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MASS MEDIA AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR EVANGELIZATION AND RELIGIOUS UNITY IN NIGERIA

Summary: Since religion is of paramount importance to the human person, where there are religious differences, there are also bound to be essential and overriding disagreements. Today, more than ever and with uncommon ease, men and women can participate in a worldwide exchange of ideas and information, having overcome the initial constraints of space and time. Owing to the effectiveness and tremendous benefits in this information age, with the advancement and the increased availability of the mass media at the disposal of the modern world, made it most accessible and most effective means of reaching every man and woman. Therefore, the mass media qualifies in the opinion of many as the chief means of information, education, and guidance in today's world. Experience, however, shows that there is indeed a growing cleavage between theory and practice, between the overrun rhetoric and the reality as far as the Church's use of the media for evangelization is concerned. There is a sense, therefore, in which a constant habit and neglect of the means of evangelization is alarming, as many tried to draw the attention of the Church to this neglect of the media with its attendant consequences in the society today. This piece, therefore, intends to express the effectiveness of the mass media for the Churches evangelization mission as well as religious unity and ecumenism in Nigeria.

Keywords: Denominations, Evangelization, Ecumenism, Religion Unity and Mass Media.

Introduction

The Media over the years in its process of disseminating information, education or entertainment has created discord among religions and even among Christian sects. For instance, the Christian-Muslim unrest that ensured out of the 2002 Silver Bird Miss World Beauty Pageant to be held in Nigeria was attributed to an article in the Christian newspaper This Day about the event.[1] The fracas claimed many lives, committed by „Muslim youths going on the rampage,

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[1] Cf. *Miss World Riots*, (Kaduna: 2002), in: *Wikipedia* [online], access: 22.04.2018, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miss_Wolrd_riots>.

leaving more than 100 dead and hundreds injured."[2] This sad event further extended the differences between the adherents of the two religions. Catholics have felt offended by the unfair attacks made on the church by some prolific Pentecostal preachers, who are regular users of the radio and television media. The adherents of Jehovah witness never fail in their print publications to ignorantly attribute catholic traditions to ancient paganism. On another note, many had taught that the display of miracles like magic on mass media is un-Christian and so when the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) banned such events it was welcomed and frowned at the same time by different quarters. While the home video goes a long way to entertain people, they also have been used to castigate Pentecostal churches, suggesting doubts on their sources of powers attributed to Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church also has suffered discrimination in much films that has not only condemned her hierarchy but also attributed their physical and spiritual prowess to sources other than Jesus Christ. Among such films are: „Rapture", „Beyond the Vows", „The Pope Must Hear This" and „Seminarian". Some of our divided brethren do not help issues as they aggressively condemn practices of other religions in manners unbecoming. Muslims also joined in denouncing the mysteries of Christianity as they broadcast their preaching on Fridays. The big question then is how the Church can utilize the mass media to promote and uphold religious and ecumenical unity rather than jettison it? Since attaining peace and unity among religions and within Christianity is imperative, then, the active participation of the Church in mass media industry shouldn't be taken for granted as it can salvage the situation at hand by making the prime position to solve this problem through the most effective means, which is; the Mass Media.

Nigeria as a Nation

The entity called Nigeria came into existence in 1914 after the amalgamation of the northern and southern Protectorate by the Colonial Masters. The nation is made up of different ethnic groups (about 250) with several languages (about 450) between them. Three languages could be said to be dominant: Hausa/Fulani in the north, Igbo in the east and Yoruba in the south-west; they are the most widespread apart from English which is the official language. At October 1, 1960, Nigeria got her independence and was admitted to membership of the United Nations on October 7, 1960; making the country a sovereign

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[2] *The Telegraph, 100 Killed in Miss World Riot in Nigeria*, in: *The Telegraph* [online], access: 24.04.2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1413995/100-killed-in-Miss-World-riots-in-Nigeria.html>.

indispensable entity, undivided both by internal and external factors. Unfortunately, shortly after these achievements, Nigeria experience Military take--over (1966), civil war (1967-1970), as well as political, ethnic, religious and several periods of unrest and conflicts. Nigeria remains an enduring entity with each group having its peculiar interests and aspiration. So what is known today as Nigeria is an aggregation of ethnic groups with different traditional attitudes and socio-political structures? From North to South, East to West, there is unquantifiable wealth in the diverse languages and cultures. Every tribe, religious and ethnic group strives to promote its tribe and religion, through several means especially the media; paid programmes are aired on the audio-visual media and print media, to promote the cause of different tribes and religion.

Currently, Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa with a population of 194,959,012 million people and the 7th in the world.[3] The creator endows it with enormous natural and human resources, a rich deposit of iron ore, high-quality petroleum, a yet untapped reservoir of natural gas and an appreciable deposit of limestone, tin, coal, etc. The country is pluralistic; diversify with political, economic, cultural and overall religion, which is between Muslim and Christians. The Muslims mostly located in the northern part of the country, while the Christians are found mostly in the middle and southern areas of the country.[4] Living, therefore, in a country with different cultural and religious values, should be a step in the right direction towards building a nation that we could be proud of its progress. Unfortunately, these values have been toppled over by individuals and leaders, for egoistic motives. There is a sense in which this ugly development captures the beginning of Aristotle's Metaphysics, where he states: „Human life may be compared to the public game which attracts diverse sorts of men, some came to compete for honours and the crowns of victory, others to trade, others, the nobler sort; solely for the enjoyment of spectacle. Similarly, in life, some work for the honours, others for profit, a few for truth alone, they are the Philosopher…"[5].

Religion and the Media in Nigeria

Adherent to Islam, Christianity, or Indigenous African Religions is central to how Nigerians identify themselves. Religious affiliation estimates vary, however, due to the lack of census data and the fact that many Nigerian Muslims

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[3] *Nigerian Population* (24.01.2018), in: *World Population Review* [online], access: 24.01.2018, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nigeria-population>.

[4] Ibidem.

[5] F.K. Obiora, *The Divine Deceit*, Nigeria 1998, p. 69.

and Christians adhere to beliefs and practices associated with indigenous reli-
gions. At least 46% of Nigerians are Muslims, the bulk of who lived in the
Hausa/Fulani, Kanuri and other areas in the north. About 46.3% percent of
Nigerians are Christians with Roman Catholicism centered in the south-east
while Methodist and other Christian denominations and sects have strong follo-
wers in various parts of both the south-east and south-west. Traditional Religion
(ATR) formed 7.4%, and others 0.3%.[6] The Christian sects are renowned for
their radical ways of evangelization or gaining members, which include such
forms as using the mass media. The Muslims too are into proselytizing and te-
aching through the mass media while the traditional religions only use such
opportunity to promote their services or the culture of the people. Nigeria today
possesses a state of the tart and highly effective media power. Mass media in the
forms of the print, audio, and video are highly prevalent and are in great use
ranging from agriculture to religious promotions or evangelization. With the
advent of the internet and the global system for mobile communication (GSM),
the communication media in Nigeria has witnessed the dissemination of infor-
mation at the speed of electricity.

Since the 19th century, the church has employed the use of various media
ranging from the community bells and local gongs to the modern radio and te-
levision. Special mention is to be made of the Second Vatican Council, which
empowered the church at all levels to avail herself the modern „means of social
communication.”[7] Today we see a Catholic Church in Nigeria that not only
publishes newspapers and magazines but also contributes in no little way to
other secular print media. We commend the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria for
its efforts in this light. The radio stations are not left out as the directors of com-
munications in our dioceses procure slots in it for evangelization. While the
church in some dioceses is preparing the grounds to open and owned radio and
television stations, which I believe will be another channel connected to the
Churches efforts and successes in the achievement and promotion of religious
unity and ecumenism in the country.

Mass Media and the Role of the Church on Evangelization in Nigeria

The Church is called upon to be deeply involved in the use of the mass me-
dia for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God in the world today. This is by
every standard a great invitation, for the church is a „foreigner” nowhere and

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[6] Cf. Nigeria.pdf, in: *Aiuto alla Chiesa che Soffre – Onlus* [online], access: 24.04.2018, <http://
acs-italia.org/wp-content/uploads/Nigeria.pdf>, p. 1.
   [7] IM, n. l.

she must always live in a world and culture that is its contemporary. It is therefore believed, through her active involvement in the media world, which defines our age; the Church will come in contact with a culture that will foster in no less measure the spread of the Kingdom of God today. In this way, the face of Christ will eminently emerge in the world today from the galaxy of sights and sounds of these modern means of social communications. For it is only when his face is seen, and voice heard in the modern culture that the world would know the glad tidings of our redemption, which the Church is called upon to spread to all nations. And this is what will make the mass media a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ; there is no room for humanity. John Paul II (1999) asserts: Thus, it is believed that through the use of the media, the Church's culture of „remembrance" can save the media culture of „transitory news" from becoming forgetfulness corroded hopes; and the media can help the Church to proclaim the Gospel in all its enduring freshness in the everyday reality of people's lives.[8]

Again it is rightly reasoned that the mass media would be useful tools for the Church's evangelization mission because the Church's culture of „wisdom" can save the media culture of „information" from becoming a meaningless accumulation of facts and agents of propaganda in the service of narrow interests and the spread of false ideologies. Nowadays the media is employed for national, ethnic, racial and religious prejudices in such frequency that tremendous harm has been done to the modern man through the media. Today, anything pleasurable irrespective of its morality is presented as acceptable and greedily promoted by the media. Sex aberrations have also become the order of the day because of the vulgarity of sex promoted by the mass media. In Nigeria, for instance, everywhere is dotted with an ever-increasing pictorial depiction of nudity in the newspapers, magazines and on the screens. The mass media have also been used to encourage the unleashing of the basic instinct and unbounded ego of human beings, whereby they are today becoming „law unto themselves".

There is also the unfortunate issue of cultural erosion and mental colonialism taking place through the urgency of the mass media. Respects for the dignity of the human, for instance, is on the decrease and there is little or no interest among people now in helping their fellow human beings due to over-exposure to exaggerated emotions, misplaced values and unnecessary and irrelevant information overload presented by the mass media today. There is also a growing trend in favor of nuclear family, careerism for genders, free mixing, sexual permissiveness, abortion and unhealthy dating. Human beings are also becoming

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[8] John Paul II, *Message for the 33rd World Day of Social Communication 1999*, n. 3, in: *The Holy See* [online], access: 27.03.2018 <www.w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/message/communication>.

isolated through excessive dependence on the media – although the world is shrinking into „a global village".

Inevitably this phenomenal abuse of the media runs counter to the creator's plan, and it has faster entrenched modern world unto incalculable moral and spiritual annihilation. Through her active involvement in the media for her evangelization mission, therefore, the Church would be offered adequate opportunity to serve as „a guide"[9] and to help circumvent every use of the media contrary to God's plan and such as might cause damage or run to his creatures in the modern world.[10] In this case, the mass media will not only be seen and used as tools for the spread the Christian message and the authentic teaching of the Church but there, will the Church also find an opportunity to integrate the message into the „new culture" created by modern communications.

Furthermore, the mass media can indeed be useful tools for the Church's evangelization mission because through these means, the Church's culture of „Joy" can save the media culture of „entertainment" from becoming a soulless flight from truth and responsibility; and the media, on the other hand, can help the Church to understand better how to communicate with people in a way that appeals and even delights. The Church, which increasingly views of realism, describes the mass media as „marvelous technological innovations",[11] which have great power on people's mind, as well as „the gifts of God from whom every good comes."[12] In several of her official Documents, the Church, therefore, as expected, echoes a call on her members to make a concerted effort to ensure that these means of communication are put at the service of the multiple forms of apostolate without delay.[13] These are just some examples of how the use of the mass media by the Church can be of tremendous benefits to the Church's mission of evangelization and how through this involvement the Church can help the media to serve the men and women of our time better in their search for meaning and fulfillment.

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[9] Pius XI, *Encyclical Letter on the Motion Picture* "*Vigilanti Cura"* (29.06.1936), n. 1, in: *The Holy See* [online], access: 27.04.2018, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29061936_vigilanti-cura.html>.

[10] IM, n. 2.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Pius XII, *Encyclical letter „Mirandi Prorsus"* (8.09.1957), n. 1, in: *The Holy See* [online], access: 27.04.2018, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091957_miranda-prorsus.html>.

[13] Cf. IM, n. 13; EN, n. 45.

Evangelization

The definition of evangelization given by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi is very instructive. He states, „evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new…"[14] The goal of this transformation is „to establish a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ."[15] Hence, the energizing agent of this proclamation is the Holy Spirit.[16] So, evangelization is about the proclamation of the Good News of salvation to the world. Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, Jesus understood this to be at the center of his ministry: I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to other cities, for I was sent for this purpose (Luke 4:43). Jesus therefore, conferred the same mandate on his Apostles go into the world and proclaim the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15).

The Church, in turn, received this mandate from the Apostles, makes her own the words of the Apostle Paul, woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel (I Cor. 9:16). Thus, she sends missionaries to announce the good news to the whole world, until such a time the Infant Churches are fully established and can carry on this work of evangelizing.[17] As can be perceived here, evangelization is for the Church „not an option",[18] it is rather a mandate, as written by Pope Pius VI: „The presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is duty incumbent upon her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved".[19] Evangelization could be seen from two levels: Primary and Secondary. While the former is meant for those who never had any contact with Jesus, they have never heard the Gospel and its transforming power; the latter is intended for those who have had a first hearing of the gospel since they are already formed into a people of God. There should be an ongoing need for a „deeper" evangelization in cultures such as this who have already embraced the Gospel.[20] The objective of this level is to focus on the depth of Christianization and the Christian community of the individual and the community converts.[21]

As a follow up, the Council Fathers has this to say: The objective of evangelization does not consist only in making converts and enrolling members but

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[14] EN, n. 18

[15] J. Asambe, *Evangelization, challenges and Prospects for the Church in Nigeria*, "Koinonia" vol. 2, 2005, n. 2, p. 42.

[16] RM, n. 21.

[17] LG, n. 17.

[18] S. Blum, *The Ministry of Evangelization*, Minnesota 1998, p. 18.

[19] EN, n. 5.

[20] R.J. Quinn et al., *New Evangelization in Africa*, Kenya 2005, p. 14.

[21] J. Asanbe, *Evangelization, challenges and Prospects,* p. 42.

also witnessing to the world by the proclamation of the truth, service in favour of authentic human development, and making Christ present in an authentic Christian living in the world.[22] This means that an intensively Christianized community would witness not only the transformation of the individuals but also the different levels of its life, its laws, customs, moral values and its worldview in the light of the Gospel.[23] Evangelization at this level indeed involves an ongoing process of dialogue between the Church and the culture of the people. If evangelization is to be done in this context, it must not lose sight of the fact that mentality change, suitable and behavioral patterns do change and at times very fast. It is within the context of these challenges facing the Church in this age of information explosion that Pope John Paul II wrote: „For the new evangelization to be effective, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the culture of our time in which the social communications media are most influential."[24] The Church certainly needs the active use of the mass media in the modern world to reach out to the „global village" into which the media culture has molded our world.[25] The Good News must be preached in and through the media culture of today in its entire ramification if the Church must be significant today and if the new era of evangelization must achieve something.

The Gains of Mass Media to Evangelization and Religious Unity

From those as mentioned above, it is crystal clear that the success of the Church's evangelization depends to a large extent on how the Church exploits the opportunity offered by the mass media for this noble goal. For this reason, since the whole Church is a missionary in nature[26] and the work of evangelization is thereby a primary duty of the entire people of God,[27] all members of the Church are called upon to put these means of social communication at the service of various forms of apostolate without delay. In this information age, an authentic Christian Press is a basic necessity in the Church. This will enable the Church to form, consolidate and promote public opinion in conformity with the natural law and with the Christian message of salvation. Hence, it is not a wasted venture for a Church to have well-articulated Newspapers/Newsletters, which come out regularly with distinctive authorities or by individual Christians, would also publish news about the church's life and activities and informed

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[22] AG, n. 11.
[23] R. Hickey, *Modern Missionary Document and Africa*, Dublin 1982, p. 210.
[24] EiA, n. 72.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] AG, n. 2.
[27] Ibidem, n. 35.

comments on them. Although there exists the real need for more significant efforts, some dioceses in Nigeria have put up outstanding performances in this regard. In most of these Dioceses, press centers have been set up to ensure the publication and circulation of the Diocesan Newspapers/Newsletters. There is no doubt that through these media the particular Churches involved, have been able to communicate the gospel of Christ to many people within and outside these territories beyond realization. There is, however, need for more effort in this direction.

In the first place, many Dioceses in the country are yet to appreciate the need for the establishment of the Catholic Print Media. Those with one are however to manage them well with well-trained professionals in the field and with proper facilities for obtaining news reports. In other words, particular Churches in Nigeria must pay particular attention to establishing a suitable Press, manned by well-trained professionals in the field. It is such a press that will help the Church to transmit Good News of God to the modern world. The faithful must also see the need to circulate these publications for the interest of evangelization. The office of Diocesan Communication must also be strengthened and supported by the faithful. Again, because of the proven efficacy of the old principle of „see, judge and act," the use of the audiovisual aspect of the mass media for evangelization must be particularly encouraged and given due attention by the Church. There is, therefore, need for the Church to liaise with the National or State Radio and Television stations for joint programmes, where the Church must continuously use these means to convey religious truths to the world. It would not be out of place if the Nigerian Hierarchy can establish a National Catholic Radio/Television Network to evangelize the world through this means.

Furthermore, not much has been done concerning the propagation of the Christian faith through cinema, drama, and films. Especially in the area of the film industry, the Church need to undertake and promote the production of films which provide wholesome entertainments and which are worthwhile culturally, morally and artistically. This should be guaranteed efficiently, especially for movies destined for the young. This could be further done by supporting and coordinating productions and projects by serious producers/distributors, by making and launching of good films with favorable criticism and even awarding of prizes; by promoting and coordinating cinemas managed by Christians and people of integrity. In the same spirit, projects designed for instructions on the proper use of the mass media, especially among the youths should be initiated and encouraged by the Church in this media age if the Church must succeed in her mission today. Such subjects or programmes, which may include Seminars, Retreats, workshops, etc., should be promoted in various Schools, Seminaries and Lay Apostolate Organizations in the country.

Urgent Areas of the Media in Evangelization, Religious Unity and Ecumenism in Nigeria

It is the Church's duty or responsibility to bring all to „full union with Christ" She does this in a manner suited to each age, to the culture of particular nations and people. Considering therefore, the contribution of the media to foster this unity the Church views them as; devised under God's providence, for the promotion of communication and communion among human beings during their earthly pilgrimage.[28] In September 2006, on the occasion of a visit to his homeland, Pope Benedict XVI delivered a famous address on the relationship of faith and reason to the staff and students of Regensburg University. The reason why that speech became well known had little or nothing to do with the content of his address. It became famous because of a quotation included in the address from a 14th century Byzantine Emperor who, in the course of a dialogue with a Persian Muslim Scholar, charged that Islam was a religion of violence. Talking about violence and how beliefs of the two dominant religions in Nigeria which can aid to productive dialogue, Fr. Michael McCabe SMA in his paper, „Mission in an Islamic Milieu" has this to say: Confronted with fanatical Muslim who seems bent on corroborating the worst accusations against their religion, we might be justified in upholding Samuel Huntington's famous thesis of a „Clash of Civilization". From the Danish cartoon controversy to the recent papal incident, we seem to be witnessing a virtually unbridled abyss between Christian principles and Islamic principles in Nigeria today. We believe in free speech, and they don't. We reason; they seem irrational in their reactions. We believe in pluralism and dialogue, and they think in violence.[29]

It is somewhat unfortunate that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria distrust one another, destroy one another's property and kill each other. Of course, so too do peoples of different ethnic groups in other parts of the country where religion is not such a striking identity factor. Is the problem one of the religious truths or is it of access to political power and economic resources? Questions about different faith convictions genuinely seem to have little relevance today in Northern Nigeria where Muslims and Christians struggle to coexist amidst poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, corruption and social instability. The main issues of the dispute would seem to be practical rather than theoretical. Christians are more concerned about their rights to build churches and to have equal access to political power and economic resources than about Jesus being the savior of all.

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[28] N. Ndiokwere, *Inculturation in Practice: The African Church Today and Tomorrow*, Enugu, Nigeria 1994, p. 294.

[29] M. McCabe, *Mission in an Islamic Milieu. A Paper Presentation at the SMA Centenary Symposium on Mission*, (unpublished), Jos, Nigeria: SAMS, 2006, p. 1.

And Muslims are adamant that the Sharia is untouchable and necessary to their life as Muslims and to overcoming the socio-economic hardships they face daily.

For any dialogue and unity with the modern world, the Church necessarily desires honest and respectful discussion with people responsible for communication media. On the Church's side, this dialogue involves efforts to understand the media. To enhance fruitful dialogue with the world; the Pontifical Council for Social Communication in Aetatis Novae (1992) affirms: „Such dialogue, therefore, requires that the Church be actively concerned with the secular media, and especially with the shaping of media policy. Christians have in effect a responsibility to make their voice heard in all the media, and their task is not confined merely to the giving out of Church news. The dialogue also requires the development of anthropology and a theology of communication."[30] This, therefore, requires that church leaders and pastoral workers respond willingly and prudently to media when requested in the bid to establish relationships, will help the Church reveal herself to the modern world, foster dialogue and unity, disclose contemporary opinion and contribute to the achievement of justice, peace and social progress in the society.

Denominations

Denominations are distinct Christian entities, whose titles whether legally registered or not, express a common belief, worship, and discipline. A religious denomination may be either a Church, such as Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches or „simply a community such as the Unitarians."[31] Primarily, therefore, the term suggests the idea of a particular title expressing the character of some distinctive feature or the essential nature, of some group; it is in the form of a religious group. It is based upon independence and autonomy in the spheres of doctrine, worship, discipline, and administration and necessarily denotes „a religious body which differs from by distinctive notes from the dogmatic, structural and liturgical points of view."[32] Several denominations may closely resemble each other and together form a single confessional family. Thus, for instance, there is not only one Methodist Church, but a Methodist family, not one Baptist, but a Baptist family, not one Lutheran Church, but some Lutheran bodies. The members of these families retain their allegiance to their source, but their mutual relationships are complicated, these may be hostile, independent, autonomous, and intimate or ecumenical-minded.

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[30] N. Ndiokwere, *Inculturation in Practice*, p. 296.
[31] B. Lambert, *Ecumenism*, Harder and Harder Publication 1966, p. 55.
[32] Ibidem, p. 56.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism is defined by the dictionary of Theology as: „a collective name for all efforts to reunite Christians of various persuasions to give effect to Christ's will, that all who believe in him shall form one Church." It is a movement or tendency towards worldwide Christian unity or cooperation. The term is derived from the Greek word *Oikoumene* (the inhabited world) and *Oikos* (house). Consequently, in traditional Catholic usage it means: a general or universal body of the church; while in modern times, it points to the various efforts to unite all Christians. It carries overtones of sympathy towards our separated brethren with the aim of attaining some amount of unity. The most contemporary meaning of this term that is seen to be universally accepted is that of as Lambert will describe it: „Christian interchange and the quest for Christian universality."[33] Ecumenical movement denotes an immense activity undertaken by every Christian community, which employing dialogue, co-operation, integration, individual and institutional union aims at drawing Christians together and reconciling them, revealing their damaged traditions, and bringing the mystical body of Christ to its perfect fulfillment. „To be involved in ecumenical mean being involved in the totality of ideas, principles, problems, activities, and institutions which together account for the origin and development of the ecumenical movement."[34]

The desire of our Lord for the unity of his flock is unhappily still very far from fulfillment. The obstacles are not everywhere the same but differ mainly according to the history and the nationality of the various groups. Nigeria, as my case study, has its peculiar problems. The most obstinate and seemingly immovable obstacles are cultural differences and political aspirations under the veneer of religion.[35] As a result of various interpretations of the Scripture allowed among Christians, there are bound to be different schools of thought and beliefs. I am sure that this denominational sentiment is an obstacle, and until this is removed a Protestant will never see a Catholic as a real brother in the Lord. The unity therefore of the Church refers back to the unity of the three Divine Persons, „that they may be one as we also are one" (Jn. 17:11), Christ situated the unity of Christians directly on the mystery of the unity of His Father with Himself.

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[33] B. Lambert, *Ecumenism*, p. 30
[34] Ibidem, p. 31.
[35] B. Heam, *Seeds of Unity*, Kenya 1976, p. 20.

Inter-religious dialogue

Inter-religious dialogue is any deliberate form of interaction or discourse among religions. It involves an exchange of views or insights through concepts expressed in word. It is based on the standard ground, which the dialogue after that tries to widen and deepen so as, to pinpoint divergences, similarities, complement, and criticisms, as well as to find the points where mutual influences or progress may take place. The first requirement for dialogue is to find firm ground where the discussion itself may take place. This essential common ground is what both sides take for granted. Inter-religious dialogue cannot accept any outgrowth unless an internal discussion at least precedes it. This intra-religious dialogue implies the critical awareness that our belief, which for us may be ultimate and even intentionally exhaustive – does not preclude an actual internal or an intellectual perspective from which it may be seen judged, and also criticized. It is aimed at giving opportunities to religions to explain the content of their faith for better appreciation by people of other religions.

Besides, the efforts at inter-religious dialogue are in themselves an indication that people recognize that both religions have something positive to offer for the good of the country. That Muslims, Christians and Indigenous faiths (ATR), believe in one, true, and loving God, creator of all, who calls people to live in peace with one another, has been reiterated on many occasions. It is accepted that the religions mentioned above believe in the same God (though it must be added that they do not share the same understanding of God), that all have liberated elements for human relationships. If any of these religions were to live according to the teaching of their doctrines, people believe that Nigeria would experience great transformation. There would be a mutual belief in the inherent value of each religion if these were to be sincerely practiced.

Religious Unity

Religious Unity designates bonds of friendship, charity, and unity that exist among different religions[36]. It brings people to the awareness of that which they have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them. Religious unity aims at forming humankind into one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to the entire earth (Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God.[37] His providence, evident goodness and saving designs extend to all men and women (Wis. 8:1; Acts

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[36] NE, n. 1.
[37] Ibidem.

14:17; Rom 2:6-7; 1 Tim 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illuminated by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (Apoc. 21:23ff). Consequently, this is merely the basis for religious unity, which stems from the fact that the religions may use different names to express this ultimate reality of God.

Evaluation and the Way Forward

In reflecting on how to employ the tools of social communication for evangelization, religious unity and ecumenism it is important to call to mind that this task is not only noble for the church but also a part of the great work of evangelization and in fact, the will of Christ that stands out as part of his last testament (John 17:21). The concern for restoring unity involves the whole church, faithful and clergy alike.[38] The path forward, therefore, is a task at all, and in fact even more for the faithful who are already professionals in the field of social communication. The mass media remains our attention because it is chief among every other means of communication because it can reach the very masses and even the whole of human society.[39] Upon seeing the usefulness and effectiveness of the mass media and how it can be abused in Nigeria, it is apt to say, the church's involvement in the use of the mass media is not an option but the first prerequisite for inter-religious and ecumenical activities. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council underscore the importance of the mass media saying that the Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ to bear salvation to all Humankind and thus is obliged to preach the gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the good news of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men and women on their proper use. That is, to wrestle them from being atheists and hedonistic agents of our time.[40] Consequently, as we can see from our discussion above, there is ultimately the challenge of not using the media by the Church, but demystifying such intending to sanitizing and Christianizing them. The question then is: how can the Church in Nigeria go on to improve what is on the ground?

It is with great concern to acknowledge the rapid development of electronic media movements which has transformed the Church on all levels; it has not only changed the way in which the people live but also improve the way children perceive the Church. Moreover, we may not speak of a direct impact of the media; its changes have affected the conditions in which everything occurs, and

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[38] UR, n. 5.
[39] IM, n. l.
[40] Ibidem, n. 3.

it modifies the way in which our senses and minds work. As a result of this, if the Church is to be a good voice and visionary to the world, it has to initiate its agenda in the use and management of the mass media which has rapidly influenced the society both negative and positive. The Church must, therefore, take up the issue of adequate media education as a matter of urgency and particular concern. The Church surely has a specific responsibility to sustain the hope of all nations' members and help them in their search for the truth, so that they can look to the future with confidence.

Consequently, the mass media that is; radio/visual media, print media and with the advancement of social media through the internet (this I must recognize) has the potential to foster religious unity, evangelization, unity among Christians (Ecumenism) in our country (Nigeria) especially today, where the nation is ravaged with religious rascality, economic and political instability, clashes or conflict of all sorts ranging from; religious, ethnic, communal, settlers (herdsmen) and indigenes (farmers), militancy, insurgency and regional agitations seeking for identity, relevance or independence. Nevertheless, in spite of the misgivings mentioned, the mass media are indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern society; it is indeed a useful tool to calm this menace only if it is used wisely with a great sense of responsibility and decency. The right to information is not merely a privilege of the individuals: it is essential to the public interest. Good entertainment too is a service to the community. Since boredom can become a danger for men and women, right entertainment is aptly characterized as a spiritual work of mercy.

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Mass media jako skuteczne narzędzie ewangelizacji i religijnej jedności w Nigerii

Streszczenie: Skoro religia ma pierwszorzędne znaczenie dla osoby ludzkiej, to tam, gdzie istnieją różnice religijne, pojawiają się też istotne rozbieżności. Dziś, bardziej niż kiedykolwiek i z niezwykłą łatwością, wszyscy są w stanie uczestniczyć w wymianie idei oraz informacji w skali całego świata, pokonując wcześniejsze ograniczenia czasu i przestrzeni. Dzięki skuteczności i ogromnym korzyściom obecnej „epoki informacji" ma miejsce łatwy dostęp do środków masowego przekazu. Są one najprostszym i najskuteczniejszym sposobem dotarcia do każdego z nas. Środki masowego przekazu uznawane są powszechnie jako główny transfer informacji, edukacji oraz rodzaj „przewodnika" w dzisiejszym świecie. Doświadczenie pokazuje jednak, że rzeczywiście istnieje coraz większa przepaść między teorią a praktyką, między retoryką a rzeczywistością, jeśli chodzi o wykorzystanie przez Kościół środków przekazu dla ewangelizacji. Istnieje zatem przekonanie, że zaniedbywanie środków ewangelizacji jest alarmujące. Zwracano uwagę Kościoła na ten fakt, który generuje szereg konsekwencji w życiu społeczeństw. Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu wskazanie skuteczności środków masowego przekazu dla pełnienia misji ewangelizacyjnej Kościołów, a także jedności religijnej i ekumenizmu w Nigerii.

Słowa kluczowe: denominacje, ewangelizacja, ekumenizm, jedność religijna i mass media.