the family.”<sup>145</sup> He contends that “not only is the Christian family the first cell of the living ecclesial community, it is also the fundamental cell of society.”<sup>146</sup> It is more so for Africa where “the family is the foundation on which the social edifice is built.”<sup>147</sup> Acknowledging this reality and, aware of the challenges of modernity, John Paul II enjoined that “the African family must preserve its own essential values.”<sup>148</sup> There is no gain saying that “the Christian idea of the Church has parallels with African traditional life in which kinship and the extended family play a central role.”<sup>149</sup> For Mbiti, “the Church is the Christian family, in which all are related to one another through faith and baptism in Jesus Christ. The Church also includes those who have died and those who still live.”<sup>150</sup> He concludes that this is similar to the African view of the family of both the living and the departed.<sup>151</sup> It is imperative to mention at this point that until the coming of Islam and Christianity, the people of the present northern Nigeria observed a normative respect and appreciation of the religion and culture of

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<sup>143</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 189.

<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995). See [w2.vatican.va](http://w2.vatican.va) > john-paul-ii > documents.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 80. See John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 75: AAS 74 (1982), 173.

<sup>146</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 80.

<sup>147</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 80.

<sup>148</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 80.

<sup>149</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 190.

<sup>150</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 190.

<sup>151</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 190.

the other.<sup>152</sup> The dominant ethnic groups, Hausas and Kanuris did not seek for other ethnicities to dissolve into their dominant cultural and religious structure. On the contrary, they respected the differences between them and other ethnicities. Marinus C. Iwuchukwu has observed that “the world of cultural and religious pluralism was a paradigm quite different from the Hellenization of the world by the Greeks or the Romanization of all under the Roman Empire.”<sup>153</sup> According to him, “in the African milieu, the other’s identity and origin were always respected and validly recognized. That was significantly the heritage of what later became Northern Nigeria until the advent of Usman dan Fodio jihad”.<sup>154</sup> A remarkable feat by the worshipers of African Traditional Religion is that despite persecution by Islam for centuries and the destruction of the places of worship by early missionaries and converts to Christianity in the past, there has been no insurgency or militancy on their behalf. They have been able to live fairly peacefully with other religions. Currently, ATR is not perceived to be a source of danger to other religions. However, just as there were positive accounts of the encounter between Christianity and ATR, there were areas of conflict.

The areas where conflict arose concerned traditional African rituals, especially those of offerings in connection with the departed, African initiation rites, marriage customs, the place of sorcery, evil magic and witchcraft in African life, and methods of dealing with disease, misfortune, and suffering. This has led some African Christians to break away from their mission Churches to form their own, where they are able to incorporate traditional African customs into their Christian life. This is easily observed in the forms of prayers, music, hymns, songs and festivals, and the attitude to dreams and visions, as well as the organizations, which are modified according to the ways that seem to fit the followers best. In the same vein, much of the traditional world view is retained in many of these independent Churches. Similarly, they are trying to make Christianity reach the roots of African life and bring hope where there was no hope. African Christians take Christianity seriously, adding it to the religious insights, which they inherited from their forebears, and applying it to meet the present-day needs of society. In many communities in Africa, it is Christianity which gave them the courage to fight oppression and domination by foreign rulers. Many embrace Christianity because it endorsed for them their value of human dignity and emphasized the love which should exist among all

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<sup>152</sup> R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and Its Enemies* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), 31-33. See Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967), 63f.

<sup>153</sup> Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenges of Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 167.

<sup>154</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 167.

men and women. Having looked at the meeting of Christianity and Traditional Religion, we now turn to the meeting with Islam.

#### **4.2.6 The Meeting between Islam and African Traditional Religion**

We are examining the interaction between Islam and African Traditional Religion because the two religions are significant in our application of the Principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth. Moreover, there cannot be any effective dialogue without attentively listening to the Word of God, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, listening without prejudice to the cultural context. Besides, we have argued that the Principle of Catholicity of Truth recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the Christian (dogma) faith is a “source of universal light” that enlightens all people. Nowhere is this point made more clear than in de Lubac’s first written book, *Catholicisme*. Hans von Balthasar, while referring to *Catholicisme*, maintains that “it reveals a fundamental option for fullness, totality, and as wide a horizon as possible, to the extent that the power of inclusion becomes the prime criterion of truth.”<sup>155</sup> De Lubac is interested in nothing less than the totality of truth, and he realises that its search prevents him from excluding even what at face value may seem diametrically opposed. De Lubac follows in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas, who cited an anonymous Latin author in the fourth century (called Ambrosiaster by Erasmus) when he remarked: “For everything that is true, irrespective of the speaker, is spoken by the Holy Spirit.” It is not surprising that St. Thomas who knew and used this quotation from Ambrosiaster, wrote: “All truth, by whomsoever expressed, comes from the Holy Spirit of man a movement to understand and speak what is true.”<sup>156</sup> Attentive listening to ATR and Islam is an important approach that will lead to dialogue as we will see later in the research.

The encounter between Islam and ATR took a different pattern from the Christian approach. Islam was founded in the seventh century in Arabia. It spread rapidly after the death of Prophet Muhammed so that in less than three centuries it had arrived at the shores of northern Nigeria. By the fourteenth century it had established a stronghold in the fringes of Northern Nigeria.<sup>157</sup> Joseph Awolalu has shown that between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islam gradually gained a

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<sup>155</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar et Georges Chantaine, *Le cardinal Henri de Lubac: L’homme et son oeuvre*, 62. See *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 28-29.

<sup>156</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, IIae, q. 109, art. 1, ad primum.

<sup>157</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 114.

foothold in the north; but it did not penetrate into the wooded southern Nigeria until much later. When it did, it did not win as many converts as it won in the far north.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the Christianity whose spread of the gospel was principally through her missionaries, Islam relied on Muslim itinerant traders. According to Awolalu: “They were clever enough not to demand a sudden break with the traditional religion – they won converts gradually, and they made sure that they first enlisted the interest of their leaders.”<sup>159</sup> These rulers, in turn, influenced the subjects and encouraged them to say the Muslim confession of faith: “I believe there is no god but Allah, And Muhammed is the prophet of Allah.”

This peaceful and subtle approach gave way to a more violent and radical jihad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led by Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani born in Gobir. Uthman dan Fodio was dissatisfied with the lax practices of Islam by northern Nigerian Muslims of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially their toleration of African Traditional practices. Consequently, he waged a holy war (*jihad*) against those who did not accept Islam, or those who were compromising Islam with the traditional religion.<sup>160</sup> It was a vicious and brutal campaign that led to the massacre of hundreds of thousands of the indigenous population. Thus, Dan Fodio forced many Hausas and other minority ethnic groups to abandon the traditional religion and accept Islam. Since the exploits of Dan Fodio, extreme violence has remained a consistent pattern in the spread of Islam among minority ethnic groups in northern Nigeria. We agree with Awolalu that “it can be asserted that from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to about the middle of this century (20<sup>th</sup> century), there was a big struggle between the imported religions and the indigenous religion held by Nigerians”.<sup>161</sup> As a result of the encounter, Awolalu argues, “the indigenous culture was badly shaken. Many Nigerians became so westernized, Christianized, and Islamized that they came to look down on things indigenous and traditional.”<sup>162</sup> This leads us to examine closely the relationship between Islam and other religions and, how the Islamic understanding of salvation compares to the Christian interpretation.

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<sup>158</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 114.

<sup>159</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 114.

<sup>160</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 114.

<sup>161</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 115.

<sup>162</sup> Awolalu, “The Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions in Nigeria,” 115.



### 4.3 The Understanding of Salvation in Islam

The concept of salvation in Islam is not understood in the same way as in Christianity or Judaism. In Islam, “the most important teaching is the complete submission or self-surrender to God the One, without doing the same for any other purpose, object, or person except Him.”<sup>163</sup> To devote oneself without total submission and surrender to God is not genuine and is therefore illegitimate.<sup>164</sup> This point of view is supported by an Islamic writer like Badr al-Din Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah al-Zakashi who posits that “those who hear in (the Qu’ran) the words of the Truth (God), they become annihilated before Him and their attributes effaced.”<sup>165</sup> Al-Zakashi insists that the believer is to say with Abraham: “I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe.”<sup>166</sup> Another Islamic writer, Zafrulla Kahn, in his translation of the Qur’an asserts: “Live every moment in submission to Allah, so that death whenever it comes should find you in a state of submission to Him.”<sup>167</sup>

One common element shared by Islam and ATR is that one does not make any distinction between the religious and the secular. On the contrary, “the whole of life is to be lived in the presence of Allah and is the sphere of God’s absolute claim and limitless compassion and mercy.”<sup>168</sup> Understood in this sense, therefore, *islam* is focused on God-centredness, which is both an inner submission to the sole Lord of the universe, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a pattern of corporate life in accordance with God’s will. It involves both *salat*, worship, and *falah*, the good embodied in behaviour.<sup>169</sup>

The Islamic way of life is holistic. It encompasses the spheres of politics, government, law, commerce, science and arts, all in obedience to God.<sup>170</sup> Due to the fact that Islam has a holistic concept of life, we do not see as in Christianity the type of distinction between Church and state. The Qur’anic demand is for Muslims to “turn from human self-centredness to an individual and communal life in obedience to God’s commands, as revealed in the Qur’an and

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<sup>163</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, “Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations Among the Believers,” in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, eds. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 490.

<sup>164</sup> Madjid, “Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations Among the Believers,” 491.

<sup>165</sup> Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters* (Albany, New Jersey: State University of New York Press, 1984), 25.

<sup>166</sup> Qur’an 2, 131.

<sup>167</sup> Qur’an, “Surah 2, 132”, trans., Zafrulla Khan (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1971).

<sup>168</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Response to the Transcendent* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), 48.

<sup>169</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 48.

<sup>170</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 49.

expounded in the Shariah.”<sup>171</sup> Indeed, “the *islam*, or God-centred existence, embodied in this earthly pattern is a life at peace with God, trusting in his mercy and compassion and hoping beyond this world for the joys of paradise.”<sup>172</sup>

On the salvation of non-Muslims, Nurcholish Madjid refers to the explanation given by Muhammad Asad when he comments:

With a breadth of vision unparalleled in any other religious faith, the idea of “salvation” is here made conditional upon three elements only: belief in God, belief in the Day of Judgement, and righteous action in life. The statement of this doctrine at this juncture – that is, in the midst of an appeal to the children of Israel – is warranted by the false Jewish belief that their descent from Abraham entitles them to be regarded as “God’s chosen people.”<sup>173</sup>

In this passage, Madjid agrees with Muhammad Asad, who insists that God’s saying affirms that anyone whether they be a descendant of the Prophet Abraham, like the Jews, or not, can obtain salvation as long as they have faith in God and Judgement Day, and they do good deeds.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, in this interpretation of Islam, salvation is awarded not based on factors of descent, but based on faithfulness to God and the Day of Judgement, and the carrying out of good deeds. It is this principle that is much emphasized in the Qur’an.<sup>175</sup>

#### **4.3.1 Islam in Northern Nigeria**

We are examining Islam in northern Nigeria in the light of the two theological principles from de Lubac, Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth. The purpose of this section of our research is to examine critically the evolution of Islam in northern Nigeria, and how the internal divisions within Islamic communities can be explained within our problematic, which is that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation. Our contention is that it is possible to maintain the uniqueness of Christ as well as the relationship between the Church and universal humanity. In northern Nigeria, we are confronted with two realities; there are Islamic groups like the *Shi’a*, who are called Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and *Izala*, a Sunni Islamic sect, who are open to dialogue with Christianity and other religions, and, Boko Haram, a terrorist organization who adopt a hard-line attitude to Christianity and other religions. Owing to the over one thousand years of Islam

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<sup>171</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 49.

<sup>172</sup> Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 49.

<sup>173</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, “Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations Among the Believers,” in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspective*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, eds., John J. Donohue & John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 494.

<sup>174</sup> Madjid, “Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations Among the Believers,” 494.

<sup>175</sup> Madjid, “Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations Among the Believers,” 495.

in Nigeria, an historical approach will play a key part in our analysis. The aim is to identify the different nuances to the Islamic attitudes to Christianity and other religions.

There are two best known phases of how the Islamic religion came to Nigeria. The origin of the first goes back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This means that Islam was in northern Nigeria only two hundred years after it was founded by Prophet Mohammed himself. It was well enshrined by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when scholars and trade merchants from North Africa made inroads through the trade routes of the Sahara Desert into what later became northern Nigeria. During this phase, Islam was mainly a religion of the elite, with the Kanem Bornu Empire, on the northeast of Lake Chad, the first part of latter-day Nigeria to get Islamized.<sup>176</sup> By the sixteenth century, Islam had become the religion of the empire. During this period, elites in other parts of northern Nigeria who accepted Islam had also begun forging diplomatic alliances and exchanges with Muslim leaders in other parts of the continent. As a result of these exchanges, Arabic literature also began making inroads into the country. For Abiodun Alao, despite the advances of Islam into northern Nigeria, indigenous religion still had considerable numbers of adherents. It was this remnant that was to wait for the second phase of Islamization of northern Nigeria.<sup>177</sup>

The second and most recent phase of Islamization in Nigeria was the 19<sup>th</sup> century jihad of Usman Dan Fodio. Best regarded as a social reformer and Islamic scholar, Dan Fodio, in 1804, “led a great jihad which within 50 years, swept all Hausa rulers off their thrones and established Fulani hegemony in most of the present-day northern Nigeria.”<sup>178</sup> This important event was preceded by the arrival, from Senegambia and Mali, of migrant Muslim scholars like the Wagarawa, Fulani and Kunta, who contributed to a second stream of the spread of Islam among the various peoples of pre-colonial northern Nigeria.<sup>179</sup> Abdul Raufu Mustapha has shown that:

Musa Jakollo, a Toronkawa Fulani, arrived around 1450; many generations later, in 1755, his family of scholars and teachers produced Shaikh Uthman dan Fodio, who led a jihad of 1804 that established the Sokoto Caliphate, a theocracy composed of 30

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<sup>176</sup> Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” in *Country Report*, 6. For more detailed discussion, see, Kenneth W. Morgan, ed., *Islam, the Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), 247.

<sup>177</sup> Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” 7.

<sup>178</sup> Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” 7.

<sup>179</sup> Abdul Raufu Mustapha, “Introduction: Interpreting Islam Sufis, Salafis, Shi’ites & Islamists in northern Nigeria,” in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, ed., Abdul Raufu Mustafa (Suffolk, GB: James Currey, 2014), 2.

emirates and sub-emirates, stretching from present-day Burkina Faso in West Africa, to Cameroon in Central Africa.<sup>180</sup>

Shaikh ‘Uthman dan Fodio led an Islamist revivalist movement with the aim of promoting his *tajdeed* (reform) principles. Indeed, he championed the revival of the *Sunna* of the Prophet and the stricter implementation of Qur’anic legal principles. His quest for reform of governance soon put him against the erstwhile rulers, who were seen as being nominally Muslims.<sup>181</sup> It did not take a long time before Islam became the dominant religion. Through contacts with other groups, trade and war, Islam expanded and penetrated the south-west of Nigeria dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group. It has been pointed out that “the most important consequence of the jihads was the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest political unit in nineteenth century West Africa, a confederation of states (emirates) held together by common aims and religious allegiance to the *Amir al-Mumini* (Commander of the Believers)...Stress was laid upon the uniqueness and exclusiveness of Islam and its opposition to any form of accommodation with African traditional beliefs.”<sup>182</sup> The brand of Islam propagated by the jihadists was reformist and ultraconservative. However, in practice, it proved problematic as many of the participants in the jihad could not sustain the emphasis on religious purity. For many of the followers of the jihadists, the overriding interest was political and economic considerations rather than the purification and spread of Islam. Victory in the war campaigns brought them economic and political gains. It is this situation that leads Mustapha to posit that “despite the victory of the jihad and efforts to consolidate its ideological harmony, the death of Shaikh dan Fodio in 1817 saw the gradual restoration of many pre-jihad practices and titles. This erosion formed the basis for subsequent calls for reform and revivalism, especially after the imposition of colonial rule and the formal transfer of power to Christian colonialists.”<sup>183</sup> It is within this context that many in northern Nigeria continue to look for inspiration to the history of the 1804 jihad and the Caliphate. Besides, it is this constant struggle to promote revivalism and reform that has also fuelled the further fragmentation of the Muslim community into competing sects and engendered a climate of hostility between some of them. The expansion of the jihad was brought to an end by British colonial government. Despite colonial rule, the British retained

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<sup>180</sup> Mustapha, “Introduction, 2. See Ousmane Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal and Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 33.

<sup>181</sup> Mustapha, “Introduction, 2.

<sup>182</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenge of Inclusive Pluralism*, 9-10. See Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa: The Cases of Northern Nigeria and Tanzania Compared* (London and New York: British Academic Press, 1960), 6.

<sup>183</sup> Mustapha, “Introduction: Interpreting Islam Sufis, Salafis, Shi’ites & Islamists in northern Nigeria”, 2.

some of the administrative structures created after the jihad as part of their policy of managing colonies through their established governance structures.

#### 4.3.2 Islam and Pluralism in Northern Nigeria

Of the three Abrahamic religions, Islam acknowledges inclusion, which is evident in its sacred text, the Qur'an. According to Ahmad S. Moussalli, "a main factor in establishing the legitimacy of pluralism, differences, and diversity was the Qur'an itself."<sup>184</sup> Jews and Christians, along with Muslims, are identified as people of the book (*Ahl al-Kittab*), a reference to the reverence Muslims are enjoined to accord the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament Bible. Muslims are equally enjoined to give unreserved respect and honour to the founding prophets of Judaism and Christianity (Moses and Jesus Christ, respectively) and to all other prophets that came before Mohammed. Islam unflinchingly holds that all good Christians and Jews will go to heaven as well as all good Muslims. Evidently, the Qur'an essentially promotes and honours the diversity of religion as the will of God, which is foundational to the theology of pluralism. Indeed, religious inclusion for Muslims is obligatory, especially relative to the Abrahamic religions. Yet, ironically today, Muslims engage in some of their greatest (except for the incessant intra-Muslims conflicts) violent conflicts against Christians and Jews across the globe. Iwuchukwu observes that "in the case of northern Nigeria, where both Christianity and Islam are foreign religions, their greatest rivals and adversaries are not African Traditional Religions (which both of them theologically resent and are ontologically programmed to conquer and supplant) but each other."<sup>185</sup>

Islam has never been monolithic. Its basic feature being dynamism which has created deep rooted diversity among Muslims. Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Mukhtar U. Bunza are of the view that "the formation of associations to advance the cause of the religion is not new in the historical evolution of Islam"<sup>186</sup> They argue that different sects, ideologies, and schools of thought have emerged within the religion throughout Islamic history. Mustapha and Bunza contend that within the context of the macro split between Sunni and Shi'a Islam, there are four Sunni and three Shi'a Schools of Law (*fiqh*) and about 313 Sufi Brotherhoods throughout the Sunni Muslim world.<sup>187</sup> Historically, therefore, Islam has been characterized by the pluralism

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<sup>184</sup> Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 107.

<sup>185</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 158.

<sup>186</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in northern Nigeria," 56.

<sup>187</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in northern Nigeria," 56.

of its expression in specific geographical, historical, and social contexts.<sup>188</sup> Although Islam is the majority religion in the North-Western and North-Eastern states of Nigeria, the Middle-Belt of the country has either majority Christian populations or are nearly even in terms of number of adherents.<sup>189</sup> Besides, there is a sprinkling of followers of African Traditional Religions. There are significant variations in the distribution of Muslims between these states. The states in the North-West zone have the highest percentage of Muslims in their population, followed by the states in the North-East and the north-central zones in that descending order.

At the start of the Sokoto Jihad in 1804, virtually all Muslims in northern Nigeria subscribed to Sunni Islam of the Maliki School, with most elites also belonging to the Qadiriyya *tariqa* or Brotherhood. By 1830, however, we see the introduction of the rival Tijaniyya *tariqa*. Currently, the majority of Nigeria's Muslims are Sunni, estimated at 95 per cent, and belong to the Qadiriya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders.<sup>190</sup> In the contemporary period, the Islamic doctrinal landscape has further fragmented into a myriad of competing sects and groups, including different groups of Sufis, Salafists, jihadists, Shi'ites, Islamic women's organizations, ethnic Yoruba Muslim organizations and a host of idiosyncratic sects, some oriented towards violent politics. The process of the fragmentation of Muslim identities has resulted in the individualization of religious affiliation and heightened competition for followers in a 'prayer economy' led by the '*ulama*'.<sup>191</sup> For the purpose of this research, we shall examine these major Islam sects in northern Nigeria. Their study will give us a broad view of their doctrinal positions and show how Islam in northern Nigeria understands itself in relation to non-Islamic religions and clarify the question of salvation for their members and others.

#### 4.3.3 Major Islamic Sects in Northern Nigeria

This section examines that Islam in northern Nigeria is not monolithic. It highlights the fact that the emergence of Boko Haram's *jihadi-salafi* ideology is not the product of a single historical event or the creation of Muhammad Yusuf [the former leader of Boko Haram]; rather,

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<sup>188</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in northern Nigeria," 56.

<sup>189</sup> The Nigerian states of the Middle-Belt we refer to are Benue, Kogi, Plateau, Nassarawa and Taraba. Also, it includes Kwara, Adamawa, the Federal Capital Territory alongside Southern Kaduna, Southern Bauchi, Southern Kebbi, Southern Gombe, Southern Yobe state and Southern Borno.

<sup>190</sup> International Crisis Group Working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide, "Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict," in *Africa Report*, no. 168 (20 December 2010).

<sup>191</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria," 54-55. In Islam, the *ulama* are the guardians, transmitters and interpreters of religious knowledge in Islam, including Islamic doctrine and law. By longstanding tradition, *ulama* are educated in religious institutions. The Qu'ran and Sunnah, are the scriptural sources of traditional Islamic law.

it is an evolved philosophically partly from the loss of power of Islamic traditions in a new and unfamiliar colonial context in northern Nigeria and partly from the gradual incursion of religious philosophies from the Middle East and North Africa into northern Nigeria.<sup>192</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim opines that “the tradition of Islamic revivalism popularly referred to as *tajdid* developed in northern Nigeria as the product of the ideologization of Islam, which had its roots in the distinctive Islamic revolutionary movement established by Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio.”<sup>193</sup> The theological focus of Dan Fodio was renew, revive, and strengthen not the Islamic syncretic and heathen practices that were ubiquitous in northern Nigeria, but an alternative interpretation of Islam as a puritanical and monotheistic ideology.<sup>194</sup> Other influential Islamic groups in northern Nigeria are the Saudi-linked *Jama at ‘izalat al-bida wa iqamat al-sunna* [Group for Removing Religious Innovation and Establishing Sunna], the Iranian-backed Islamic Movement of Nigeria, the Senegal-linked *Tijaniyyah* and *Qadiriyyah* Sufi brotherhoods, the Egyptian-linked *Jama ‘atul Tajdid Islam* [Movement for the Revival of Islam], or the *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS-linked Boko Haram. All these diverse Islamic groups have their interpretations of Islamic law and traditions to which we have to attentively listen. No doubt, pluralism affects Islam in Nigeria at two levels; the first is within Islam itself; and, secondly, between Islam and other religions or people of no religion.

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<sup>192</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” in *ResearchGate*, September 2015, 187.

<http://www.researchgate.net/publication/282396632> (Accessed September 24, 2019).

<sup>193</sup> Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” 187. For a more detailed explication on the life and works of Uthman Dan Fodio see F.H. El-Masri, “The Life of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio before the Jihad,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2:4 (1963), 435-448; Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967); Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Ibraheem Suleiman, *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Usman b. Fodio*, (London/New York: Mansell, 1986). Bayan Wujub al-hijra ‘ala ‘l-‘ibad, ed. and trans. F.H. El-Masri (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1978), ch. 1-5, 48-60.

<sup>194</sup> Uthman b. Fodio, *Bayan Wujub al-hijra ‘ala ‘l-‘ibad*, ed. and trans. F.H. El-Masri (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1978), ch. 1-5, 48-60.

#### 4.3.4 Sufism

The biggest Islamic groups within northern Nigeria are the Sufis. According to Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Muktar U. Bunza, “Sufism is the individual spiritual quest to get closer to God. It can also be defined as an attempt to interpret Islam in the context of the prevailing – often seen as corrupting – times.”<sup>195</sup> For Shaikh Ibrahim Niasse, “the Sufi is the son of his hour (*ibn waqtihi*).”<sup>196</sup> The aim of Sufism, or *tasawwuf* is to purify

man’s heart and employing his senses and faculties in the way of God, to live a life at the spiritual level. *Tasawwuf* also enables man, through constant performance of the acts of worshipping God, to deepen his conscience of being a servant of God. It enables him to renounce the world with respect to its transient dimension and the face of it that is turned to human desires and fancies, and awakens him to the other world and to the face of this world that is turned toward the Divine Beautiful Names.<sup>197</sup>

This passage refers to Sufism as the cultivation of good character, awareness of God and surrender to God’s will, often in the context of a challenging environment.<sup>198</sup> Jonathan Hill refers to J. Esposito who defines the Sufis as “Muslims who take seriously God’s call to perceive his presence both in the world and in the self...[and who] stress inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction.”<sup>199</sup> It is this worldview that leads them to certain unique practices in the Islamic community. The Sufis are noted for their rigorous fulfilment of all obligatory religious duties, the undertaking of additional voluntary prayers day and night, the constant remembrance (*zikr or dhikr*) of Allah, the unceasing *salawaat* (invocations of blessings) on Prophet Muhammed, fasting, charity, *zuhd* (abstinence) and *juhd* (exertion in the way of Allah) as exemplified by the Prophet (Qadiriya n.d.).<sup>200</sup> When the Sufis perform rituals and rites, the core purpose is the purification of the self. This is given more prominence than the purification of society. However, Mustapha and Bunza posit that “many Sufi orders are identified with specific ritualistic practices, which constantly seek ‘to realise the presence of God.’”<sup>201</sup> For the Sufi, the emphasis was the transformation of the individual over society

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<sup>195</sup> Mustapha & Bunza., “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” 56.

<sup>196</sup> Hassan Cisse, “Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Niasse,” 1984, <http://tijani.org/haykh-al-islam-ibrahim-niasse>, (Accessed May 28, 2018).

<sup>197</sup> Ibrahim Niasse, *World of Tasawwuf*, [www.spiritualfoundation.net/sufismhtm#976353022008](http://www.spiritualfoundation.net/sufismhtm#976353022008) (Accessed May 31, 2019).

<sup>198</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” 57.

<sup>199</sup> Jonathan Hill, “Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for Counter-Radicalization?” Strategic Studies Institute, (Carlisle PA: U.S. Army War College, 16-17 [www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil](http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil) (Accessed May 29, 2019).

<sup>200</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, 57.

<sup>201</sup> World of Tasawwuf 2008, [www.spiritualfoundation.net/sufismhtm#97635302](http://www.spiritualfoundation.net/sufismhtm#97635302) (Accessed May 31, .2019).



because they were of the view that the society can hardly be reformed if the individual's mind is corrupted. It is for this reason that Ricardo R. Larémont maintains that the Sufi give prominence to *jihad al nafsi* (internal struggle to conquer the self) over *jihad al-kharij* (external jihad targeted at the conquest of others).<sup>202</sup> Another distinctive feature of the Sufi is that there is a clear distinction between the Shaikhs and their disciples. The Shaikhs are seen as God's chosen spiritual guides for the people, blessed with Baraka (charisma or grace), the fruit of which can be transmitted to their followers who seek *tarbiyat al-nafs* or guiding of the soul. It is not surprising that in northern Nigeria, they command considerable reverence with important political and social ramifications. Other unique features of Sufi groups are their mysticism and their veneration of saints. This reverence for saints and Shaikhs is an important distinction between the Sufis and the more iconoclastic Salafists.<sup>203</sup>

This exposition on the Sufis reveals striking closeness to the Christian faith to which we can auscultate. The Sufi quest for the purification of the self, *jihad al nafsi* (internal struggle to conquer the self) over *jihad al-kharj* (external jihad targeted at the conquest of others), veneration of saints, their respect for leaders, fulfilment of religious duties, practice of prayer, fasting, abstinence, charity are areas that are similar to the Christian faith. *Nostra Aetate* has prepared us for these Sufi values, when it teaches about Islam in general: "They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, whose faith Muslims eagerly link to their own."<sup>204</sup> Again, *Nostra Aetate* asserts that "although not acknowledging him [Jesus] as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his Virgin Mother they also honour, and even at times devoutly invoke".<sup>205</sup> Certainly, these agree with our position when we referred to de Lubac and St. Thomas Aquinas that "All truth, by whomsoever expressed, comes from the Holy Spirit of man a movement to understand and speak what is true."<sup>206</sup> As we observed in the second chapter, de Lubac reiterated that the Christian faith obliges us to auscultate and dialogue with difference, because we can never let up on truth irrespective of its source. Moreover, de Lubac identifies the Church with that spirit of openness. Earlier we noted that traditionally the majority of Nigeria's Muslims are Sunni belonging to the Qadiriya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders. It is outside the scope of our research to

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<sup>202</sup> Ricardo R. Larémont, *Islamic Law and Politics in Northern Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Trenton New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2011), 164.

<sup>203</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria", in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, 57.

<sup>204</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3.

<sup>206</sup> *Supra*, 72.

examine in details these two sects. however, we will proceed with an exposition of Boko Haram, an extreme Islamic sect, which is responsible for the death of thousands of people and a lot of destruction on its way.

#### **4.3.5 Boko Haram, or Jama ‘atu Ahlul Sunna li Da ‘awati wal Jihad**

Our exposition of Boko Haram is key to our research for a few reasons. The first is that it is an unfolding religious phenomenon; one that has never happened in the history of any religious group in Nigeria. Boko Haram stands alone because it made a transition from a reformist Islamic sect into a deadly terrorist organization. The end result is that Boko Haram’s activities have resulted in the deaths of more than 20,000 people and the displacement of 5.5 million in the Lake Chad basin.<sup>207</sup> Secondly, Boko Haram’s rigid puritanical interpretation of Islam means that it is uncompromising towards dialogue with other Muslims, who disagree with them and with people of other religions, especially Christians. The extreme misunderstanding of Christianity and the violence unleashed by Boko Haram, highlights the timeless significance of inclusive pluralism, which upholds the relationship between the Church and universal humanity. This is possible because all humanity is connected to Christ, by virtue of creation, not in an external way, but organically. The violence against other religions by Boko Haram highlights the difficulty of interreligious dialogue with extremist sects. This leads us to take to heart the suggestion of Marinus C. Iwuchuckwu for an “inclusive religious and cultural pluralism for northern Nigeria,” on the one hand, and, listening with “large ears” as suggested by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, which we will treat in details later in this chapter.

Boko Haram started in Maiduguri in the north-east of Nigeria in the early 2000s, but its influence has spread to all parts of the north. We will analyse the doctrinal and ideological development of this Boko Haram, given the violence unleashed by the group and the political, economic and sociological implications of their actions.<sup>208</sup> In addition, Boko Haram evolved

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<sup>207</sup> Atta Barkindo, “How Boko Haram Exploits History and Memory,” in Africa Research Institute, *CounterPoints*, October 2016, 1.

<sup>208</sup> Stuart Elden, <http://progressivegeographies.com/2013/02/14/boko-haram-an-annotated-bibliography>. See Abdulkareem Muhammed, *The Paradox of Boko Haram* (Kano, Nigeria: Moving Image, 2010); Ahmad Salkida, “The Story of Nigeria’s first Suicide Bomber”, in *BluePrint Magazine*, Sahara Reporters, 27 June, <http://saharareporters.com> (Accessed June 20, 2019); “Genesis and Consequences of Boko Haram Crisis,” in Kano Online, <http://kanoonline.com> (Accessed June 20, 2019); A. Hizaki, “Les origines et la transformation de l’insurrection de Boko Haram dans le nord du Nigeria”, *Politique Africaine*, 130, 137-64; “Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in North-East Nigeria,” in *CERI Publication*, Sciences Po, Paris, 4 July; Perouse de Montclos & Marc-Antoine, “Boko Haram and Politics: From Insurgency to Terrorism,” in Marc-Antoine de Montclos, ed., *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State of Nigeria*, West African Politics and

into a *jihadi-Salafi* ideology for many reasons. Firstly, the change in the Islamic way of life in northern Nigeria, partly because of British colonial rule which led to the loss of power of Islamic traditions. Secondly, the introduction of Islamic religious philosophies from the Middle East and North Africa into northern Nigeria which led to radicalization in many communities.<sup>209</sup>

Abdulbasit Kassim is of the view that prior to the ideological crossing of Boko Haram into jihadi-Salafi milieu, the late Muhammad Yusuf and his acolytes – most of whom could be described as iconoclasts – were heavily influenced by the scholars of quietist and politico Salafism such as the late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, the late Sheikh Muhammad Auwal Albani, Sheikh Muhammad Abba Aji, Imam Ali Gabchiya and Sheikh Abubakar Mujahid.<sup>210</sup> According to Kassim, “differences in the interpretation of doctrinal issues in Islam-such as the propriety or impropriety of Muslim participation in western education and secular democracy-reduced the ephemeral influences of these scholars on Boko Haram.”<sup>211</sup> However, the contact between Boko Haram and *jihadi-Salafi* groups in the Islamic Maghreb and the subsequent exposure to their ideologues and to the religious philosophy of *jihadi-Salafism* aggravated the schisms with earlier scholars.<sup>212</sup> Kassim opines that it was this exposure and cross-fertilization of jihadi-Salafi ideologies that expedited the theological indoctrination of Boko Haram from mere preaching against Western education into the radical strain of *jihadi-Salafism*, where members of the group acquired the theological imprimatur to fight against all obstacles –

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Society, Vol. 2 (Leiden and Ibadan: African Studies Centres and Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, 2014).

<sup>209</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” in *ResearchGate*, September 2015, 187.

<sup>210</sup> Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” 188.

<sup>211</sup> Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” 188. Most of the detailed analysis of the transcripts of the polemical debates between the first leader of Boko Haram and the quietist Salafi scholars such as Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, Malam Isa Aliyu Pantami and Mallam Idris Abdul Aziz can be found in the following scholarly works: See Anonymous, “The Popular Discourses of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Boko Haram,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 42 (2012), 123-139; Abdalla Uba Adamu, “African Neo-Kharijites and Islamic Militancy Against Authority: The Boko Haram/Yusufiyya Kharijites of Northern Nigeria”, paper presented to the Islam in Africa Working Group of the African Studies Centre, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 24 February 2010, 15-20; Andrea Brigaglia, “A Contribution to the History of the Wahhabi Da'wa in West Africa: The Career and the Murder of Shaykh Ja'far Mahmoud Adam Salafis between Boko Haram and the State”, *Islamic Africa* 3:1 (2012), 1-23. Alex Thurston, “Nigeria's Mainstream Salafis between Boko Haram and the State”, *Islamic Africa*, 6 (2015), 117-122.

<sup>212</sup> Andrea Brigaglia, “Ja'far Mahmud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria,” *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 11 (2012): 35-44.

including the established secular systems often described as man-made constructs devoid of legitimacy – preventing the restoration of decimated Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria.<sup>213</sup>

The transnational influence of *jihadi-Salafi* ideology on Boko Haram’s first leader Muhammad Yusuf is pervasive as reflected in his only book “*Hadhihi Aqidatuna wa Minhaju Da’awatuna*” (This is our Creed and the Methodology of our Preaching). Muhammad Yusuf outlines a summary of the religious philosophy of Boko Haram when he remarks:

Our religion is Islam, our creed is the creed of the *al-salaf al-salih Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jama’ah*, and our *manhaj* is jihad. We believe that the *Shariah* is the only truth. The constitution is a lie, it is *Kufr*. Democracy is a lie; it is *Kufr*. Working with the government that does not rule by the *Shariah* is a lie; it is *Kufr*. For those who are ignorant, let them be aware that it is important for a Muslim to make *hijrah* from the institutions established by the *tawaghit*.<sup>214</sup>

Muhammad Yusuf’s book “*Hadhihi Aqidatuna wa Minhaju Da’awatuna*” (This is our Creed and the Methodology of our Preaching) gives the clearest insights into the ideology of Boko Haram. For Muhammad Yusuf, any form of executive, legislative, and judicial function derived from the secular constitution rather than from the *Shariah* is at variance with his version of Islam. Yusuf posits that the right to legislate belongs to God alone and any government or constitution that undermines God’s divine legislation can be classified as *taghut*. This explains why Muhammad Yusuf laid so much emphasis on preaching to his followers about the obligation of performing *hijrah* (migration) and making *bara’ah* from the government and its institutions as precursors for the preparation to wage *jihad* against political rulers in northern Nigeria, whom he described as infidels and *tawaghit* who have refused to embrace Islamic political doctrine of ruling based on *Shariah*.<sup>215</sup> Muhammad Yusuf, the first leader of Boko Haram, was so convinced that any Muslim who subjects himself to the institutions established

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<sup>213</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” 188.

<sup>214</sup> This translation is by Abdulbasit Kassim, of “*Littafin Haazihi Aqeedatuna\_010a.wmv*,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWfWa2rfsKw&list=UUdXgmSgdqk3HIwFnZcYuweA>, and “*Littafin Haazihi Aqeedatuna\_010b.wmv*,”

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OFTRSi5Ips&list=UUdXgmSgdqk3HIwFnZcYuweA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFTRSi5Ips&list=UUdXgmSgdqk3HIwFnZcYuweA) (Accessed September 30, 2019). This book has also been translated by Dr Yusuf Abdullahi Yusuf. Another translation of Muhammed Yusuf’s book is given by Atta Barkindo: “This is our creed and the methodology of propagation.” See Atta Barkindo, “How Boko Haram Exploits History and Memory,” in *Africa Research Institute: Counterpoints*, October 2016, 1. *Tawaghit* is the Islamic terminology denoting a focus of worship other than Allah...The modern Islamic philosopher Abul A’la Maududi defines *taghut* in his Qur’anic commentary as a creature who not only rebels against God but transgresses his will.

<sup>215</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim, “Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram,” 189.

by the secular state has committed a major unbelief and polytheism that leads directly to expulsion from the religion. Regarding such Muslims Yusuf remarks:

Those who formulate evil laws in their parliaments have made themselves partners to God, whether or not they feel it, whether or not they agree to this or disagree, whether or not they meant it ... those who follow the legislative [sic] system and agree to take their cases to these courts are in agreement with *taghut* and are idolaters.<sup>216</sup>

For Muhammad Yusuf, any law that is not strictly Islamic is an offence against God. As Abdulbasit Kassim has observed, Yusuf goes to the extent of arguing that the abandonment of *jihad* by the Muslims has contributed to the prevalence of unbelief, polytheism, the supremacy of the laws of the Jews and Christians and the spread of immorality, corruption, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, consumption of alcohol, and other great tribulations that befell the followers of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>217</sup> Significantly, Yusuf went further to incite his followers to make preparation to wage jihad against the government of Nigeria and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), an ecumenical body that represents all Nigeria's Christians. Yusuf's contention is that the government and the Christian body were formed and are in alliance to oppress Muslims in Nigeria.<sup>218</sup> Many reasons have been given as to why Boko Haram embarked upon a long-term violent terrorism or revenge mission against the state, Christians, and other groups. However, it is not within the scope of this study to cover all these reasons. What is paramount to us is that the ideology of Boko Haram prior to the government crackdown in 2009 is geared toward the preparation for a long-term cataclysmic confrontation with the secular authorities in Nigeria.<sup>219</sup> Indeed, "fighting jihad is the *raison d'être* of Boko Haram."<sup>220</sup>

In 2009, Muhammad Yusuf died in the custody of the Nigeria police. He was succeeded by Abubakar Shekau (second leader of Boko Haram). Shekau aligned Boko Haram's ideology to fit closely with the ideology of jihadi-Salafism. In one of his videos titled: "Message to the

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<sup>216</sup> Kyari Mohammed, "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram," in *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, ed. Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2014), 16. See Anonymous, "The Popular Discourses of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-Radicalism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Boko Haram," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42 (2012), 127.

<sup>217</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," 190.

<sup>218</sup> Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," 190.

<sup>219</sup> Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," 190.

<sup>220</sup> Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of jihadi-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," 191.

African Leaders especially Idris Déby,” Shekau articulated his opposition to secular laws and their allies. Shekau asserts:

Do you know about democracy at all? You hear them talking about Abraham Lincoln, Aminu Kano and Tafawa Balewa; these individuals are all infidels. They all rejected the Qur’an as a source of legislation and they choose the constitutions as a replacement of the Qur’an, when in actual reality they know that the constitution is not the book of God. God has made this issue very clear in the Qur’an; this is why He said that all the rights of legislation belongs to Him alone, and He has commanded His servants to worship no other god except Him alone. That is our own religion.<sup>221</sup>

Shekau did not hide his disdain for liberal democracy, and Muslim leaders who support their values. Little wonder he vehemently criticised the Emir of Kano, Ado Bayero (1930-2014), north west Nigeria, who was a vocal critic of Boko Haram and with a different take on how society should be governed. Shekau preached urging his followers to violence against Christians and other religions when he remarked:

We are the *Jama’atu Ahlus-Suunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad* that has been maliciously branded Boko Haram. Everybody knows about the gruesome murders of Muslims in different parts of Nigeria. Jos is a testimony of the gruesome killings of our Muslims brethren and the abductions of our women and children whose whereabouts are still unknown. My message to my Muslim brethren is that they should know that this war is a war between Muslims and infidels. This is a religious war.<sup>222</sup>

As far as Shekau is concerned Christians are in opposition to *Shariah*, therefore, the need for jihad. Shekau takes advantage of long-standing conflicts between Christians and Muslims in some parts of Nigeria to advocate for jihad against Christians. For Shekau the only acceptable political solution of Boko Haram for the reformation of northern Nigeria is jihad and anything short of jihad will be rejected by the group. He blatantly urged his followers to take up arms and wage jihad for the liberation of the entire universe:

I call on all my brethren, wherever you are: May God make this video reach you. I have given you the permission to rise and take up arms and start killing these vagabonds. Kill them, kill them and kill them. Today our religion is nothing but killings, killings and killings! Kill and slaughter, but don’t eat them. Abstain from killing their elderly, women, the insane, and anyone who repents. Anybody who rebels against Allah, kill

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<sup>221</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim’s translation of the video “Boko Haram’s Shekau on the Abduction of Chibok School Girls”, TRAC Focus on Nigeria, see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm21dvevMBU&list=TLJ-B\\_jJGSqcXKenZHLtwC2uanpJcC&z](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm21dvevMBU&list=TLJ-B_jJGSqcXKenZHLtwC2uanpJcC&z) (Accessed June 30, 2019).

<sup>222</sup> Abdulbasit Kassim’s translation of the video “Boko Haram Leader, Abubakar Shekau Claims Responsibility on Barracks Attack”, TRAC Focus on Nigeria, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pba8uvuf9Is> (Accessed June 30, 2019).

him. By Allah, I will kill you. Killing is my job. Let's kill them all; we'd rather leave this world. Let the whole world perish! May Allah curse you!<sup>223</sup>

This is without question one of the most inciteful comments ever put out by Boko Haram. Shekau commands his followers to kill those who disagree with Boko Haram ideology as a means of promoting an Islamic state. What followed was an intensification of targeted assassinations, burning of schools and telecommunications base stations, the kidnapping of locals and foreigners for ransom, sometimes in neighbouring countries and the wholesale sacking of villages perceived as hostile to its ambition, extortion of money and provisions from the population and in many cases forcibly recruiting young men to join its ranks, or inducing them with money or the prospect of youthful excitement to join the sect as informants or combatants.<sup>224</sup> Shekau's Boko Haram is extreme and poses a challenge to what de Lubac suggests in his principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth. In the first place, Shekau's Boko Haram has no place for attentive listening or dialogue. His perspective of truth is inimical to the understanding of truth which recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them. Boko Haram's position is the worse form of an "exclusivist view," which does not value difference and inclusion. Marinus C. Iwuchukwu commenting on the state of interreligious dialogue in northern Nigeria posits that "exclusivism breeds and promotes anti-dialogic worldview and assumption."<sup>225</sup> The violent attacks on Christians and other groups who differed from Boko Haram negates the sense of a common humanity and common destiny which de Lubac believed in. This goes to show that Boko Haram has not arrived yet at dialogue. But the spirit of interreligious engagement is still active in the larger society. It is now opportune to examine the third major group in the Islamic community in Nigeria, namely, the Shi'a called Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), or Muslim Brothers.

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<sup>223</sup> Shekau: "The Warlord," Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), available at <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/who-real-abubakar-shekau-aka-abu-muhammad-abubakar-bin-muhammad-boko-harams-renegade-warlo-5> (Accessed June 30, 2019).

<sup>224</sup> Abdul Raufu Mustapha "Understanding Boko Haram," 153-4.

<sup>225</sup> Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenges of Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 151.

#### 4.3.6 Shi'a in Nigeria

The Islamic sect Shi'a is referred to as Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), or Muslim Brothers. It is unlike Boko Haram, which is a *Sunni* sect. While it advocates its own version of Islamic state, and, while not all its teachings and methods are agreeable to Christianity, nevertheless, it is by and large not violent to Christians or people of other religions. Its understanding of humanity is similar to what de Lubac opines in *Catholicisme*, a “passion for the destiny of a common humanity,” based on the creation of the human person in the image of God. Moreover, the two theological principles of de Lubac, namely, the principle of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth can be applied in dialogue with Shi'ites in Nigeria.

In the history of Islam, “the Shi'a sect is one of the earliest branching away from the established Sunni order.”<sup>226</sup> The sect started to take root after the death of the prophet Muhammed and the choice of Abubakar as the First Caliph by a gathering of religious and clan elders around 632-633 AD.<sup>227</sup> This choice led to the split between the Shi'a and the Sunni establishment. The key difference between the Shi'a and the Sunni is that “while Sunnis choose their leaders through community consensus, *ijma*,<sup>6</sup> Shi'ites, on the other hand, observe *nass*, literally ‘condition’ or ‘arrangement,’ through which a rightly-guided leader designates his successor.”<sup>228</sup> From this point of view, while the Shi'a, like other schools of thought in Islam, believe in the Qur'an and that the Prophet Mohammed is the Seal of the Prophets, they nevertheless reject the notion of choosing leaders for the Islamic community by consensus. The Shi'a believe that only God can designate the leader for His community on earth. It is in the light of this understanding that the Prophet's family and descendants are seen to have special divinely inspired spiritual and political claims to authority over the community. This is also the background to Shi'a belief that their Imams or leaders are divinely guided and are therefore free from error and sin. By definition, therefore, the Shi'a Imam is infallible. Just like the Sunni sect, the Shi'a too has fragmented into many minor sects.

In Nigeria, the sect is most associated with Shaikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky of the Muslim Brothers. According to Bunza, “initially, there was no Shi'a ideology attached to the *Movement*

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<sup>226</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” 70.

<sup>227</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria,” 70.

<sup>228</sup> Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1987). See Jonah Winters, “Origins of Shi'ism: A Consensus of Western Scholarship”, [http://bahi-library.com/winters\\_origins\\_schiism](http://bahi-library.com/winters_origins_schiism) (Accessed June 24, 2019); Abdulhussein Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler (al-Adil) in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantel of the Prophet*, Second Edition (London: Oneworld Publications, 2008); F. Draftary & G. Miskinzoda, eds., *The Study of Shi'ism: History, Theology and Law (Shi'i Heritage)* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).



for *Jihad and the Restoration of the Caliphate* which Shaikh El-Zakzaky formed.”<sup>229</sup> However, with time, it broke into two factions – the pro-Saudi Wahhabi-inclined *Da ‘wa* group, dedicated to missionary work, and the pro-Iranian *Umma* group, dedicated to the enthronement of Sharia and the establishment of an Islamic state. Subsequently, the *Umma* group split into the *Hodabiyya*, which favoured accommodation with the state, and the *yan Shi’a*, who gravitated towards Iranian Shi’ism.<sup>230</sup> Although IMN’S leans toward Shi’a, they claim to be part of the legacy of Shaikh Uthman dan Fodio. Again, despite the confrontational tone of its fiery rhetoric, the IMN has resorted to violence only exceptionally. Indeed, the organization actively pursues inter-faith dialogue for peaceful co-existence with Christians. This was demonstrated in August 2012 when Shaikh El-Zakzaky received a delegation from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in his headquarters, noting in his speech that

There is a saying of imam Ali (AS) that there are two types of humans, they are either your brothers in religion or your brothers in creation. No man is an island and so everyone has to live with the other and not alone because it is virtually impossible to live alone... If we know that we have to live together why then don’t we stop the fight and come and understand how to live together.<sup>231</sup>

The leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria is emphasizing the importance of peaceful coexistence by insisting on humanity’s oneness in creation. It comes as a welcome relief that inter-religious dialogue is so important to the IMN that it has a Christian’s Forum through which it is in constant dialogue with Christian clerics and youths who are regularly invited to IMN activities.

In our exposition of Islam in Nigeria, we have observed that there is no singular historical process of identity fragmentation within the Muslim community. Differing interpretations of Islamic doctrine, different attitudes towards the need for reform and rejuvenation, opposing conceptions of the ‘virtuous life,’ different ritual practices and competing mundane interests, have led to tensions and fragmentation within the Muslim community. Our examination of the different sects, actors, and institutions indicates that

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<sup>229</sup> Mustapha & Bunza, “Contemporary Islamic Sects & Groups in Northern Nigeria”, in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim Identities & Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, 71. See M. U. Bunza, “Muslims and the Modern State in Nigeria: A Study of the Impact of Foreign Religious Literature, 1980s-1990s”, *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 17-18, 49-63; M. U. Bunza, “The Iranian Model of Political Islamic Movement in Nigeria,” in Gomez-Perez, M., ed. *L’Islam Politique au Sud du Sahara: Identities, Discourse et Enjeux*, 227-42.

<sup>230</sup> C. Casey, “Marginalized Muslims: Politics and Perpetual Bounds of Islamic Authenticity in Northern Nigeria”, in *Africa Today*, Vol. 54, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 67-92.

<sup>231</sup> Islamic Movement in Nigeria, 2012.

[www.islamicmovement.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43:christianmuslim-group-visit-sheikh-zakzaky-h&catid=41:frontpage](http://www.islamicmovement.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43:christianmuslim-group-visit-sheikh-zakzaky-h&catid=41:frontpage) (Accessed June 25, 2019).

conflicts have as much a defining feature of intra-Muslim relations over the centuries in northern Nigeria, as they have been in the recent history of Muslim/Christian relations.<sup>232</sup>

In the light of these realities, two Nigerian theologians, have suggested their response to this cultural and religious context. The first is Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, who suggests an “inclusive cultural and religious pluralism” for northern Nigeria.<sup>233</sup> The second person who has proposed a concept to address the nature of the cultural and religious pluralism in Nigeria is Elochukwu E. Uzukwu. He proposes what he calls *A Listening Church*.<sup>234</sup> The details of their exposition will come later in the research.

#### **4.3.7 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu: Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria.**

Marinus C. Iwuchukwu is a theologian from Kano diocese (North West Nigeria).<sup>235</sup> Kano is not only the biggest city in northern Nigeria but it also has the largest concentration of Muslims. Iwuchukwu is influenced by the writing of Jacques Dupuis. Therefore, it is not surprising when he asserts, “my comfortable emersion into the inclusive religious pluralism of Jacques Dupuis has significantly refined my thoughts on the feasibility of effective and enduring interreligious dialogue between two supersessionistic religions, with strong leaning toward either exclusiveness or exclusive inclusivism.”<sup>236</sup> Iwuchukwu is concerned with exploring the necessity for evolving new trajectories in the project of building a better Muslim-Christian relationship and better social harmony among the different ethnicities that live in the north of Nigeria. He recommends the theological and cultural assumption of inclusive pluralism as foundational for effective interreligious dialogue.<sup>237</sup> Iwuchukwu is of the view that in pursuit of the desired progressive northern Nigeria, through adoption of inclusive cultural and religious pluralism, the tools for realizing inclusive pluralism need to be effectively

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<sup>232</sup> Amara Ben, “The Izala Movement in Nigeria: Its Splits, Relationship to Sufis and Perception of Shari ‘a Re-Implementation,” 267.

<sup>233</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>234</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church* (New York: Orbis Book, 1996).

<sup>235</sup> The life and writings of Iwuchukwu is mostly sourced from Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, “Duquesne University: Curriculum Vitae,” <http://www.duq.edu/academics/faculty/marinus-iwuchukwu> (Accessed July 7, 2019). See Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria; Media Ecology and Religious Pluralism: Engaging Walter Ong and Jacques Dupuis Toward Effective Interreligious Dialogue* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010). Co-edited *Can Muslims and Christians Resolve their Religious and Social Conflicts? Cases from Africa and the United States* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013).

<sup>236</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, xv.

<sup>237</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, xiii.

put in place and sustained. These tools are of different categories; namely, ideological, social, and legal.<sup>238</sup>

Iwuchukwu is of the opinion that an ideological change of worldview is required. He argues that northern Nigeria must shift “from binary presupposition (us versus them) to inclusive worldview, from totalizing ideology to accommodating and appreciation of differences.”<sup>239</sup> He suggests that “for northern Nigerians to reflect an inclusive pluralistic worldview, they must expunge the prevailing exclusive mentality, which often separates people into antagonistic camps or gives the impression that either a certain culture or a religion is superior to others”.<sup>240</sup> For Iwuchukwu, it is crucially important for Christians and Muslims to begin to embrace and respect the differences between them. Besides, Iwuchukwu contends that while it is true that people of both religious affiliations share many things in common, conflicts are often perpetuated when the perpetrators of violence and hate negatively amplify the differences.<sup>241</sup>

Iwuchukwu advocates a legal approach to the possibility of an inclusive cultural and religious pluralism. This legal method, which he advocates, is one which adheres to the demands for civil liberty regarding the rights and freedom of every individual. It has to take cognisance of the legal obligations which accord every human the dignity, respect, and equality given to every person by the creator and by the law.<sup>242</sup> For this to be realized, Iwuchukwu recommends the abrogation or the amendment of the indigene and settler law, which has been divisive and discriminatory against people outside northern Nigeria.<sup>243</sup>

The third approach by Iwuchukwu for an inclusive cultural and religious pluralism in Nigeria is social. He opines that this is possible through a pragmatic application of the concepts of dialogue of action or life, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, living and working together with people of different religious faith traditions toward the common good in the society.<sup>244</sup> For Iwuchukwu, “the dialogue of action and the dialogue of life are people oriented or the most social imperative means of promoting interreligious dialogue in any society”.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, Iwuchukwu posits that “while people are slow and even reluctant to invest time and

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<sup>238</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>239</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>240</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>241</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>242</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>243</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>244</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 175.

<sup>245</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 175.

energy toward in-depth theological discussions, they are more likely to be open to social interactions with other people for better social harmony and promoting the common good.”<sup>246</sup> Iwuchukwu highly recommends the promotion and advancement of dialogue of action and dialogue of life toward healing the ruptured relationship between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria. He contends that for these dialogic forms to be effectively reversed and heal the deterioration that has engulfed the north, an inclusive religious pluralistic worldview is recommended as indispensable.<sup>247</sup> Inclusive religious pluralism finds a strong bearing and theological basis in both Islam and Christianity. In addition, African social and religious philosophy as well as African social theology accommodate and comfortably embrace an inclusive religious pluralistic worldview.<sup>248</sup> After all, being good neighbours to each other is indispensable for peaceful coexistence between northern Nigerian Christians, Muslims and people of other faith traditions.

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<sup>246</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 175.

<sup>247</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 187-8.

<sup>248</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 189.

#### 4.3.8 Elochukwu E. Uzukwu: A Listening Church

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu is a Spiritan priest, liturgist, and ecclesiology from Nigeria.<sup>249</sup> For this research, the key concern of Uzukwu is to find “a viable way of building a humane society in Africa and an emergent African ecclesiology.”<sup>250</sup> He finds this in the theology of inculturation. For ecclesiology, Uzukwu identifies the concept of “the Church as a family,” which, since the publication of *Ecclesia in Africa*, has been given official Magisterial recognition.<sup>251</sup> For Uzukwu, the family Church as family is “a new way of being Church in Africa.”<sup>252</sup> Uzukwu adapts the concept of the totem of the Manja chief, which is a rabbit because it has large ears. The chief is one who is versed in the art of listening.<sup>253</sup> According to Uzukwu, among the Manja of the Central African Republic the totem for the chief is the rabbit because this unobtrusive animal has “large ears.” As is common all over Africa, the chief is considered to be very close to God, to the ancestors, and to the protective spirits of the community. He does not replace the ancestors. But along with other elders, he makes them present (represents them) in his person and behaviour. The Manja underline listening as the most dominant characteristic of the chief. His “large ears” brings him close to God, ancestors, and divinities and close to the conversations taking place in the community. He has the last word because he speaks, having assimilated and digested the Word in the community. He is the guardian of the dynamic, life-giving Word, which creates and re-creates the community. “Word” means truthfulness, fairness, honesty, communication.<sup>254</sup> Indeed, Uzukwu points out that in the political community as well as in the Church, the chief, as the Manja tell us, begins by listening; he speaks only after having recorded the discussions going on in the community,

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<sup>249</sup> Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*. See Roger Gaise, “Elochukwu Eugene Uzukwu: An Untiring Liturgist,” in *African Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, vol. 1, ed. Benézét Bujo and Juvenal Ilunga Muya (Nairobi: Paulines, 2002), 165; For a full biodata of Elochukwu Uzukwu see, “Duquesne University:Curriculum Vitae,”

<http://www.dug.edu/academics/faculty/elochukwu-uzukwu> (Accessed June 6, 2019); Elochukwu E. Uzukwu is the author of four books: *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*; *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012); *Worship as Body Language. Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997); *Liturgy, Truly Christian Truly African* (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1982).

<sup>250</sup> Gaise, “Elochukwu Eugene Uzukwu: An Untiring Liturgist,” x.

<sup>251</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*. See John Paul II, 63.

<sup>252</sup> Uzukwu, “A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening” in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, 6, no. 1 (1994), 18.

<sup>253</sup> Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, x.

<sup>254</sup> Uzukwu, *A Listening Church*, 129.

so that his speech releases the healing Word of which he is the principal custodian, a Word which makes the community stand erect.<sup>255</sup>

The Manja image of leadership is a retrieval of the dynamic personality of the chief or community leader in African Traditional Religion, living in attentive listening to the community in order to accomplish adequately the ministry of custodianship of that Word which belongs to the community, the Word which belongs to humanity. However, Uzuoku cautions against the abuse of the understanding of the chief by African dictators, nor the imported Roman and feudal autocracy, which dominates the present ministerial practice of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>256</sup>

Uzuoku's understanding of a listening Church, especially of leaders in the Church is similar to de Lubac's interpretation of the Principle of Auscultation. We noted in chapter two that for de Lubac, the Principle of Auscultation is understood in two ways: attentive listening without prejudice to the context, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, attentive listening to the Word of God. For Uzuoku, the imagery appropriate for ministry of service in the Church is the image of the "large ears." Although his emphasis is on the leadership of the bishops in their dioceses and episcopal conferences, we posit that this outlook can be extended to relationship with people of other faith traditions. Uzuoku is of the view that "a leadership which cultivates the ministry with large ears makes it easier for the Churches to listen, to hear, and to do what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (Rev. 2:29; 3:22)." We believe that if we listen to other faith traditions "with large ears" then we can minimize some of the conflicts which are already taking place. After all, de Lubac's Principle of the Catholicity of Truth recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that the Christian (dogma) faith is a "source of universal light" that enlightens all people. Listening "with large ears" ensures that the Christian identity is preserved in its integrity in the process of encountering and entering into dialogue with the other religious traditions.

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<sup>255</sup> Uzuoku, *A Listening Church*, 129.

<sup>256</sup> Uzuoku, *A Listening Church*, 130.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have highlighted the complex pluralistic nature of the northern Nigerian society with African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity being the dominant religions. We have examined of the current trends within these religions to see how they fit into our thesis that Christ is the one and universal means of salvation apart from whom there is no salvation. It is our view that the salvation of other faith traditions is possible through creation of which humanity is a part. Our position is faithful to what has traditionally been professed by the Christian faith of the saving significance of the person and event of Jesus Christ. Besides, we accept the position of Henri de Lubac that all humanity is connected to Christ, by virtue of its creation, not in an external way, but organically. It is for this reason that all can speak something of the truth that is Christ, as we explained in the Catholicity of Truth in chapter two.

We have emphasized in this chapter that, while African Traditional Religion is not a revelatory religion and does not have a revelatory text like in Christianity and Islam, nevertheless, it is a lived religion and has a religious sense. In addition, it has been largely accommodating of other religions, thereby creating a favourable environment for Islam and Christianity to thrive. Besides, we have seen that in northern Nigeria, Islam and Christianity observed a normative respect and appreciation of the religion and culture of other people. From the historical and cultural point of view, the dominant ethnic groups, Hausas and Kanuris did not seek to assimilate other ethnic groups into their dominant cultural and religious structure. On the contrary, they respected the differences between them and other ethnicities.

Within Islam, the evolution of Islamic identities in northern Nigeria has important implications for the country in two ways. Firstly, they affect the interaction between the various Muslim communities. Secondly, they affect inter-faith relations with followers of other faiths. Northern Nigerian Islam has a historical process of identity fragmentation within the Muslim community. The consequence is that there is no monolithic Islam but differing interpretations of Islamic doctrines, differing attitudes towards the need to reform and rejuvenation, and different relationship with people of other religions. By studying the different sects in the Islamic community, we are able to observe that conflicts have been as much a defining feature of intra-Muslim relations over the centuries in northern Nigeria, as they have been in the recent history of Muslim/Christian relations. It is has brought out the timeless significance of de Lubac's book *Catholicisme* in which he invites the reader to see the human being in his or her dignity in the divine plan of creation and Redemption. De Lubac articulates this in his passion for the destiny of a common humanity, a key sense of the greatness of God and his mystery.

Emphasizing the common humanity of people of different religious backgrounds is an agreeable first step into engaging in conversation with people of other religions.

Nigerian Christianity too has its history of fragmentation. Since the coming of Christianity in the eighteenth century, it has not only grown with over eighty million followers but has been fragmented and factionalized into different denominations and sects. It has maintained mostly an Exclusivist view of salvation especially among the Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Indeed, it is not surprising that many Christians with this exclusivist worldview are slow to engage in dialogue with people of other religious traditions or of no religion nor accept that they have some seed of the Christian faith or truth in them. However, in order to foster peaceful coexistence Iwuchukwu suggests “the inclusive cultural and religious pluralism.” He posits a retrieval in African societies of the normative respect and appreciation of the religions and cultures of other people.<sup>257</sup> After all, “in the African milieu, the other’s identity and origin were always respected and validly recognized.”<sup>258</sup> For Iwuchukwu, “an inclusive religious pluralism reflects a worldview where the approach to pluralism is advocated on the grounds of people’s common human origin and common human destiny.”<sup>259</sup> He points out that this doctrinal perspective is shared by both Christians and Muslims, who maintain that we are all children of the one God who is equally disposed to each of us regardless of our cultural and religious differences. It is for this reason that he insists that there is need for a conscious return to the African inclusive religious and cultural worldview for amicable and enduring peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria. We observe that this position is similar not only to Jacques Dupuis but also to Henri de Lubac in *Catholicism*.<sup>260</sup>

We retrieve from Elochukwu E. Uzukwu the concept of “A Listening Church.” According to Uzukwu, the family of God ecclesiological construct is “a new way of being Church in Africa.”<sup>261</sup> What he means is listening with “large ears” in order to discern with truthfulness, fairness and honesty the problems of a community. It is with an open mindset like Uzukwu is suggesting that meaningful interreligious dialogue can take place with other religions or atheism.

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<sup>257</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 167.

<sup>258</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 167.

<sup>259</sup> Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*, 167.

<sup>260</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

<sup>261</sup> Elochukwu Uzukwu, “A Servant Church in a New African Nation,” 18.



Hence, engagement and dialogue with all the different religions or people of no religion is possible in Nigeria without adopting the paradigm shift toward a neutral and indifferent ‘pluralism’ of the pluralists.<sup>262</sup> Now that we have made an exposition of the complex pluralistic context of northern Nigeria, we will make a synthesis of what we consider to be Henri de Lubac’s hermeneutics, which is the subject of our next chapter.

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<sup>262</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*.

## **Chapter Five: Retrieval of Henri de Lubac's Hermeneutics on Religious Pluralism**

### **Introduction**

Throughout this study, we sought to address an important problematic: While non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church, as Henri de Lubac makes clear, there is a range of views on how this takes place. We have been guided by de Lubac and other inclusivists theologians, who maintain that non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church. De Lubac's contention is that salvation is through Christ and his Church, yet, no one is necessarily excluded. For him, non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church because all humanity is connected to Christ through creation, not in an external way, but organically. From the doctrinal point of view, our challenge is how to uphold this on the unicity and universality of Christ, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, engage with other religions outside the Christian tradition in Nigeria without compromising to the Catholic faith and without ambiguity?

In view of the fact that de Lubac never compromised the integrity of the Christian dogmas in his engagement with other religions and ideologies, we will retrieve some crucially important Lubacian theological concepts. It is vitally important because de Lubac demonstrates how to maintain the uniqueness of Christ as well as the relationship between the Church and universal humanity. Our retrieval of aspects of Lubacian theology will highlight the inclusive nature of de Lubac's theological method on the question of religious pluralism without compromising the integrity of the Christian faith. In addition, it will draw our attention to the significance and impact of de Lubac's two theological principles, Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth, on the questions raised on the relationship between Christianity, other religions, and atheists. The aim is to explain how the aforementioned principles are cogent approaches that will enrich inter-religious dialogue and contribute to mutual respect and tolerance. Here, we refer to de Lubac's Trinitarian Christology, his observations about the spirit of Catholicism understood in its universalist sense, his interpretation of the relationship between religion, mission and salvation, his interpretation of mysticism, the relationship between Islam and Christianity, and de Lubac's attitude to other religions and philosophies.

## 5.1 De Lubac's Trinitarian Christology

Christ is the Mediator of salvation according to de Lubac. Although “there is not a systematic Christology in the works of Henri de Lubac” as Noel O’Sullivan notes, the centrality of Christ is ever present.<sup>1</sup> We agree with O’Sullivan that “de Lubac’s Christology is a descending Christology, with a marked emphasis on the Incarnation, understood as the definitive revelation of Trinitarian love, resplendent in all its transcendent newness.”<sup>2</sup> It is this Incarnational Christology which was key in our dialogue with Karl Rahner’s transcendental Christology on the question of the anonymous Christian.

De Lubac’s Trinitarian Christology is made clear in *La Révélation divine*, when he asserts: “Finally, the Spirit has only one movement: the same movement of Jesus towards the Father.”<sup>3</sup> For de Lubac, Christ cannot be understood in isolation from the community of the Trinity; neither can the Church nor creation, for that matter. Christ reveals God as the internal movement of love. The Church, and through her, all of humanity is called to participate in this community. But the process in which this comes about is also Trinitarian in character: it is through Christ, in the Spirit, towards the Father. Equally pivotal is that at the core of de Lubac’s anthropology is that man cannot be understood or reach his or her fulfilment apart from Christ, the one Mediator.

De Lubac opines that it is uniquely through Christ that man is redeemed and saved. But because the Church is the Body of Christ, then it is in the Church that salvation is attained. This is true not only for its members but for all people of good-will, who, by wish or desire, aspire to be united to God and, by implication aspire to be part of the Church. Indeed, Christ is the person at once perfectly human and perfectly divine, who unites nature and the supernatural end. It is supremely important that this unification be accomplished in a person, who, thus reveals to humankind its own commission of reconciliation. De Lubac’s interpretation of the role of Christ in salvation is not exclusive. It is open to all people of good will.

The inclusive nature of the role of Christ in the salvation of all humanity in the Christian understanding is not well known among many Muslims and other non-Christian groups in Nigeria because of the exclusive interpretation that is widespread. A careful understanding of the Christian perspective on the salvific role of Christ, which includes all of humanity as de

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<sup>1</sup> Noel O’Sullivan, “An Emerging Christology,” in *T&T Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 327.

<sup>2</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as the key to interpreting the theology of creation in the works of Henri de Lubac* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 452.

<sup>3</sup> De Lubac, *La Révélation divine* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 46. See (coll. Unam Sanctam), 1968; (coll. “Traditions chrétiennes”), (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

Lubac points, out can be an important springboard for inter-religious engagement especially with Muslims. After all, Jesus and other prophets are revered in Islam. The Qur'an asserts:

We have sent revelations to you as We sent revelations to Noah and the prophets who came after him; and We sent revelations to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their offspring, and to Jesus and Job... and to Moses God spoke directly.<sup>4</sup>

The names of these prophets will certainly be familiar to Christians. At the same time, it opens the door for the right understanding of what each religion interprets to be the unique role of the particular prophets. Despite the similarity of names, their roles and interpretation can be different in Christianity and Islam. What is imperative is that although the accounts of the prophets are not exactly the same, nevertheless, in both the Qur'an and the Bible, there is mutual reverence accorded them. Similarly, acknowledging that Christianity and Islam differ in the ways God has revealed himself will ease some of the conflicts and violence that erupt as a result of lack of awareness of the perspectives of the two religions. Christianity and Islam in Nigeria can emulate the attitude of ATR followers, who do not engage in violent acts simply because another religion thinks, worships or behaves in a different way.

## **5.2 Catholicism understood in its universalist sense**

Henri de Lubac argued for the interpretation of Catholicism understood in its universalist sense. The background for this is de Lubac's "passion for the destiny of a common humanity," based on the creation of the human person in the image of God. We note that in his 1938 work *Catholicisme* de Lubac was keen to explain the social nature of Christianity against the unfair criticism levelled at it for being too individualistic. De Lubac counters that Christianity is not only of its nature social, but this is because its source and its end is the Trinity. Another vital concern of de Lubac is the need to emphasize the unity which is impaired, though never destroyed, by sin, and how this unity is recovered through the redemptive act of Christ. However, salvation is more than a "recovered unity." It is being raised to a new relationship with God, in God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Hence, we cannot be made puppets or passive recipients in this. Two imageries capture this reality poignantly in de Lubac's writings; the role he places on the Cross and the concept of recapitulation.

The first imagery is that of the Cross. We see evidence of this in his first work, *Catholicisme*, where he describes the image of Christ stretched out on the Cross drawing all

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<sup>4</sup> Qur'an 4:163-164.

people to himself. Although the key concern is to explain the social nature of Christian dogmas, de Lubac refers to the Cross as closely linked to this interpretation. We are not surprised that de Lubac comments on the theme of uniting Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Ephesians. According to de Lubac: “From high on his Cross, with arms outstretched, [Christ] he will bring together the divided parts of creation, ‘bring down the wall of separation’ between them.”<sup>5</sup> In the same vein, de Lubac inspired by Irenaeus takes up the image of the Cross in the final chapter of *Catholicisme* when he remarks:

By the wood of the Cross, the work of the Word of God was made manifest to all: his hands stretched out to gather all men (women) together. Two hands outstretched, for there are two peoples scattered over the whole earth. One sole head in the midst, for there is but one God over all, among all and in all.<sup>6</sup>

It is obvious that the gesture of an outstretched hands signifies the bringing together of all peoples, especially Jews and Gentiles, through love. De Lubac is here highlighting the communitarian aspect of the process of salvation even though too often it is considered from an individualistic point of view. De Lubac writes: “Through Christ dying on the Cross, the humanity which he was carrying in its entirety in himself renounces itself and dies.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed de Lubac draws attention to the Trinitarian significance of the Cross in which Jesus is united to the Father on the one hand and, on the other hand, it is the moment in which he is most united to humanity, thereby restoring the unity of humanity.

The second imagery is de Lubac’s interpretation of the biblical and patristic idea of recapitulation. Recapitulation is a translation of the Greek term, *anacephalaiosis* [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι]. According to Karl Rahner, “its theological usage, relating to saving history, derives from Ephesians 1:10 and was employed notably by St Irenaeus.”<sup>8</sup> For Rahner, it denotes that the whole of creation is referred to the Incarnation of God in such a way that creation as such must be understood as a preparation for collaboration with God made Man. Rahner opines that

In the present economy, therefore, Christ is not only the goal of creation and the apogee of Adam’s race, but having borne our sins and risen as the first-born from the dead, his

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<sup>5</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 19. See Ephesians 2: 14.

<sup>6</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 369. St Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5, 17, 4 (PG 7, 1171-72).

<sup>7</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 323.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, “Anacephalaecosis,” in *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed., Cornelius Ernst, trans., Richard Strachan (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 17.

radical acceptance of every phase of human history has redeemed and “re”-constituted that creation which up until his coming had been subjected to vanity.<sup>9</sup>

Karl Rahner in this quotation is emphasizing the understanding of recapitulation in an eschatological sense. However, in de Lubac, “recapitulation” is not interpreted solely in an eschatological sense. On the contrary, Christ is ‘reuniting,’ ‘summing up’ all things throughout the history of salvation. Indeed, “recapitulation brings together Economy and Eschatology”.<sup>10</sup> Following the example of Irenaeus, who takes on the Pauline idea of recapitulation, de Lubac quotes the text of Ephesians and uses the understanding to express the implications for his Christology and his theology of creation. De Lubac writes:

He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fulness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup>

De Lubac takes into account the nuances of this quotation from the Letter to the Ephesians to mean “restore, sum up, crown, reunite.”<sup>12</sup> For de Lubac, recapitulation is a recovery of an already existing unity, which was either not recognised or was partially lost. We observe this in his treatment of the Pauline idea of recapitulation in the first chapter of *Catholicisme*. De Lubac does so in conjunction with the other Pauline concept of the “New Man” and both ideas are centred on the mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ. What is paramount for de Lubac is the unity of humanity from its creation to the fulfilment of all things at the end. Following St Paul, de Lubac is stressing the social character of Christianity, where each member plays a part. He contrasts Pauline and Johannine expressions of the same reality. What he calls the “intense intimacy” of the vine image in St John, where the accent is on the unity of the Life that circulates in the mystical vine, is paralleled in St Paul, where Christ is more like “a milieu, an atmosphere, a world where man and God, man and man communicate and are united.”<sup>13</sup> Hence, Christ is the locus of unification. There is a physical, spatial aspect to de Lubac’s description here. He also draws attention to the reconciliation between Jew and Greek referred to in the second chapter of Ephesians.<sup>14</sup> Besides, the Cross plays a central role in the process of recapitulation. Writing in the first volume of *The Exégèse Médiévale*, de Lubac refers to

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<sup>9</sup> Rahner and Vorgrimler, “Anacephalaeosis,” 17.

<sup>10</sup> O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, 441.

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 1: 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 203.

<sup>13</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 2:15.

“universal recapitulation” brought about by the Sacrifice of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> It is “through the cross” that Jews and Greeks are united. If we take the quotation from Colossians, we find that Christ is reconciler and peace maker: “Through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross.”<sup>16</sup> Reconciliation, unity, harmony have their source in “the blood of the cross.”<sup>17</sup> The unity and harmony, which de Lubac is emphasising is the unity of all peoples without the exclusion of any religion, race, gender or ideology. For de Lubac, recapitulation is not only interpreted as the re-establishment of a unity lost through sin, it is also the establishment of a new unity, a New Man in the Mystery of Christ. The purpose is to bring humanity to a new state, which de Lubac describes in different ways as participation in the “inner movement of the Trinitarian life,”<sup>18</sup> the supernatural destiny of man; oneness in the heart of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis is that it is not only humanity that is reunited in this new creation but all reality.

This brings into focus de Lubac’s Principle of the Catholicity of Truth, especially the second aspect which states that the Christian faith is ‘a locus of universal light.’ For de Lubac, means that Christian faith enlightens all peoples; everyone needs the light of Christ to come to a full knowledge of the truth. Since truth is catholic as de Lubac opines, it is not the preserve of any institution, group or individual, but is universal; it can be heard even in the most unexpected sources. In Nigeria, this means dialogue rooted in mutual friendship and respect. Where there is dialogue, Christians, Muslims and believers in ATR have demonstrated the capacity to communicate at the level of a common search for truth and a shared desire to please God. After all, Christians and Muslims have much in common in their understanding of “the Living God, Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, who is Father of the one great human family to which we all belong.”<sup>20</sup> De Lubac’s principles of Auscultation and Catholicity of Truth can help us see the fact that the Qur’an articulates the common destiny of all believers in God when it remarks that “those who believe – the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans – whosoever believe in God and the Last Day and do good works, they shall have their reward from their Lord and shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they come to grief.”<sup>21</sup> Again, a diligent

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<sup>15</sup> Henri de Lubac, “La ‘récapitulation univrsalle’s’est effectuée par le Sacrifice de Jésus” in *Exégèse Médiévale* I (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1959-1964), 327.

<sup>16</sup> Colosians 1:20.

<sup>17</sup> Colosians 1:20; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:14.

<sup>18</sup> De Lubac, *Theology in History* II, 20.

<sup>19</sup> De Lubac, MSE, 206.

<sup>20</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Qur’an 2: 62. Also see, Qur’an 5: 44-46; and 29: 46.

and exegetical study of the Qur'an will clarify its negative teaching about polytheists, Christians and Jews. As Erdal Toprakyan observes: "An analysis of the historical context of these passages shows that these verses are always revealed in times of hostility and are therefore not decisive for times of peace."<sup>22</sup> He maintains that even radical Islamic groups know that the Qur'an allows no hate and violence against peaceful followers of other religions.<sup>23</sup> It is for this reason that Abdu-Raheem who, writing on Muslims and tolerance, posits that Islam "enjoins its adherents not only to be tolerant but also to respect and appreciate the point of view of others."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, there are positive values in ATR, which are complementary to the content of faith. They can even be seen as preparation for the Gospel; belief in a Supreme Being who is Eternal, Creator, Provident and Just Judge.<sup>25</sup> De Lubac's Principle of Catholicity of Truth is significant here. As de Lubac points out, it is because of the role of the Logos in the creation of the human being that the truth can be found in all people. In the same way that St John reminds us that Christ is the Truth, de Lubac opines that Christ is catholic understood in the universal sense. It is the same approach by *The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue* when it asserts that "the whole of humankind forms one family, due to the common origin of all men and women, created by God in his own image. Correspondingly, all are called to a common destiny, the fullness of life in God."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Erdal Toprakyan, "The Changeability of Islamic Principles using the Example of Pluralism," in *Studies & Comments 12 – Religious Pluralism: Modern Concepts for Interfaith Dialogue*, ed., Richard Asbeck (Munich: Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung e. V., 2010), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Toprakyan, "The Changeability of Islamic Principles using the Example of Pluralism," 19.

<sup>24</sup> M. A. Abdu-Raheem, "Islamic Concept of Tolerance and the Task before the Nigerian Muslim", in *Religion and Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria*, ed., Jacob K. Olupona (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 1992), 74.

<sup>25</sup> Abdu-Raheem, "Islamic Concept of Tolerance and the Task before the Nigerian Muslim," 74.

<sup>26</sup> Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Proclamation, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientation on Interreligious Dialogue and Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/interrelg/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/interrelg/documents) (Accessed November 9, 2020).



### 5.3 The Relationship between Religion, Mission and Salvation

An important way of retrieving Henri de Lubac's interpretation of religious pluralism is by focusing on how he believes that there is a link between religion, mission, and salvation. Our retrieval will point to the fact that there is a co-relationship between mission and dialogue. Together, they give us a broad perspective of how he views religious pluralism.

#### 5.3.1 Religion and Mission

Firstly, there is an awareness of diversity of religions, interreligious encounter, assimilation and division in de Lubac's writings. In one of his early writings in 1933, de Lubac references the syncretic religious history of the Gobi Desert, which extends across large swathes of northern China and southern Mongolia. Travellers crossing the isolated Chinese Turkestan region discovered many old manuscripts, which inspired explorers to search for more evidence about other religions and cultures.<sup>27</sup> They soon discovered that this long strip of Turkestan, connects the Chinese world with the Iranian and Mediterranean worlds. De Lubac posits that for centuries, it was the principal route of communication between the Near East and the far reaches of Asia, the link between two major centres of human culture.<sup>28</sup> The "Old Silk Road," which was opened officially in 125 B.C., became a major route for Buddhist missionaries travelling eastward from Turkestan to China, while Chinese pilgrims went westward into India. Their language of communication was Sogdian which is now forgotten.<sup>29</sup> De Lubac describes how for nearly a millennium, the Gobi Desert was home to numerous flourishing religions; Mahayana (Great Vehicle) and Hinayana (Smaller) Buddhists, Daoists [Taoists], Zoroastrians, Jews, Manicheans, and Nestorian Christians.<sup>30</sup> This was before Islam conquered these territories and became the predominant religion.<sup>31</sup> De Lubac points out that "this almost inaccessible region, lost in the centre of the Asian continent, submerged in century-long stagnation and outside of all the major currents of human life, was formerly the area of encounter for all the great religions claiming to be universal."<sup>32</sup> According to de Lubac, the Gobi Desert played an important role in the history of civilization. De Lubac describes it as "an interior Asiatic sea" like the Mediterranean which allowed all the cultures on its shores to

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<sup>27</sup> Henri de Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," in *Theological Fragments*, trans., Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 289.

<sup>28</sup> De Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," 289.

<sup>29</sup> De Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," 296-98, 291.

<sup>30</sup> De Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," 300.

<sup>31</sup> De Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," 300.

<sup>32</sup> De Lubac, "Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert," 305.

communicate with each other.<sup>33</sup> However, with the expansion of Islam in the West, China under the Ming dynasty closing itself up in a narrow nationalism, the direct communication between “the two halves of the world were cut off from each other.”<sup>34</sup> The breakdown of communication between East and West dealt a severe blow to Christian missionary expansion.

De Lubac contends that in spite of all the forces of dissolution, humanity never renounces its pursuit of unity. This is because Christ is always seeking its scattered members wherever they may be. The obstacle to West-East communication was eventually overcome by sea routes. This new form of transportation requires a new approach in conveying the Christian Faith to other lands and cultures. The traditional approach of mission spreading from neighbour to neighbour, quite naturally, assimilating new human elements at each stage was no longer adequate.<sup>35</sup> It will take the genial boldness of Matthew Ricci in the seventeenth century to begin another wave of missionary enterprise from the Adriatic Sea to the imperial court at Peking. Ricci’s missionary model was to replace the quasi-spontaneous adaptation of Christianity of the past with a conscious methodical and persistent effort. His goal was not just the participation of distant peoples in a common culture. Rather, it was above all their spiritual unity in Christ, at a depth where all cultural diversities disappear.<sup>36</sup>

To be successful as missionaries meant that they had to adapt their methods to the different cultures. Ricci adopted the way of life of the Orientals and drew admiration from them. The same can be said of Robert de Nobili who appealed to the Brahmins. They adapted their missionary methods in order to bear witness to the unity and purity of the Catholic spirit by which they were inspired.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, this approach is steeply rooted in the history of the Church. A vivid example is the case of St Cyril (826-69) and St Methodius (815-85), who were brothers from Thessalonica in Greece. They preached the Gospel in Moravia using their own translation of the Scriptures and the liturgy in the local language. These translations into Slavonic were in an alphabet now called Cyrillic, which they devised. They are honoured as apostles of the Slavic peoples and in 1980 Pope John Paul II declared them Patrons of Europe.

The systematic missionary approach was evident in the eighteenth century through the Instruction of Propaganda to bishops sent to China. The instructions are found in the formal

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<sup>33</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert,” 305.

<sup>34</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert,” 307.

<sup>35</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert,” 307.

<sup>36</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the sands of the Gobi Desert,” 307.

<sup>37</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 288-289.

teaching of Pope Benedict XV in *Maximum illud* (1919),<sup>38</sup> Pius XI in *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926).<sup>39</sup> This new understanding of mission is territorial. It entails taking the Christian message from established Christian lands to sometimes inhospitable territories with the sole purpose of making converts. Moreover, the call to conversion is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel.”<sup>40</sup> Mission was understood as taking the Gospel to alien cultures in order to convert them to Christ. The consequence of this approach is that the type of Christianity that came to northern Nigeria was exclusivist, sometimes rejecting and condemning local customs and traditions as “pagan”. Marinus C Iwuchukwu observes that “the coming of Christianity further advanced the exclusive religious mentality, hence the discrimination and even antagonism of non-Christians and, in some cases, fellow Christians of different denominations.”<sup>41</sup>

Christianity came to Northern Nigeria as early as 1710. We agree with Thaddeus Byimui Umaru and Edward O’Connor (SMA) that two Franciscan priests set out to visit Borno from Tripoli because they heard of a Christian kingdom in the Kwararafa-Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria. In addition, Fr. Philipo da Segni (OFM) was visiting Kukawa, the then capital of Borno.<sup>42</sup> eighteenth century coincided with the peak of the Uthman dan Fodio jihad, who promoted an exclusive form of Islam. The jihadists established a caliphate with the aim of bringing all ethnic groups under Islamic rule. However, before the advent of the jihad, the identity and origin of hundreds of ethnic groups and their religions were respected and validly recognized. Iwuchukwu has observed that the people of northern Nigeria, regardless of their religion, share the following anecdotes: “All human beings are alike,” “we all have a common origin,” and we are all destined to meet with our creator at the end of life.” He contends that these anecdotes reflect strong inclusive philosophical and theological assumptions. They

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<sup>38</sup> Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *Maximum Illud*, 1919. See AAS 11 (1919), 44f. This Apostolic Letter by Pope Benedict XV is the first in a series of great encyclicals explicitly concerned with the full organisation of mission work in the twentieth century. It represents an important break-through for the modern concept of the Church’s missionary activity. This year 2019 marks the centenary of the publication of *Maximum illud* by Pope Benedict XV. Pope Francis has declared October 2019 as an Extraordinary Month of Mission to celebrate the significance of this document to the universal Church and its missionary initiative.

<sup>39</sup> Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 1926. See AAS 18 (1926), 65f. Pope Pius XI followed the footsteps of his predecessor Benedict XV, Benedict XV. He made it one of the main preoccupations of his pontificate to foster the growth of the Church in mission countries.

<sup>40</sup> MK 1:15. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1427.

<sup>41</sup> Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenges of Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 167.

<sup>42</sup> Thaddeus Byimui Umaru, *Christian Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria: A Socio-Political Consideration* (UK: Xlibris, 2013), 37-38. See Edward O’Connor, *From the Niger to the Sahara: The Story of the Archdiocese of Kaduna* (Ibadan, Nigeria: SMA Fathers, 2009), 9-25.

reflect a worldview, where the approach to pluralism is advocated on the grounds of people's common human origin and common human destiny. Certainly, this is similar to the doctrine shared by both Christians and Muslims that we are children of the one God, who is equally disposed to each of us, regardless of our cultural and religious differences.

De Lubac's principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth can readily be applied here. The Christian has much to learn by listening to the African inclusive religious and cultural worldview for amicable and enduring peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims in northern Nigeria. For the African, religion is meant to facilitate daily life experiences and ensure that they successfully proceed from one day to the other. Religion facilitates peaceful coexistence among Africans and serves as a guide to relationship between neighbours. Although there is belief in the hereafter, it is not the primary focus of ATR as it is found in Christianity and Islam. Christianity and Islam lay significant capital on the life hereafter, is that both religions have a focus, which reminds their adherents that paradise or heaven are reserved for women and men, who have successfully managed their earthly daily life experiences based on the virtues of justice, peace, love, compassion, and forgiveness. It will significantly advance the search for peace, effective interreligious dialogue, and security of life and property in northern Nigeria if Christians and Muslims would rejuvenate their African "functionalist" approach to religion. The truth found in these three religions readily fit into our principle of the Catholicity of Truth.

### **5.3.2 Mission and Salvation**

To explain the universality of salvation through Christ, de Lubac retrieves from the wealth of the writings of the Fathers of the Church support for his position on the salvation of non-Christians.

According to D. Stephen Long, "the Church is so central to de Lubac's epistemology that it can easily make his work appear triumphalist."<sup>43</sup> When de Lubac insists that the Church is the locus of salvation he is not exclusive in his interpretation as if non-Christians are condemned. On the contrary, de Lubac affirms that "it is by the Church and by the Church alone that you will be saved."<sup>44</sup> It is de Lubac's firm conviction that "outside Christianity nothing attains its end, that only end, towards which, unknowingly, all human desires, all human endeavours, are in movement: the embrace of God in Christ."<sup>45</sup> He contends that the

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<sup>43</sup> D. Stephen Long, "Knowing God," 283.

<sup>44</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 112.

<sup>45</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 224.

natural desire for God cannot be naturally fulfilled; only the Church satisfies it through the Word and Sacraments entrusted to it by God. Moreover, the Church takes up everything good in human culture and lifts it to God. This is the reason why the Church affirms whatever is good in any culture. Besides, Long suggests that de Lubac “gives other cultures, religions and peoples a privileged place, while he affirms the Church (the Roman Catholic Church) as the site for fully recognizing and completing those desires.”<sup>46</sup> According to de Lubac: “All men know God ‘naturally,’ but they do not always recognize him.”<sup>47</sup> It is the Church that gives form to the desire present in every culture.

A further implication of de Lubac’s assertion that outside the Church there is no salvation is his interpretation that God is present not only in every human intellect but also in every culture. As Long points out, this is obvious in de Lubac critique of the Reformers whom he accuses of failing to be sufficiently humanist by not finding the good in paganism and preserving it.<sup>48</sup> De Lubac opines that the Reformers went too far; they moved beyond “attacking abuses that were only too real” and tried to purify the Church, failing to realize that “Christianity transformed the old world by absorbing it.”<sup>49</sup> But de Lubac affirmed Matthew Ricci’s cultural project. He writes: “When Ricci treated Confucius as Ambrose treated Seneca or Cyril Philo, he was on the right path.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the Church’s mission is not insular; it is to unite the human race by interpreting revelation and thereby drawing all good and proper human desire to its singular end. De Lubac is when he asserts: “The human race is one ... But salvation for this body, for humanity, consists in its receiving the form of Christ, and that is possible only through the Catholic Church. For is she not the only complete, authoritative interpreter of the Christian revelation?”<sup>51</sup> It is to this spirit of openness that we are alluding to in a complex and sometimes violent society like northern Nigeria.

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<sup>46</sup> D. Stephen Long, “Knowing God,” 284.

<sup>47</sup> De Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans., Alexander Dru (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 75.

<sup>48</sup> Long, “Knowing God,” 284. Also see, Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 223.

<sup>50</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 223.

<sup>51</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 223.

### 5.3.3 Mission and Evangelization

Mission and evangelization are pivotal to de Lubac. Missionary work according to de Lubac is the “duty of all, normally no doubt the least determined of all duties, but the strictest and the most universal.”<sup>52</sup> The point de Lubac is making is that the scope of mission is not only global, but that the context is not the same everywhere in the world. Indeed, there are different opportunities for mission, which are often varied and frequently unexpected. These are the opportunities that de Lubac suggests must be seized upon when they appear. After all, the grace of Catholicism was not given to us for ourselves alone, but for those who do not possess it. De Lubac draws our attention to the fact that the Church was intended for all, and this came about after a long preparation beginning in the Old Testament. Hence, Christians who have been brought up within it have no entitlement to enjoy their situation in proud, isolated superiority.<sup>53</sup> Rather, Christians have been brought into the Church for the salvation of those outside, in order that all may enjoy their full, God-given humanity. Similarly, the missionary endeavour entails great respect for the humanity of the person being evangelized, a humanity which already possess. However, in the France of de Lubac’s day, such respect was not afforded to all people.

It is in the inclusive spirit of de Lubac that we refer to his observations on African religions. De Lubac refers to the peoples and religions of sub-Saharan Africa, when he writes on their belief in a single superior being among West African Bantu, the Jola of Senegal and the Ovambo of South Africa.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, just like the Gobi Desert in which there was communication between so many religions, the same can be said of the Sahara Desert. Historically, the spread of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula to the Maghreb (north Africa) has been attributed to many factors, including commerce, missionary evangelization, and political expansionism. These missionaries and traders who introduced Islam to the Kanem Kingdom (north-east Nigeria) were Berbers and Arabs, through the trans-Saharan trade activities around the eastern route.<sup>55</sup> These Muslim Arabs and Berbers were not only responsible for the spread of Islam in other parts of northern Nigeria, but brought also their lifestyle and culture.<sup>56</sup> They encountered indigenous populations, who had their own religions, and there was mutual influence. It is remarkable that African Traditional Religion and Islam co-existed for nearly a

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<sup>52</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 243.

<sup>53</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 243.

<sup>54</sup> De Lubac, “The Origin of Religion,” 310, 322-323.

<sup>55</sup> Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Kenny, “The Spread of Islam in Nigeria: A Historical Survey,” 22-24 March 2001, A Paper Presented at a Conference on Sharia in Nigeria, Enugu, Nigeria. <http://www.josephkenny.joyeurs.com/Sist.htm>, (Accessed December 16, 2019).

thousand years in relative peace up to the time of the coming of Christianity in the north-east of Nigeria in nineteenth century.

It is vitally important that we comment on de Lubac's reference to Fr Matthew Ricci's missionary enterprise in the seventeenth century. Ricci applied the missionary method of "adaptation" or "inculturation" long before the Second Vatican Council.<sup>57</sup> Although theological and liturgical adaptation is mentioned in the documents of Vatican II, the term inculturation is not used. However, since Vatican II, inculturation has become more frequent. Inculturation is the insertion or introduction of the Christian life and message into a particular culture in such a way that the Christian message finds expression through the elements proper to that particular culture and becomes a principle that animates, directs, and transforms that culture.<sup>58</sup> It is this perspective on mission that is encouraged as is evident in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*:

It is necessary that in each of the great socio-cultural regions, as are called, theological investigation should be encouraged and the facts and words revealed by God, contained in Sacred Scripture, and explained by the Fathers and Magisterium of the Church, submitted to new examination in the light of the tradition of the Universal Church... Thus, a way will be opened for a more profound adaptation in the whole sphere of Christian life. This manner of acting will avoid every appearance of syncretism and false exclusiveness.<sup>59</sup>

In the first place, the passage implies that theological investigation in view of inculturating the gospel message is imposed by Vatican II as an obligation that has to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, it emphasizes that in the effort to adapt the Christian message, the theologian should have a

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<sup>57</sup> Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 1, 9, 13-14, 20-21, 32, 33, 218. See J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, "Adaption, Liturgical," in *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, ed. Jacques Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 2001), no. 512, 530, 541f, 1245-1249. See Mark R. Francis, "Adaptation, Liturgical", in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed., Peter E. Fink (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 14-15. Francis is of the view that a careful reading of "S.C. 37-40, will reveal that the term "adaptation" when applied to the liturgy variously refers to concepts borrowed from the social sciences such as 'localization,' 'acculturation,' 'contextualization,' 'indigenization,' and 'inculturation,' as well as the more theological expression 'incarnation.'"

<sup>58</sup> The term was first introduced by Fr Joseph Masson S.J. (Professor at the Gregorian University – Rome) in 1962). However, is often credited to Pedro Arrupe who wrote a letter to the Society of Jesus on the issue of Inculturation in 1978. It is important to distinguish Inculturation from the following terms: "Interculturation" which implies mutual influence between the Christian and the culture into which it is introduced; "Acculturation," the encounter between cultures. It is also understood as the study of cultural transmission in process; "Enculturation", is the cultural learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his/her culture; "Indigenisation", the living and expressing of the gospel message in accordance with a particular traditional [indigenous] culture; "Contextualization"- living and expressing the Christian message in terms of particular cultural context; "Africanization"- living and expression of the gospel message in accordance with African traditional cultures. See Joseph Blomjous WF, "Inculturation or Interculturation," in *Africa Ecclesiastical Review (AFER)*, Vol. 22, no. 6, 393-8; L. Kaufmann, "Theological Education in the 1970s," in *AFER*, Vol. 15, no.3 (July 1973): 251.

<sup>59</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 22.

sincere dialogue with the whole tradition of the Church from Patristic epoch down to our contemporary period. It would thus be false to limit this dialogue to scripture alone, or to the Patristic period, or to modern times, while excluding the scholastic period, as is often done.<sup>60</sup> This point is strongly reiterated by the first African Synod, which notes that inculturation should be governed by two principles: compatibility with the gospel, and communion with the universal Church; a prescription that is also echoed by Saint John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*.<sup>61</sup> Besides, inculturation is rooted in the theology of the incarnation. For just as “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14), so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations must take root in the life-situation of the hearers of the Word. Inculturation is precisely this insertion of the Gospel message into cultures.<sup>62</sup> For the Incarnation of the Son of God, precisely because it was complete and concrete, was also an incarnation in a particular culture.<sup>63</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Evangelization and Syncretism

Of great significance is the directive in *Ad gentes* to avoid every appearance of syncretism and of false particularism.<sup>64</sup> Syncretism is the unlawful mixture of Christian elements and, for example, African cultural items that are incompatible with Christian faith. “False Particularism” here is understood as closing into oneself and lack of interest in, and openness towards, non- African communities. Moreover, cultures are not like sealed containers but more like houses with windows. They can naturally criticize and enrich one another through dialogue. As Pope Paul VI insisted in opposition to certain contemporary trends, the universal Church is more than a federation of particular Churches. Autonomous local Churches, as he warned, can easily fall prey to local separatist forces.<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, in his Encyclical on Saints Cyril and Methodius, *Slavorum Apostoli*, made a similar point: “Every local Church ... must remain open and alert to the other Churches and traditions and at the same time to universal

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<sup>60</sup> See Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, no. 9, 24; *Lumen Gentium* (The Church), no.58; *Unitatis redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), no.17.

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 52.

<sup>62</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 53.

<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 60. Also see, Edward Schillebeekx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans., Hubert Hoskins (New York: Crossroad, 1979); *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans., John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1980); Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicea* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953); Karl Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 178-322; R. Ruether, *To Change the World* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978); Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

<sup>64</sup> Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 62.



and Catholic communion; were it to remain closed in on itself, it would run the risk of becoming impoverished.”<sup>66</sup>

Both the caution by de Lubac and *Ad gentes* against syncretism is a guide, which can be applied to a place like Nigeria where there is the temptation to adapt uncritically forms of religion and practices that are contrary to the official position of the Church. Currently, there is a sect calling itself *Chrislam*. It is a blend of Christianity and Islam which takes practices from both the Bible and the Qur’an. In African Independent Churches like the *Aladura Church*, their liturgy has a more traditional African worship approach. According to distinguished African historian, Elizabeth Isichei: “Prayers sometimes become a form of technology, like traditional rituals; if the right words are pronounced at the right place and time, very specific consequences will follow.”<sup>67</sup> Isichei explains that it is common practice today to find Nigerian Christians of different denominations recommending special prayers for specific favours from God if they are said at particular times or hours of the day. She writes: “Nigerian Catholics have recommended to me combinations of efficacious Psalms to be recited at specific times and used in conjunction with green scapulars.”<sup>68</sup> Syncretism of this kind is not a sign of a strong faith. It is precisely against these practices that de Lubac was warning.

A similar caution is echoed by Vatican II’s Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius* no. 16. The text outlines the significance of theological adaptation. It asserts:

With due regard to the conditions of different countries, students should be introduced to a fuller knowledge of the Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Holy See, so that they may be able to take part in promoting the restoration of unity between all Christians according to the decisions of the Council.

They should also be introduced to a knowledge of whatever other religions have most commonly encountered in this or that region, so that they may recognize more clearly how much goodness and truth they possess through the providence of God, and then how to refute their errors and bring the light of truth to those who are without it.<sup>69</sup>

The key concern of the text is the teaching of theology in Seminaries. However, it is relevant for theological adaptation in general for two reasons. Firstly, a theologian has to contribute to the creation of a theology which corresponds to the needs of theological formation of future priests in his own region. Secondly, the theology which has to be taught in the seminary is

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<sup>66</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism, Current Challenges in the theology of Church* (New York: Harper, 1988), 44-45.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 278.

<sup>68</sup> Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, 278.

<sup>69</sup> Vatican II, *Optatam Totius*, no. 16.

meant not only for the seminarians, but it is intended to be propagated by them in their own regions to the people of God. The implication is that seminaries need a theology which is well adapted to the needs and mentality of the people in their socio-cultural territories. The theological subjects, taught under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, with St Thomas as teacher, would prepare future priests to be able to defend her teachings against attacks. Vatican II not only recommended St Thomas as model of theological work pious, diligent, open to the scientific and human problems of his time, etc, but also recommends the content of his teaching without thereby imposing his system, nor declaring his assertions as infallibly true. Significantly, de Lubac was not limiting himself to St Thomas Aquinas. De Lubac is drawing attention to *ressourcement*, which is “to go back to the sources of Christian doctrine, to find in it the truth of our life.”<sup>70</sup> Through attentive listening and respect of other religions and cultures the Catholic theologian will be better prepared to participate in dialogue.

#### 5.4 De Lubac’s interpretation of Mysticism

Henri de Lubac did not write a treatise specifically on Christian Mysticism in the same way that he published other works of monumental importance, which continue to shape Roman Catholic identity and mission to this day. Either as an author or editor, de Lubac’s works covered themes like nature and grace, *ressourcement*, spiritual exegesis, *corpus mysticum*, atheist humanism and a wide range of other issues. Be that as it may, de Lubac’s most significant writing on the subject of Christian Mysticism is found in the preface to the book published in 1965 by Fr. André Ravier titled *La Mystique et les mystiques*.<sup>71</sup>

In his *mémoire*, de Lubac explained how he had planned writing a book on mysticism, but struggled for years with how to approach the subject. Although he collected a number of notes for that and even wrote a first part, de Lubac admits that the plan was never carried through to completion. De Lubac sums up his position when he asserts:

I truly believe that for a rather long time the idea for my book on Mysticism has been my inspiration in everything; I form my judgments on the basis of it, it provides me with the means to classify my ideas in proportion to it. But I will not write this book. It is in all ways beyond my physical, intellectual, spiritual strength. I have a clear vision of how it is linked together, I can distinguish and more or less situate the problems that

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<sup>70</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings*, trans., Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 31; ET of *Mémoire*, 29.

<sup>71</sup> An initial and briefer version of this chapter appeared as the preface to a collection entitled *La Mystique et les mystiques*, ed. Fr. André Ravier, S.J. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965). It is this same Preface that was later expanded and published as Henri de Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery”, in *Theological Fragments*, 35-69. Also see, De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings*, trans., Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 113.

should be treated in it, in their nature and in their order, I see the precise direction in which the solution to each of them should be sought – but I am incapable of formulating the solution. This is all enough to allow me to rule out one by one the views that are not conformed to it, in works I read or the theories I hear expressed, but all this does not take its final form, the only one that would allow it to exist. The centre always eludes me. What I achieve on paper is only preliminary, banalities, peripheral discussions or scholarly details.<sup>72</sup>

In this passage lies the justification for de Lubac’s writing on mysticism.<sup>73</sup> It is apparent that many of de Lubac’s works were saturated with mystical theology. Bryan C. Hallon opines that his works on *ressourcement* theology was, to a large extent, an effort to infuse the whole Catholic theology and ecclesial life with a mystical dimension.<sup>74</sup>

Where then is the source of mysticism? For de Lubac, the Church is the natural setting of mysticism. It is in the Church that mysticism is sustained by the life of faith and nourished by the sacraments. De Lubac writes:

Christian mysticism is still, is necessarily an ecclesial mysticism, since it is first of all in the Church that the Incarnation brings about the marriage of the Word and humanity.<sup>75</sup>

What de Lubac is emphasising here is the unity between Christ and humanity. In this way, de Lubac places the Incarnation as the centre of his Christology. To buttress this view, de Lubac quotes from Dom Anselme Stolz: “Outside the Church, no mysticism,” a phrase based on the dictum which goes back to St. Cyprian of Carthage: *extra ecclesia nulla salus*.<sup>76</sup> However, it has been observed that though the adaptation of the adage sums up the position of Dom Stolz, it does not do justice to that of de Lubac.<sup>77</sup> In the same vein, the German Benedictine, Professor at St. Anselm’s in Rome, raises the question of the possibility of finding true mysticism outside the Church, given that some external manifestations of mystical experience can be found in pre-Christian and non-Christian contexts. However, he decides that the question is complex, especially given that the possibility of salvation outside the Church is not assured. He writes in this regard: “In the current state of theological knowledge, the question of these possibilities of salvation outside the Church must be regarded as still open.”<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to find such a

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<sup>72</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 113.

<sup>73</sup> Bryan C. Hallon, “Mysticism and Mystical Theology,” 308.

<sup>74</sup> Hallon, “Mysticism and Mystical Theology,” 308.

<sup>75</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery”, in *Theological Fragments*, 62.

<sup>76</sup> Dom Anselme Stolz, *Théologie de la mystique* (Chêvetogne, Belgium: Editions des Bénédictins d’Amay, 1937), 69, 255.

<sup>77</sup> Noel O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as key to interpreting the theology of creation in the works of Henri de Lubac* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 371.

<sup>78</sup> Stolz, *Théologie de la mystique* (Second Edition), 69. De Lubac quotes from the 1937 edition.

reservation which, of course, was understandable at the time of Stolz was writing in the late 1930s.

What is remarkable is the openness of de Lubac at a time, when such a view was not popular in the Catholic Church. De Lubac recognized that God acts in all people. This is relevant to mysticism as it is to salvation itself. When de Lubac talks of genuine mystical experience he means union with the Living God. He is of the contention that this is possible outside the Church and even among non-believers because of the fact that the human person is created in the image of God. He writes:

Every man is made in the image of God. If, in theory, man's reason can arrive at a certain knowledge of the existence of God – although not without risking a mixture of erroneous conceptions – it is perhaps permissible to think that every man, in certain privileged circumstances, is also capable of experiencing in the depths of his soul something of the divine Presence even if reason has not first played a preliminary role, even if he does not know how to recognize the reality that he experiences.<sup>79</sup>

De Lubac maintains that through creation in the image of God enables all people to experience the capacity for God. In using the analogy of the concept of the natural knowledge of God, de Lubac argues for the possibility of a genuine mystical experience even in someone who does not have the wherewithal to understand that experience. According to de Lubac, even someone who has not yet heard the Word of God can be understood in multiple ways. We note that de Lubac's understanding of man created in the image of God is that the capacity for God refers not only to the desire for God and the knowledge of God, but also the experience of union with God.

De Lubac's writing on mysticism can contribute significantly to a greater respect for other religions and inter-religious dialogue. Although de Lubac's emphasis is on advocating a distinctively Christian and Catholic form of mysticism, nevertheless, he affirms that mysticism appears to be a virtually universal occurrence, which is not necessarily, confined to people of a particular religion. He cites Friedrich Nietzsche [1844-1900], an atheist, who refers to himself as a mystic when he remarked: "I am a mystic, and I believe in nothing."<sup>80</sup> Similarly, we have seen in the fourth chapter of this work that among the key characteristics of Sufi Islam in Nigeria are their mysticism and their veneration of saints. The same can be said of adherents of African Traditional Religion, who have a profound sense of a Supreme Being and of the sacred. Again, Hallon has observed that while "mysticism is common to humans, the

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<sup>79</sup> De Lubac, "Mysticism and Mystery," 68.

<sup>80</sup> De Lubac, "Mysticism and Mystery," 42.

particularities of human experience and the distinctiveness of various religious traditions shape mystical experience in different ways.”<sup>81</sup> For de Lubac, Christian mysticism involves participation in the life of the Trinity through a union with Jesus Christ given in grace. Indeed, the distinctiveness of Christian mysticism comes from the distinctiveness of God Himself. The key emphasis for de Lubac is the inclusive nature of Christian mysticism, whose aim is the spiritual understanding that characteristic of the life of faith shared by all believers. De Lubac asserts that nature is a vast and diverse symbol across which the Face of God is mysteriously reflected. Thus, “a man is religious to the very degree that he recognizes everywhere these reflections of the divine Face, that is, that he lives in a sacred atmosphere.”<sup>82</sup>

Through the life of grace, which comes from the Trinity, all can participate in the life of God. Although de Lubac was writing in the 1940s, it is obvious that his openness to all religions and atheism has prepared the way for subsequent dialogue with other religions and people of no religion within the Catholic Church. It is this spirit that we firmly believe can bridge the gap of division and hostility among people of different religious backgrounds in Nigeria.

### **5.5 De Lubac and the relationship between Christianity and Islam**

Henri de Lubac refers to Islam many times in his writings but did not write any specific treatise on it. However, a critical examination of his writings on the history of religions reveals his keen interest in Islam. Historical, political, and social change in the France of de Lubac’s time affected interreligious relationships. This is more so in the France of the 1960s and 70s, which experienced a massive wave of Muslim migration. Politically, the government of France granted independence to Algeria in 1962. It allowed *harki* soldiers from Algeria, who fought with the French army to settle in France as citizens. Others fled Algeria for France because of the instability, uncertainty, and withdrawal of the French, which followed the recognition of independence. Besides, in 1976, the French government passed the *regroupement familial* (family regrouping) law. This law permitted the families of mostly male migrant workers to come to France in order to join their husbands and fathers, and gain citizenship. The consequence of this law was that large numbers of children and wives of Muslim immigrants relocated to France to settle. A greater number of these new arrivals were Maghrebi; Moroccans, Tunisians, and Algerians. Many of the immigrants from North Africa settled in the

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<sup>81</sup> Hallon, “Mysticism and Mystical Theology,” 309.

<sup>82</sup> De Lubac, “Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred,” in *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 231.

industrial areas, especially Paris, where de Lubac spent his final years following the closure of the Jesuit scholasticate in Lyon in 1974. Indeed, de Lubac witnessed the rise of Islam in the France of his day.

In *Catholicisme*, de Lubac refers to Islam in the context of the mission of the Church.<sup>83</sup> He acknowledges that it is in the nature of the Church to be missionary. However, her advance is often slow and sometimes it is checked by reverses, such as occurred in the seventh century in the face of the overwhelming progress of Islam, and in the eighteenth century, when Christianity was overwhelmed in the Far East.<sup>84</sup> De Lubac notes that in the very year that Christianity penetrated into China, 635 A.D fourteen years after the Hegira, the Muslim conquest began.<sup>85</sup> However, it was not all about conquest. Islam also brought with it the concept of unity. De Lubac asserts that: “The Arabs before the Higura had hardly any unity. We have observed that the idea of a God, in its highest as well as most humble appearances, breaks out of and overflows all social as well as mental frameworks.”<sup>86</sup> Like Christianity, Islam is not unique as a missionary religion judging by its capacity to spread and make large numbers of converts.

The difference between the missionary approach of Islam and Christianity is explained by de Lubac’s understanding of monotheism. For de Lubac, there are two groups of monotheism. The first group believes in God to whom one must convert by destroying all idols. The second believes in an intransigent Being who claims all worship for himself and wishes to be recognized by all.<sup>87</sup> De Lubac posits that Islam belongs to the second category. It is a type of monotheistic religion which is “charged with an explosive force,”<sup>88</sup> It is this “explosive force” of Islam, to which de Lubac refers, that the world has witnessed in recent years with the rise of extreme jihadist groups and their atrocities. Jihadist groups like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al-Qaeda, al-Shebaab and Boko Haram have caused the death and displacement of thousands of people around the world.<sup>89</sup> Islam applies the first type of

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<sup>83</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 227.

<sup>84</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 227.

<sup>85</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the Sands of the Gobi Desert,” 305.

<sup>86</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the Sands of the Gobi Desert,” 329. Higura refers to the fact that the first Muslims suffered a brutal persecution at the hands of the corrupt leaders of Makkah that in 622CE Muhammad led his followers to the nearby city of Madinah, where a small band of converts had invited him. See Mir Zohair Husain, *Global Islamic Politics*, Second Edition (New York: Longman, 2003), 6.

<sup>87</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the Sands of the Gobi Desert,” 329.

<sup>88</sup> De Lubac, “Secrets from the Sands of the Gobi Desert,” 329.

<sup>89</sup> In the north-east of Nigeria alone, Boko Haram has caused the death of over thirty thousand people since it launched a violent attack on the state in 2009.

monotheism for expressing, completing, and spreading itself, while bringing the old religion like Christianity to its demise. It is interesting that de Lubac places Christianity into his second or “explosive” classification of monotheism. This is because Christianity as a missionary religion has witnessed huge numbers of conversions worldwide, thereby making it the world’s most successful missionary religion. David Grumett has observed that de Lubac draws our attention to the fact that the mission of Islam and Christianity is analogous, although Islam can be said to be a radicalization of it.<sup>90</sup> In Nigeria, the practice of forced conversion is common in Islamic communities. Boko Haram and other terrorist sects force people to convert to Islam or be subjected to physical abuse or death.

While Islam and Christianity can be said to share a similar missionary spirit, the same cannot be said when it comes to the understanding of the relationship between religion and mysticism according to de Lubac. For de Lubac, religion and mysticism are not two separate things. He suggests that the rules and practices of religion need to be accepted together with the experiential dimension of mysticism as part of a unified way of believing. Our author suggests that this unity is not apparent in Islam. According to de Lubac, what is vehemently emphasized by Islam is the understanding of religion in the strict sense in which a feeling of obligation accompanied by fear and scruples toward the superior power is the focus.<sup>91</sup> Relying on the work of Fr Louis Massignon, de Lubac affirms that the Qur’an is “a code of an exterior and ritualistic religion,” on the one hand, and, on the other hand, recognizes some opening for spiritual experience.<sup>92</sup> Still, this narrow opening of the eruption of the Spirit is rejected by many Islamic interpreters. Their preference is for the view, which maintains that “God has no need of men’s [women’s] love, and the only thing he asks of them is reverent obedience.”<sup>93</sup> In the same vein, it “condemns as a sacrilege the temerity of anyone who aspires to divine union or believes himself called to it.”<sup>94</sup> This accounts for the dominant practices among Muslims; one represented by the *Sunnis* and the other by the *Sufis*. As de Lubac sees it, “the God of Islam is a ‘block of impenetrably dense holiness’: for the true Muslim, the mystery of God is not communicable.”<sup>95</sup> Even though the Prophet Mohammed himself at the time of his nocturnal ascension experienced, the raptures that led him to the gate of the inaccessible holy city, where

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<sup>90</sup> David Grumett, “On Religion,” 266.

<sup>91</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>92</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>93</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>94</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>95</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

the glory of God resides he did not consider penetrating into the love of God.<sup>96</sup> This explains why “for the Muslim, the Christian belief in the divine Incarnation and the new order of relations that it established between man and God can only be a blasphemy. For Muslims, the only possible relationship with God is expressed in the word *Islam*, which means “submission.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, in Islam you do not get to know God. Rather, you are just to do his will.

Our exposition of de Lubac’s writings on Islam and its relationship to Christianity leads us to two observations. In the first place, the rise of Islam in France can be viewed negatively from the Christian perspective. This rise came about as a result of the French state’s secular policy, which adversely affected Christianity. Secondly, the consequence of the secular policy was the resurgence of religion within a historically secular public sphere by second-generation migrants, who challenged the terms on which they were accepted as citizens. In the midst of the cultural and social challenge posed by Muslim immigration, de Lubac’s reaction cannot go unnoticed. He does not reject Islam. Conversely, he is at pains to comprehend its differences from Christianity, especially its conception of the supernatural as relatively inaccessible. Writing on a Muslim convert to Christianity, Monsignor Paul Mulla-Zadé, de Lubac describes the history of the dialogue between Islam and Christianity as “the unfolding of a long drama of conscience with unexpected developments.”<sup>98</sup> De Lubac points out how both converts, Msgr. Paul Mulla-Zadé and Father Jean Mohammed Abdel-Jalil, a Franciscan, “worked unceasingly to destroy the misunderstandings that exist between believers of the two monotheisms.”<sup>99</sup> Of great significance is that both Paul Mulla-Zadé and Father Jean Mohammed Abdel-Jalil like de Lubac were influenced by the lay philosopher Maurice Blondel. De Lubac holds them in high esteem and praised their “ever proclaimed fidelity to the best of what they owed to Islam.”<sup>100</sup> It is apparent that de Lubac applies his first principle of Fundamental theology, Auscultation, to attentively listen to the insights of Islam without being aggressively hostile to it. Equally, he applies the principle of The Catholicity of Truth which is the justification for Auscultation to highlight the fact that truth is universal and can be found even in Islam. Thus, Islam deserves to be respected.

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<sup>96</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>97</sup> De Lubac, “Mysticism and Mystery,” 41.

<sup>98</sup> De Lubac, “Msgr. Paul Mulla-Zadé,” 575. See Preface to Charles Molette, *La Vérité où je la trouve. Une conscience d’homme dans la lumière de Maurice Blondel*.

<sup>99</sup> De Lubac, “Msgr. Paul Mulla-Zadé,” 576.

<sup>100</sup> De Lubac, “Msgr. Paul Mulla-Zadé,” 575.



## 5.6 De Lubac's Attitude to other Religions and Philosophies

From the beginning of our study we have pointed out that de Lubac was a man of his time. It is our conviction that his theological work and cultural context are closely entwined. De Lubac's work enables us to observe the relationship between faith and culture. This is more apparent when we retrieve what de Lubac suggests to be the right attitude towards other religions and philosophies. His writings on atheism, syncretism, liberalism, and secularism brings this out clearly.

### 5.6.1 Atheism and Syncretism

De Lubac lived in a France that was constitutionally secular. Equally, he lived in a Europe that had been ravaged by the anti-Christian politics of both Nazism and Communism. It is not surprising that de Lubac was at pains to point out that atheistic humanism and the concomitant ideologies that it inspired were anti-Christian. He makes this point vehemently in *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*,<sup>101</sup> a work whose early traces can be found in the little publication that appeared in 1942, entitled *Explication chrétienne de notre temps*.<sup>102</sup> This work was published during the Second World War and was an alarm cry regarding the development of National Socialism and the evils of the Occupation in France, though it refrains from mentioning these by name because of censorship: ostensibly it is an exposition of the dangers of a Godless society.

In *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, we gain an insight into de Lubac's reading of atheism. For him, atheism is as a direct result of "a tragic misunderstanding".<sup>103</sup> De Lubac contends that what atheism misunderstands so tragically is the image of God in humanity. Historically, this misunderstanding was not always there. De Lubac highlights the fact that in the ancient world, the idea of the human as God's image was introduced and seen as something liberating, as the source of human dignity and excellence. The contrary view is held in the modern age. The same idea of the human race, which was once welcomed as liberating has come to be experienced as a burden. In the modern age: "Man is getting rid of God in order to regain possession of the human greatness that it seems to him, is being unwarrantably withheld by another."<sup>104</sup> For de Lubac, this "immense drift" from one point of view to another, can only

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<sup>101</sup> De Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

<sup>102</sup> De Lubac, *Explication chrétienne de notre temps* (Paris: Orante, 1942), republished in *Théologie dans l'Histoire II*, op. cit., 232-49.

<sup>103</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 19.

<sup>104</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 24-25.

end in incoherence.<sup>105</sup> If humans truly are created in the image of God, then to reject God is to reject the only principle that establishes human value. All attempts to reduce the paradoxes of the human condition without reference to God will inevitably produce a false and dehumanizing synthesis. Atheism, de Lubac concludes, leads necessarily to the self-destruction of humanism: “Where there is no God, there is no man either.”<sup>106</sup>

In *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, de Lubac recognized that, in modern society, the rejection of religion as a legitimate category of discourse is often grounded in a similar misunderstanding to that which motivated the rejection of the idea of Christian culture: that to acknowledge the transcendent is to accept an alien and restrictive intrusion into ordinary natural life.<sup>107</sup> De Lubac posits a second position, which asserts that religion does not refer to structurally identical belief configurations in different contexts.<sup>108</sup> We observe this in his attack on a syncretistic understanding of religion. De Lubac protests that: “With no regard to genuine Christianity, today every species of the “sacred” or even every tawdry imitation thereof, every religion, every spirituality, every culture is being exalted, amid total confusion and with no effort at discrimination.”<sup>109</sup> According to de Lubac, the protagonists of this view are dazzled by the discovery of the vast universe, so much so, that “they have become blind to the unique contribution of Judeo-Christian revelation, as well as to the lights, overpowering or discreet, shed by holiness.”<sup>110</sup>

### 5.6.2 Liberalism

In the same way that de Lubac cautions against atheism and syncretism, he warned against liberalism. Liberalism is a broad tendency in politics and religion that followed the Enlightenment in supporting freedom and progress and in welcoming new ideas from the science and culture of the day.<sup>111</sup> There are two parallel sides to the meaning of Liberalism. Firstly, it has promoted open-minded education and social justice. Secondly, Liberalism has become a form of secular humanism that rejects religious authority, judges Christianity by the spirit of the age, and is incompatible with orthodox belief.<sup>112</sup> For de Lubac, liberalism is

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<sup>105</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 11.

<sup>106</sup> De Lubac, DHA, 65.

<sup>107</sup> De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans., Brother Richard Arnez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 95-96.

<sup>108</sup> De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, 96-98.

<sup>109</sup> De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, 98-99.

<sup>110</sup> De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, 99.

<sup>111</sup> Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, “Liberalism,” in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>112</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, “Liberalism,” 137.

unfitting because it tolerates error, “or of making the salt of the Gospel savourless.”<sup>113</sup> According to de Lubac, it is important for Christian dogmas to be explained in all their purity. He concurs with the first Council of Jerusalem which insisted that while it would be wrong to obscure the gentle severity of the Gospel, it is equally unlawful to load it with additional burdens.<sup>114</sup> De Lubac contends that in a bid to adapt the supernatural truth to the human level, “we must especially beware of blasphemy, of confusing ourselves... with our tastes, our habits, our prejudices, our passions, our narrow-mindedness and our weakness.”<sup>115</sup> The goal of evangelization according to de Lubac is to “give souls to God, not to conquer them for ourselves.” For de Lubac, the Christian perspective of liberalism is “none other than the liberalism of charity.”<sup>116</sup>

Our author cites St Paul as the great example against the mistake of liberalism. De Lubac highlights that St Paul was not ashamed to flaunt the scandal of the Cross. Paul unreservedly proclaimed the necessity of breaking with error and sin and of dying to oneself, to live a renewed life in Christ: “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste.”<sup>117</sup> As de Lubac points out: “Paul refuses to allow the demands of the Judaizing party, and he even attacks those who were cowed by their audacity.”<sup>118</sup> Guided by the logic of his faith, St Paul preached without compromising doctrine in opportunistic opinions. On the contrary, he upholds its real character in the face of Peter’s imprudent concessions. Paul “refuses to change the Gospel to please other men [women], because then he would be unfaithful to Christ.”<sup>119</sup> For de Lubac, it is the Holy Spirit which guided the Apostle and still guides the Church, and speaks by the voice of the modern popes. Again, de Lubac maintains that the path to which the Holy Spirit commits us is the only safe one. Moreover, “to follow it is neither naivete, nor syncretism, nor liberalism; it is simply Catholicism.”<sup>120</sup>

De Lubac’s perspective on the danger of liberalism to the Christian faith can well be appreciated by followers of Islam and ATR in Nigeria. This is because secularism is a common enemy to all religions. Equally, the two principles that has guided our work comes into play again to enhance dialogue. In the first place, Nigeria’s Muslims like others in the Islamic world,

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<sup>113</sup> De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, 99.

<sup>114</sup> Acts 15:28: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials”.

<sup>115</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 301.

<sup>116</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 301.

<sup>117</sup> 1 Cor. 5:7.

<sup>118</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 301.

<sup>119</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 302.

<sup>120</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 302.

question a secular value system in which the individual person is conceived as the centre of the universe. In this worldview, as Thomas Michel observes, “fulfilling to the utmost one’s potential, capabilities, and legitimate desires is considered the highest human goal, and individuals must be free to achieve these aspirations.”<sup>121</sup> He is of the opinion that while secular liberalism does not deny the existence of God or reject religion as such, it is sceptical of the ability of any religious system to attain truth, and it is opposed to the role of religion in public life. Religion, according to Michel, can be admitted as the personal choice of some individuals who feel they need some direction in their private and familial lives, but it has no place in public affairs.<sup>122</sup> Proponents of secularism are of the view that the marketplace, social interaction and, above all, government, are autonomous spheres that must exist and operate outside the influence of religious thought. Against secular values, Muslims revivalists propose their own theocentric value system. This is a position in which both Christians and followers of ATR will agree and an opening for dialogue. With the principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth we can learn that for Muslims, God has revealed a proper way for humans to live and has laid down the principles on which society is to be built. They take their moral will of God very seriously and view as enemies those who would propose incompatible ethical values. They are called upon to struggle (the root meaning of *jihad*) against secular, i.e., anti-God, anti-religion, anti-morality forces, propagated first and foremost by American and European opinion-makers. While Christians and other non-Muslims religions might not accept all their conclusions, there are truths that we have in common. The rejection of secularism and an emphasis on the sacralization of society is one that can be a bridge to all the various religious groups.

Nigeria’s Muslim critique of modern secularism is a challenge to Christians. For Christianity, Islam and to some extent ATR, it is God who is the centre of the universe, at the heart of human life and every human activity. Any way of life that reduces faith to private morality and ritual is unacceptable, and an affront to God’s majesty and holiness.<sup>123</sup> But as Thomas Michel points out: “Muslims regard modern Christians’ easy acceptance of secular society and humanist ethics as a compromise with the essence of true faith.”<sup>124</sup> In Nigeria, Muslims repeatedly affirm that they have no argument with true Christians, whom they regard

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<sup>121</sup> Thomas Michel, “The Roots of Muslim Anger and its Challenge for Christians,” in *Info on Human Development*, Vol. 25, no. 4-6. April – June 1999, 44.

<sup>122</sup> Michel, “The Roots of Muslim Anger and its Challenge for Christians,” 44.

<sup>123</sup> Michel, “The Roots of Muslim Anger and its Challenge for Christians,” 44.

<sup>124</sup> Michel, “The Roots of Muslim Anger and its Challenge for Christians,” 44.

as natural allies in the struggle against modern secularism, but they feel that Christians have too often sold their birth right in order to present themselves as modern and progressive. Similarly, ATR is experiencing a massive erosion of practice from its followers as a result of secularism. Values and beliefs which ATR, Islam, and Christianity have in common are being challenged. These tenets would include the basic truths about God and norms of behaviour; the reality that God exists, is unique, good, just and all powerful. Nowhere is this clearly seen than in family life. The threat to these values by secularism led Pope Benedict XVI in *Africae Munus* to remark:

By virtue of its [family] central importance and the various threats looming over it – distortion of the very notion of marriage and family, devaluation of maternity and trivialization of abortion, easy divorce and the relativism of a “new ethics” – the family needs to be protected and defended, so that it may offer society the service expected of it, that of providing men and women capable of building a social fabric of peace and harmony.<sup>125</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI identifies the family as the foundation of the shared values by Christianity, Islam, and ATR. It is for this reason that he advocates for its protection from the wave of secularism which is increasingly visible in Nigeria. Here, he re-echoes the concerns of Saint John Paul II, who alerted the African Church of the threat to the African family and values by international institutions like the United Nations.<sup>126</sup> De Lubac’s theological principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth would play a key role here. It would alert Christians to be conscious of the extent to which they have compromised their faith with incompatible elements of modern Western culture and unaware of the ways in which the Christian Churches have been wounded in the course of their encounter with liberal values. Secularism can be a source of unity for all the religions because of its anti-religious component which is a threat to morality and a God-centred life. Working together in dialogue will curb the unnecessary suspicion, competition and the desire to have a higher moral ground that often lead to conflict and violence.

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<sup>125</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 43.

<sup>126</sup> Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 84.

### 5.6.3 Henri de Lubac: A Literary, Contextual and Pastoral Theologian

Henri de Lubac was born into a France that was going through a cultural and social change. A visible sign of this was that the Catholic Church was losing its influence in public space. One example of the declining influence was in 1879. The government of the French Third Republic began to expel Catholic religious congregations and created a secular system of public education. Joseph S. Flipper observes that “in most Catholic European countries, the Catholic Church experienced marginalization and loss of its traditional exercise of political power.”<sup>127</sup> Another event of great significance was the German invasion and the occupation of northern France in 1940. According to de Lubac, the war of conquest waged by Hitler’s Germany was not only a revolution which was anti-French or anti-English but most importantly anti-Christian.<sup>128</sup> Joseph S. Flipper has suggested de Lubac’s effort in Lyon during the German occupation were primarily literary and pastoral. His participation in the resistance against Nazism was spiritual precisely because it was unarmed.<sup>129</sup> De Lubac describes what he sees in Nazism as “neopaganism” together with the attendant nationalism and anti-Semitism, which was adversely affecting the fabric of the French society.<sup>130</sup> For de Lubac, Nazism promotes racism which he argues constitutes the contemporary heresy fundamentally opposed to the common supernatural destiny of humanity.<sup>131</sup> The consequence of this led to the mass murder of Jews.

Writing in 1941 de Lubac avers that this “Hitlerian virus” affected even the Church.<sup>132</sup> De Lubac laments: “Are there no priests who imagine that a Hitlerian order would favour religion? And have they not gone to the point of spreading in the presbyterates that, in case of a German victory, a concordat could be signed that would assure salaries to the clergy?”<sup>133</sup> Rather than conforming with this state of affairs, de Lubac joined others in playing key roles in the Church’s spiritual resistance to Nazism. As the war raged on, de Lubac along with figures as Pierre Chaillet, Gaston Fessard, Jean Daniélou, and Yves de Montcheuil, contributed immensely to *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien* -the production and distribution of a clandestine series of pamphlets encouraging Christians to organize resistance to Nazism on theological grounds. As de Lubac sees it, the social dimension of the Church, as a “fraternal community,”

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<sup>127</sup> Joseph S. Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 419.

<sup>128</sup> Henri de Lubac, “Letter to My Superior,” in *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 429.

<sup>129</sup> Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 422.

<sup>130</sup> Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 433.

<sup>131</sup> Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 423.

<sup>132</sup> Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 431.

<sup>133</sup> Flipper, “Henri de Lubac and Political Theology,” 434.

was gradually have eroded. Indeed, fundamental Christian social ideals like “liberty, equality, brotherhood,” “nationality,” “progress,” and “social justice” – were detached from their Christian roots and became ideologies. De Lubac posits that without an embodied faith, human beings have fallen into despair:

Man is isolated, uprooted, ‘disconcerted’. He is asphyxiated: it is as if emptiness had been formed in him by an air pump... The consequence is not only a social imbalance. The world itself appears ‘broken’. There is, at the innermost part of his consciousness, a metaphysical despair. It was of this hunger and this thirst that the prophet Amos once spoke: absolute hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst that, in many cases, do not even know themselves to be such but that leave on the deepest palate a taste of death... substitute faiths... fill this tragic void... Inevitably something like a great call for air is produced in his inner void, which opens him to the invasion of new positive forces, whatever they might be.<sup>134</sup>

De Lubac highlights the fact that just as the moral void in France led to its subsequent weakness in resisting invading German forces, the spiritual void in human beings led to their subsequent receptivity to dangerous new faiths which fill the void. The contemporary return to neopaganism flows directly from the loss of Christianity as a social reality.

Although de Lubac lived in a different milieu to our time, nevertheless, his approach is still invaluable. He was not only able to listen attentively, on the one hand, but on the other hand, raised objection to the danger posed by atheist humanism and the totalitarianism of Nazi rule. Of greater significance was that he found the diagnosis for them. Using his literary gift, he was able to proffer a spiritual, pastoral and theological answer to the difficult and complex issues of his day. For de Lubac, the source of atheism is the loss of the sense of God or the sacred. The atheist thinkers rebelled against the tyranny of transcendence and sought to liberate human beings from God in order to secure humanity’s immanent dignity. On the contrary, de Lubac asserts that in abolishing transcendence, humanity unmoors itself from the source of its own dignity and vocation. This, de Lubac contends, is the backdrop to the horrors of his era.

In the current milieu in Nigeria, the greatest challenge to all religions is Islamic terrorism spearheaded by Boko Haram and Hausa-Fulani herdsmen. Their violence is nothing short of genocide and a brazen disregard for the dignity of life and religious freedom which is the right of every citizen and proposed by the Church in documents like *Pacem in Terris*<sup>135</sup> and *Dignitatis Humanae*.<sup>136</sup> Through the principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth,

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<sup>134</sup> De Lubac, “Christian Explanation of Our Times”, in TH, op. cit., 443.

<sup>135</sup> Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963.

<sup>136</sup> Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965.

all religious groups can work together towards a society that guarantees religious freedom and mutual respect instead of being at war with one another. This is the point made in a joint document by World Council of Churches (WCC), Pontifical Council For Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance of January 2011 when it remarks that: “religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one’s religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image of and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26).”<sup>137</sup> It is our conviction that de Lubac’s approach to atheism and Nazi totalitarianism would inspire theologians in Nigeria in a cultural and social context of religious pluralism. In the midst of exclusive claims to salvation by Christianity and Islam, sectarian divisions in the different religions in the country, lack of focused theological engagement, terrorism by Boko Haram and other groups; what is needed is a spiritual, theological and pastoral approach which would lead to tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we set out to retrieve the hermeneutics of Henri de Lubac on religious pluralism. In our view, the key to unlocking de Lubac’s hermeneutics on religious pluralism are his two principles of Fundamental Theology, namely, Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth. Auscultation understood on the one hand, as attentive listening without prejudice; accurate diagnosis; finding the right solution for the problem, and, on the one hand, attentive listening to the Word of God. Equally, we understand the dual meaning of The Catholicity of Truth; which recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them on the one hand and, on the other hand, that the Christian faith is a “source of universal light” that enlightens all people. It is also the justification behind “Auscultation.”. With these two concepts at the background, we are able to retrieve some meanings on the part of de Lubac on how to approach religious pluralism. They include de Lubac’s Trinitarian Christology; Catholicism understood in its universalist form; the relationship between religion, mission and salvation; de Lubac’s interpretation of Mysticism; the relationship between Christianity and Islam; and de Lubac’s attitude to other religions and philosophies.

In focusing on the universalism of Catholicism, de Lubac is emphasising the unity which is impaired, though never destroyed, by sin, and how this unity is recovered through the

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<sup>137</sup> World Council of Churches, “Declaration on Religious Liberty “. This was adopted at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in August 1948.  
<http://www.religlaw.org/content/religlaw/documents/wccdecreliglib1948.htm> (Accessed 24.02.2020).



redemptive act of Christ. He insists that Christianity is social and this is because its source and its end is the Trinity and the social nature of Christianity is based on the dogma of the Trinity. De Lubac highlights the dignity of the human person, which is due to his or her creation. God created humanity as a whole in his image and likeness. On this ground, he suggests that other religions deserve to be respected. In addition, we observe that there is the awareness of diversity of religions, interreligious encounter, assimilation, and division in de Lubac's writings. This points to the complex circumstances of mission and evangelization which are necessary in the Church because Christ mandated us: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you."<sup>138</sup> De Lubac is of the view that genuine mystical experience means union with the Living God. For him, the Church is the natural setting for mysticism. However, de Lubac recognizes the possibility of mysticism outside the Church or even among non-believers because they are created in the image of God. However, he draws our attention to atheistic humanism and the concomitant ideologies that it inspires as anti-Christian.

In Henri de Lubac we have a well thought out doctrinal approach to the complex question of religious pluralism. As a *ressourcement* theologian, he is rooted in Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and Liturgy. This is visible in his arguments and writing because of his global approach and a common humanity and destiny. Hence, we are able to see in de Lubac an inspiration on how to dialogue with other religions and philosophies, while respecting their differences. Most importantly, how to engage with other religions and still maintain the integrity of the Catholic faith.

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<sup>138</sup> Mt. 28: 19-20.

## General Conclusion

In this study, we raised two central theological questions. Why and how is Christ unique and necessary for salvation for those who adhere to him, and at the same time, how is he of universal significance for humanity? These questions are crucial given the unique experience of religious pluralism in Nigeria. We have outlined how Nigeria's experience is unique because two of the great monotheistic religions in the world, Christianity and Islam, have over eighty million adherents each. We highlighted how African Traditional Religion [ATR], which is the indigenous religion, has survived and flourished for centuries despite hostility from Christianity and Islam in the past. However, the reality of pluralism has not translated into conciliatory inter-religious relations between Christians and people of other faiths in Northern Nigeria. Many in the Islamic community in Northern Nigeria are intolerant and hostile to the Christian faith and other religions.

This dissertation emphasises that Henri de Lubac's writings on non-Christian religions can serve as a direction through which we can follow in finding a theological approach which will be of interest to Nigeria's unique experience of religious pluralism. The key concerns of this research are in the spheres of Christology and Salvation, which have implications for dialogue with people of other religions. Our method is dictated by Henri de Lubac's methodology which is *Ressourcement*: going back to the sources of Christian doctrine; Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and Liturgy.

We examined the evolution through which Christian thinking about salvation of people "outside the Church" has gone from the earliest centuries of the Christian era to our present day. The necessity of the Church for salvation had always been expressed in the dictum: "Outside the Church, there is no salvation."<sup>1</sup> This expression of the salvific necessity of the Church, which Francis A. Sullivan sees to be negative and misleading, has given way to a more positive and profound theological expression in Vatican II's description of the Church as the "universal sacrament of salvation."<sup>2</sup> From selected contributions of important early Christian writers like Justin, Cyprian, Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine, our study explains how the early Christians understood the formulation "outside the Church there is no salvation" to refer to Christians, who had separated themselves from the Church through an adherence to a

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<sup>1</sup> This axiom goes back to Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others. See, Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III, 24, 1 (PG 7, 966); Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I, 6 (PG 8, 281); Origen, *In Jesu Nave* 3, 5 (PG 11, 841).

<sup>2</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 22-23; Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1.

heretical or schismatic sect. As a corollary, we emphasize how a misrepresentation of the “true meaning of the affirmations of faith has done great harm to relations between Christians and the other religious traditions, and indeed to the Christian message itself.”<sup>3</sup>

The study addresses one important problematic: While non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church, as de Lubac makes clear, there is a range of views on how this takes place. The Pluralist view claims that salvation is mediated through other religions. This interpretation is promoted by writers like John Hick, Paul F. Knitter and Roger Haight. The Inclusivists, on the other hand, reject the possibility of salvation through other religions. These authors assert that non-Christians can be saved by the grace of Christ through the Church. The protagonists of this interpretation are Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner and Gavin D’Costa. According to de Lubac, salvation is through Christ and his Church, yet no one is necessarily excluded. Then there is the more nuanced, some would say ambiguous, approach of Jacques Dupuis.

Our dissertation interrogated all the relevant Magisterial documents (*Lumen gentium* 16-17; *Nostra Aetate*; *Ad gentes* 7-8; *Dominus Iesus*; Notification on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Jacques Dupuis and Notification on the book *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight). In addition, we analysed the views of many theologians; de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, John Hick, Jacques Dupuis, Paul F. Knitter, Roger Haight, Terrence Merrigan, Gavin D’Costa and Ilaria Morali. The leading views since Vatican II have that of the “anonymous Christian” by Karl Rahner and “inclusive pluralism” by Jacques Dupuis. Besides, examining these Magisterial documents and the writings of these theologians, has been enlightening because it shows the complexity of this issue. Our examination of the Magisterial documents highlights the difficulty between these official pronouncements and how they work practically. In addition, our research has been guided by a significant Notification by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), which not only gives an answer to our problematic but also gives clarification on Dupuis’s nuanced and ambiguous position on the possibility of salvation through other religions. The Notification asserts:

It is legitimate therefore to maintain that the Holy Spirit accomplishes salvation in non-Christians also through those elements of truth and goodness present in the various religions; however, to hold that these religions, considered as such, are ways of

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 44.

salvation, has no foundation in Catholic theology, also because they contain omissions, insufficiencies, and errors.<sup>4</sup>

The recent Magisterial documents clarified certain ambiguities and errors in certain writings with regards to the teaching of the Catholic faith in relation to other religions. These pronouncements are *Dominus Iesus*, Notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* and Notification on *Jesus Symbol of God*. We noted that there is a difference between the two Notifications. While the Notification on *Toward a Christian Theology of Pluralism* by Dupuis concerns only clarifications on certain nuanced or ambiguous statements on the possibility of salvation being mediated through other religions, the Notification on *Jesus Symbol of God* by Roger Haight in which he affirmed that there may be other incarnations was outrightly rejected as going too far. At the heart of our research is de Lubac's theological principles of Fundamental Theology, namely, the Principle of "Auscultation" and "the Catholicity of Truth." We are of the view that these two theological principles are the keys to the practice of dialogue in the complex reality of religious pluralism in northern Nigeria.

We observed some similarity of thought between de Lubac and Elochukwu E. Uzuoku, a Nigerian theologian. Uzuoku's understanding of a listening Church, especially of leaders in the Church is close to de Lubac's interpretation of the Principle of Auscultation. We noted in chapter two that for de Lubac, the Principle of Auscultation is understood in two ways: attentive listening without prejudice to the context on the one hand, and, on the other hand, attentive listening to the Word of God. For Uzuoku, the imagery appropriate for ministry of service in the Church is the image of the "large ears." Although Uzuoku emphasis is on the leadership of the bishops in their dioceses and episcopal conferences, we posit that this outlook can be extended to relationship with people of other faith traditions. Uzuoku is of the view that "a leadership which cultivates the ministry 'with large ears' makes it easier for the Churches to listen, to hear, and to do what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (Rev. 2:29; 3:22)." We believe that if we listen to other faith traditions "with large ears," then we can minimize some of the conflicts which are already taking place. After all, de Lubac's Principle of the Catholicity of Truth recognizes that all people have something of the truth in them on the one hand and, on the other hand, that the Christian faith is a "source of universal light" that enlightens all people.

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<sup>4</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, no. 8; See, [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/.../cfaith.../rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20010124\\_dupuis\\_en.ht](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/.../cfaith.../rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010124_dupuis_en.ht) (Accessed March 29, 2019).

Listening “with large ears” ensures that the Christian identity is preserved in its integrity in the process of encountering and entering into dialogue with the other religious traditions.

This research has retrieved some important Lubacian hermeneutics on non-Christian religions. It is our conviction that this will contribute significantly in four ways towards fostering peaceful coexistence in northern Nigeria, namely, holistic dialogue as a tool for achieving religious harmony, religious freedom, collaboration in the spirit of common humanity, and the positive appraisal of non-Christian religions. It is here opportune to examine these four areas that we have suggested, which might help improve the fragile and often conflictual relationship between the different religious groups in northern Nigeria.

### **Holistic Dialogue as a Tool for Religious Harmony**

De Lubac’s two key theological principles of Fundamental Theology, namely, “Auscultation” and the “Catholicity of Truth” can serve as the foundation for a comprehensive dialogue. De Lubac involved himself in a passionate dialogue with a diverse plurality of thought, including with Christianity’s fiercest critics. Similarly, we observed in the second and fifth chapters of this thesis that de Lubac spent considerable time in the 1930s reflecting on religious origins and the relation of Christianity to other religions and to atheism.<sup>5</sup> As Jacques Dupuis notes, de Lubac outlined the relationship between Christianity and other religions and in particular the way in which salvation in Jesus Christ reaches non-Christians.<sup>6</sup> Dupuis opines that de Lubac’s approach was to make Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s “fulfilment theory” his own by explaining that the mystery of Christ reaches the members of other religious traditions as a divine response to the human aspiration for union with the Divine.<sup>7</sup> However, de Lubac does not go as far as to attribute to other traditions a role in the mystery of the salvation of their members. That will imply making other religions parallel ways of salvation with Christianity thereby destroying the unity of the divine design. This position, which has formed the mainstream Catholic position today, is common among theologians like Yves Congar, Jacques Dupuis, Walter Kasper, Hans Küng and Gustave Thill. Be that as it may, de Lubac’s position can be a starting point for a deeper conversation between different religions in northern Nigeria. After all, Vatican II (1962-65) encouraged Catholics to dialogue with the world at large, with members of non-Christian religions, with other Christians<sup>8</sup>. It is imperative to adopt a holistic

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<sup>5</sup> Supra, chapter 2, 57; chapter 5, 228-231.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans., Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 51.

<sup>7</sup> Henri Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 92; *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 16; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 14-18.

approach to dialogue as a tool for religious harmony because the history of inter-religious conflict between Christians, Muslims and followers of ATR in northern Nigeria points to the reality that there is no single solution to the issue.<sup>9</sup> John Cardinal Onaiyekan opines that inter-faith mutual comprehension and collaboration is so crucial that Nigerians have no choice but to embrace it.<sup>10</sup> It is our conviction that all aspects of dialogue are necessary if lasting peaceful coexistence between people of different religions and atheists is to be attained. In de Lubac's writings on non-Christian religions, we discover the fruitful impact of the dialogue of ideas, which is fundamental to any meaningful conversation between people of different religions and philosophies. Through attentive listening, openness and willingness to understand the tenets of other religions and beliefs we will be able to bring about a more peaceful relationship between divergent religions and philosophies.

Another effective form of dialogue is the dialogue of life. It is a more practical and symbolic approach to dialogue. The dialogue of life is the friendly or fraternal encounter in real life between people of different religions. In the context of Nigeria, this is what can bring about a more spontaneous harmony and peaceful coexistence. Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama explains that: "The dialogue of life among Muslims and Christians is an imperative and it must start from the grassroots with both the old and young. It is a pity that some parents and teachers indoctrinate children to think and behave negatively towards people of other religions."<sup>11</sup> He suggests that through many activities like weddings, marriages, festivals periods such as *Salla*<sup>12</sup> and Christmas, school graduation and naming ceremonies, deliberate efforts should be made to broaden friendship with people of other faith communities. By engaging at these levels of

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<sup>9</sup> Archbishop Ignatius A. Kaigama asserts that: "There are four forms of dialogue frequently mentioned in various documents: The dialogue of life, of action, of theological exchange and of spiritual experience. The 'dialogue of life' is an attitude, a way of acting, a spirit guiding conduct and building a common life with others on the basis of trust, understanding and respect. The 'dialogue of action' or 'dialogue of works' fosters collaboration with others for goals of humanitarian, social, economic or political ends aimed at the common good, peace and harmony. The 'dialogue of experts' is the attempt by specialists or experts to share and deepen understanding of their respective religious heritage, not necessarily with the intention of uniting the religions but to reveal what in each religion can be reasons for common action especially in the areas of morals and ethics. The 'dialogue of religious experience' fosters the sharing of prayer, contemplation and learning from each other's spiritual traditions, not with the intention of worshipping God in the same way but to realize that the same God can be worshipped in different ways." See, Ignatius A. Kaigama, *Dialogue of Life: An Urgent Necessity for Nigerian Muslims and Christians* (Jos, Nigeria: Fab Educational Books, 2006), 8; Val Thampu, "Models of Interreligious Dialogue," in Hans Ucko, Charlotte Venema and Ariane Hentsch, eds., *Changing the Present, Dreaming the Future: A Critical Movement in Interreligious Dialogue* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2006), 39-41.

<sup>10</sup> John Cardinal Onaiyekan, *Seeking Common Grounds: Inter-Religious Dialogue in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Kaigama, *Dialogue of Life: An Urgent Necessity for Nigerian Muslims and Christians*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Salla* is a word in the Hausa language in northern Nigeria which refers to the two Islamic festivals of *Eid el-Fitr* and *Eid el-Kabir*.

dialogue, there is the willingness and realization of the importance of listening to the Word of God, attentively listening without prejudice to the other religions and the commitment to finding a conciliatory response to the problem. Similarly, there is the recognition that the Christian faith, especially the Trinity, is a “source of universal light” that enlightens all people on the one hand and, on the other hand, the recognition that all people have something of the truth in them. This is what we argued throughout this dissertation is de Lubac’s principle of “Auscultation” and “the Catholicity of Truth.”

### **Religious Freedom**

Among the many significant contributions of the Second Vatican Council to the Church is its *Declaration on Religious Freedom*.<sup>13</sup> The declaration asserts:

The freedom or immunity from coercion in religious matters which is the right of individuals must also be accorded to men when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the nature of man and of religion itself.<sup>14</sup>

This declaration affirms the significance of religious freedom for the individual or community. The document acknowledges that the private and public acts of religion by which men and women direct themselves to God according to their convictions transcend the earthly and temporal order of things. Since humans are also spiritual beings, the declaration on religious freedom admonishes civil authorities, whose purpose is the care of the common good in the temporal order, to recognize and look with favour on the religious life of the citizens.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the declaration insists that provided the just requirements of public order are not violated, the rights of individuals and groups should not be denied. Vatican II’s *Dignitatis Humanae* remarks that individuals and faith communities “must be allowed to honour the supreme Godhead with public worship, help their members to practise their religion and strengthen them with religious instruction, and promote institutions in which members may work together to organize their own lives according to their religious principles”.<sup>16</sup>

The issue of Religious freedom has been a major source of conflict and violence in northern Nigeria. Although there have been incidences of intolerance and violence in the southern parts of the country between followers of ATR, Christianity and Islam, the reports of violation of religious freedom is generally low. The disregard for religious freedom persists in

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<sup>13</sup> Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 4.

northern Nigeria. This is despite the fact that the constitution of the country explicitly prohibits the adoption of a particular religion and upholds the right of every Nigerian to freedom of religion including freedom to practise, propagate, and change religion or belief, both in public or in private.<sup>17</sup> In many Islamic dominated parts of northern Nigeria Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Jos, Zaria and Maiduguri. Muslim government officials deny Christians and other non-Muslims access to land to build places of worship. It is such insensitivity to other religious traditions that led to the implementation of the *Sharia* law. For many northern Nigerian Muslims, the introduction and implementation of strict *Sharia* law was a way of asserting their legitimate Islamic moral heritage.<sup>18</sup> Christians, ATR followers, and other groups, whose religious freedoms were infringed upon by Muslims and that their constitutional rights were being violated, thus denying them the freedom to practice their faith. It is such fears that led the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria to remark:

The reality on the ground in the states that have adopted sharia shows clearly that non-Muslims are being negatively and unjustly affected. They are being deprived of their means of livelihood. Fanatics are being encouraged to molest law-abiding citizens without cause. Under the prevailing circumstances, freedom to practise and propagate one's faith, guaranteed in our constitution, is being progressively eroded. The right of citizens to change their religion is often denied... Christian bodies are denied land on which to build places of worship... and are often denied access to the use of media of communication owned by state governments.<sup>19</sup>

In this statement, the Nigerian Bishops' Conference is challenging the government of Nigeria to maintain the constitutional provisions, which ensures equality for all citizens. The Catholic Bishops point out that the implementation of *Sharia* law in the northern states of Nigeria has led to conflict and violence. However, we are of the view that it can be an important theme for fruitful engagement with the Islamic community. This will help Muslims to understand the fears and concerns of many Christians, who believe that as important as *Sharia* is to the Muslims, the implementation and application take away the rights to freedom of worship. Muslims disagree, arguing that the correct application of *Sharia* can be a saving grace to society. For Muslims, *Sharia* is non-negotiable and is integral to Islamic life. This intolerance by Muslims has resulted in more distrust between them and members of other religious traditions. However, through dialogue and mutual understanding, a sensitive implementation

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<sup>17</sup> See *The Nigerian Constitution: 1963, 1979, 1999: A Compendium* (Lagos: Nigeria: Olakanmi & Co LawLords Publications, 2008), 326 and 341.

<sup>18</sup> International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*, Africa Report, no. 168, December 2010, Dakar/Brussels, 15-16. <http://www.crisisgroup.org> (Accessed 24.04.2020).

<sup>19</sup> Peter Schineller (ed), *Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, 1960-2002: The Voice of the Voiceless* (Abuja, Nigeria: Gaudium Et Spes Institute, 2020), 146.



of *Sharia* by Muslims can guarantee the freedom of Christians and other faith traditions to enjoy their rights and privileges even when they live and work in “Sharia states.” As Archbishop Kaigama notes: “This understanding can be the panacea to end the unnecessary tension and conflict over the *Sharia* matter.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Justice Adamu S. M. Kanam, the Grand *Khadi*<sup>21</sup> of Plateau State (Nigeria), clarifies that “*Sharia* guides Muslims to moral discipline, obedience, loyalty, and good conduct.”<sup>22</sup> He goes further to admonish Muslims to be guided by the teaching of the *Qur’an* and *Sharia* principles, while Christians should be guided by the teaching of the Gospel and the doctrine of the Ten Commandments. According to Kanam, “whatever one thinks, dialogue is the solution to all our problems. Preferably, dialogue should be used as a means of prevention of possible occurrences of conflicts than be regarded and used as a remedy for reconciliation of occurred damages.”<sup>23</sup> Although Adamu Kanam is a Muslim, the truth he articulates has a universal appeal, which is what de Lubac means by the “Catholicity of Truth.”

### **Collaboration in the Spirit of the Common Humanity**

We have emphasized in this study that Henri de Lubac understands Catholicism in its universalist sense. For him, Christianity is social. The true social nature of Christianity is based on the dogma of the faith, especially the Trinity. In the same vein, de Lubac draws attention to the dignity of the human person which is due to his or her creation. According to him, God created humanity as a whole, in his image and likeness. He contends that because humanity was created as a whole, it was not the outcome of unconnected individuals created separately. Our conviction that de Lubac’s interpretation is inclusive in many aspects. It highlights the fact that other religions deserve to be respected. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance and the recognition of diversity, which is consistent with *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>24</sup> It is obvious that there is the awareness of diversity of religions and interreligious encounter in his writings. We can draw inspiration from de Lubac in order to forge the path of greater cooperation especially in the areas of justice, peace and development. Most people in northern Nigeria will agree that the reality of grim poverty, disease, violence, a lack of adequate educational infrastructures, negative secular influences will best be overcome collectively if all the segments of society work together. John Cardinal Onaiyekan notes that it is gratifying that in recent years, when

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<sup>20</sup> Kaigama, *Dialogue of Life*, 63.

<sup>21</sup> The *Grand Khadi* is the Chief Judge of a *Sharia* court in a state in Nigeria.

<sup>22</sup> Kaigama, *Dialogue of Life*, 65-66. The *Grand Khadi* is the Chief Judge of a *Sharia* court in a state in Nigeria.

<sup>23</sup> Kaigama, *Dialogue of Life*, 66.

<sup>24</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 5.

there has been so much conflict in the name of religion, many other groups are springing up for interfaith cooperation and dialogue.<sup>25</sup>

Different interfaith initiatives in the Catholic Church in Nigeria beginning from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Bishops, Priests, Nuns in cooperation with Muslim clerics and lay people, and followers of ATR have yielded fruitful results such as the engagement between the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) with some Muslim leaders, who are well disposed to dialogue; mutual visitations between Muslim and Christian leaders as symbols of unity; Muslim and Christian women and groups working together to promote peace, etc. Equally, there are many Islamic based organizations that are collaborating with Christian communities and people or other religious traditions in peace building, conflict resolution and dialogue. Thaddeus Umaru cites two prominent Islamic groups that are engaged with Christian groups. The first is the Jama'atu Nasril Islam ([JNI), which is collaborating with the Nigeria Interreligious Council (NIREC) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The second group is a Muslim women's organization called Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) which is engaged in dialogue with the Catholic Women Organization (CWO).<sup>26</sup> The Catholic Church in Nigeria allows people of all religious backgrounds and of no religion to attend Catholic schools and hospitals. This is not to mention the provision of clean water in rural communities and vocational training centres for young men, women and the physically challenged. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, four hundred and fifty Catholic health facilities have been offered for use to the government of Nigeria in the likelihood that the state was running short of such centres. This is a practical demonstration of our common humanity. After all, ethical and social justice concerns are issues of the whole of humanity not only Christians.

### **The Positive appraisal of religions**

Our research is guided by the *Ressourcement* method, which enables us to sift through a maze of Henri de Lubac's writings in different epochs. De Lubac's extensive writings on Buddhism, his analysis of modern atheism, and the rise of secularism as exemplified by Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Augustine Comte have enriched our study. The thesis of de Lubac's highly detailed and attentive engagement with Buddhism, which provides an instructive model

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<sup>25</sup> Onaiyekan, *Seeking Common Grounds: Inter-religious Dialogue in Africa*, 111-112

<sup>26</sup> Thaddeus Umaru, *Christian Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria*, 196. Umaru notes that due to the tensions in Northern Nigeria in the 1990, the dialogue meeting between FOMWAN and CWO did not continue. Also see, Kathleen McGarvey, *Muslim and Christian Women in Dialogue the Case of Northern Nigeria* (Lagos, Nigeria: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2009), 166-80 and 247.

for interfaith encounter, has been advanced by David Grumett.<sup>27</sup> Grumett draws attention to how de Lubac studies every religion uniquely, thus, extending his dialogue beyond the three great monotheistic traditions. It is with this understanding in mind that we go into dialogue with ATR. Again, Grumett highlights the fact that de Lubac's "exposition of how culture and belief are inextricably linked reminds us that when a confessional system is transplanted from one culture into another it is fundamentally changed and needs to be understood in qualitatively new ways."<sup>28</sup> Although Christianity and Islam were founded outside the African continent, their encounter with ATR in sub-Saharan Africa has led to a new form of mutual relationship. However, what is common to Islam, Christianity, and ATR is that they are not monolithic. Since these three religions are not monolithic, de Lubac's methodology of studying Buddhism and secular atheism individually paves the way for the Christian to engage with Islam and ATR. It will lead Christians to focus on a particular denomination or sect within each religious tradition rather than treating an entire religious confession as one.

In this study, we dialogue with Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, especially Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, in order to show the development in the doctrine of salvation in relation to people of other religions and atheists. We discovered the depth of de Lubac's conversation with world religions as he recognizes cultural and traditional practices in many continents including some ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa. However, de Lubac's caution against syncretism is a guide that can be applied in a place like Nigeria, where there is the temptation to adapt uncritically forms of religion and practices that are contrary to the official position of the Church. An example of this syncretism is that of a group calling itself *Chrislam*. It is a blend of Christianity and Islam that takes practices from both the Bible and the Qur'an.

Our study clearly articulates the inherent difference between looking at other religions from a distance or secure location (de Lubac) and being personally involved or experiencing them first-hand (Dupuis and the author of this research). A vivid example is the author's experience of the violence carried out by terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Hausa-Fulani Muslim Herdsmen in northern Nigeria and reading or writing about them only in academic papers. Our research has brought into focus the link between the theology of religion and interreligious dialogue. It has brought into light the fact that de Lubac's theological principles of Auscultation and the Catholicity of Truth can be applied globally in order to improve the

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<sup>27</sup> David Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 151.

<sup>28</sup> Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 151.

important issue of the relationship between different religions, peoples, and cultures in the twenty first century.

This research explored areas like Christology and Trinity, which are controversial subjects for Muslims. They hardly feature in interactions between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. However, Christians can listen to the Islamic tenets, which do not disapprove of a pluralistic way of life. This pluralistic setup is approved by the Covenant of Medina (called Mithaq-i-Medina).<sup>29</sup> After all, when the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina owing to persecution in Mecca at the hands of Meccan tribal leaders, he found Medinese society a pluralistic society. There were Jews, pagans and Muslims. The Jews and pagans were divided into several tribes, each tribe having its own customs and traditions. As a result of the religious diversity and violence associated with religion in northern Nigeria, the inter-faith dialogue is mostly centred on conflict resolution. It is hoped that we will find partners to engage with at a deeper level in the future. We know that there are people of other religions willing and competent to engage in dialogue. In de Lubac, we have inspiration on how to dialogue with other religions and philosophies, while respecting their difference. His writings on non-Christian religions, atheism, and secularism enrich us on how to engage with other religions, while maintaining the integrity of the Catholic faith.

Finally, it is our contention that highlighting the positive evaluation of non-Christian religions in the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the Magisterial teachings of the Church especially *Nostra Aetate*, the post-Vatican II theological assessments of theologians like Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis has enriched the Catholic Church in northern Nigeria to have a more open attitude to people of other religions and none. Indeed, the assertion of de Lubac about our common humanity and common destiny is still relevant as we grapple with the issue of religious pluralism. De Lubac remarks can hardly be disputed that: “The human race is one. By our fundamental nature and still more in virtue of our common destiny.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Asghar Ali Emginer, “Islam and Secularism,” in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspective*, Second Edition, eds., John J. Donohue & John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 139.

<sup>30</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 221.

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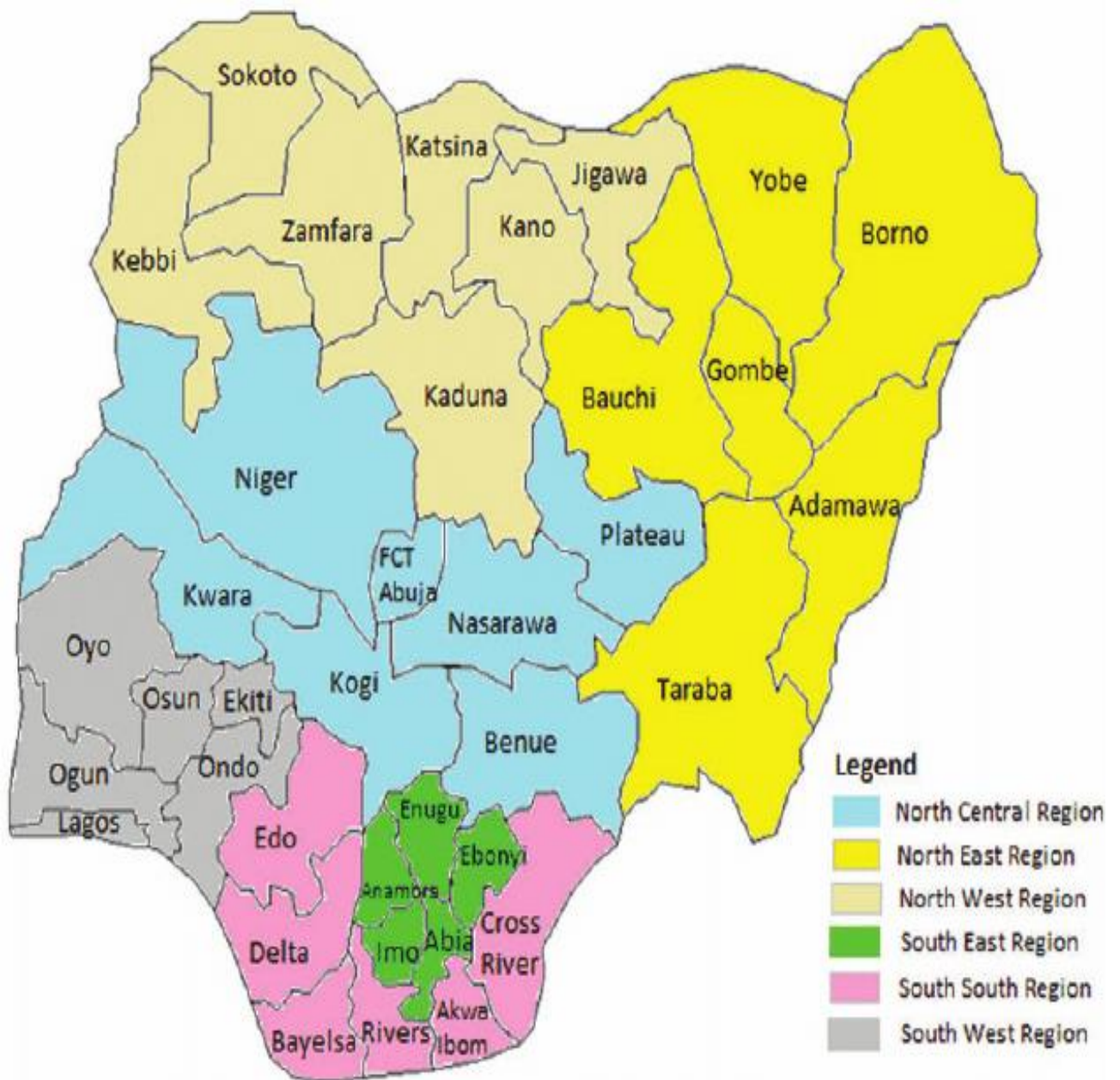
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## Map



**Map** of Nigeria showing the six geo-political zones. Northern Nigeria covers three geo-political zones: North Central Region, North East Region and North West Region.