

Innovations

Getting Ecumenical Dialogue Right in Nigeria- An Exploration of Raimon Panikkar's "Dialogical Dialogue"

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Abstracts: *Ecumenical encounters and experiences have not been palatable in Nigeria. It has been confronted with several challenges, which for some time has been frustrating the actualization of the ecumenical vision and aspirations. These challenges include but are not limited to a lack of proper ecumenical dispositions or attitudinal orientations among participants in the dialogue, lack of trust for one another, ancient animosity and prejudice, internal politics among Churches and dishonesty among members in the dialogue. The present study explores the ecumenical significance of Raimon Panikkar's "Dialogical Dialogue" towards addressing the above ecumenical challenges in Nigeria. Descriptive phenomenology of qualitative research was found proper for the study, hence its adoption for the study. The exploration reveals two major ecumenical imperatives of the Dialogical Dialogue; the proper attitudinal orientation expected in religious dialogue among religious people and the rules that should regulate the process. It also enunciated indispensable prerequisites necessary in any true religious dialogue. Since ecumenical dialogue is an important dimension of religious dialogue (the intra-religious dialogue), the present research recommends that these imperatives should guide ecumenical encounters and dialogue in Nigeria. If these imperatives are sincerely implemented, there is every hope that ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria will advance to a greater height than what it has used to be in the past.*

Keywords: *Dialogue, Ecumenical, Ecumenical Dialogue, Ecumenical encounter, Dialogical Dialogue.*

Introduction

The history of the Catholic Church is one marked with two major threats; external (persecutions) and internal (doctrinal error, discipline and liturgical crisis). However, nothing strained the 'Unity' and 'Catholicity' of the Church as the

scandal of division experienced within and among the same Christian community. The earliest account of this division dates back to the first century, starting with the long argument in Antioch on the prerequisite condition for admitting the Gentile converts into the Christian fold (Act. 15). The division became so apparent in the Corinthian Church, where Christians took sides against one another; those for Apollo, those for Peter and those for Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-17). This was followed, primarily in the Eastern Roman Empire of the fourth and subsequent centuries the great Christological and Trinitarian debates and division.

Initially, it was the confrontations between the Patriarch of Constantinople and representatives of the Papacy. The consequence of this confrontation was popularly known in Church history as the Great Schism of 1054, resulting in the mutual excommunication between the Papal legates and Patriarch Michael Cerularius in 1054. The plundering of Constantinople by Western Christian soldiers during the Fourth Crusade (1204) was believed by many to have further contributed to the weakening of the Eastern Empire and reinforced the Eastern Church's suspicion of Western Christian leaders. A permanent division resulted after the crusade. The Western Church was not safe either. Though the West had experienced temporary divisions because of heresy and schism, the Church of the West was shaken from its roots in the 16th century. Here, Christianity confronted major divisions between the Churches of the Reformation and the Church of Rome and among the Churches of the Reformation themselves. "All of Northern Europe and important sections of central Europe separated from the Roman Communion not just in matters of discipline but also in matters of faith" (Alan, 1987: 23). After the Reformation, it became so obvious that the Unity and Catholicity of the Catholic Church has been gravely wounded; an experience which calls not only for diagnostic measures but also healing measures.

The resultant effects of the division have been the upsurge of more splinter Churches, each claiming to be pure more than the other. There came unhealthy confrontations and rivalry between the Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation and among the Churches of the Reformation themselves. Splinter groups increasingly disagreed with the mother Church. Things were not well in the mission field either. Missionaries competed and cast aspersions on one another in the scramble for territories and adherents. This was a dark age for the Catholic Church and called for immediate remedial measures.

Nevertheless, the same history encompasses endless efforts made by the Church to regain unity. In the list of the earliest efforts include meetings of leaders held to discover peaceful solutions for thorny problems; an immense controversial literature produced to find a formula of accommodation in which the parties can find agreement and above all; an ecumenical Council (Rouse, 2004). The results of these efforts saw notable conciliatory formulas of the 7th century such as the Tome of Union (Act of Union) of 613, the Ekthesis (Decree on Union) of 638 and the Topo (Decree on Union) of 648. Among the ecumenical councils devoted to

the restoration of unity, three stood out; the Second Council of Lyon (1274), the Council of Florence (1431-1445) and the Council of Trent (1545). The Colloquy of Marburg (1529) dealt in particular with the differences between Lutherans and the Reformed (used for the Calvinist group). There was also another reconciliatory formula carried out at the regional level known as the Uniate Churches (Missionary strategy between the Eastern and Western churches).

In the modern time, under the concept of Ecumenism (*oikounenia*), these efforts were once again renewed. From the nineteenth century, there was an upsurge of ecumenical stirrings and movements, especially, within the Protestant community. The Catholic Church's commitment to modern ecumenism came to a climax with the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. The same ecumenical zeal was felt at national, regional and even, local levels. In Nigeria, aside from efforts made by the Protestant Missionaries in Southern Nigeria to foster mutual understanding and collaboration among Christians; an impulse largely attributed to the challenges and difficulties the Missionaries were encountering in the mission field, the earliest proposal towards organic unity was made nine years after the Edinburg Conference of 1910 by Dr. Dean of the Church of Scotland; a proposal believed to have been instigated by the spirit of the conference (Anokwulu, 2010). Since then, there have been bilateral ecumenical conversations of one form and another going on among different Churches in the three zones of the country. With the birth of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the mid-70s, a new era was launched in the history of ecumenical encounters and dialogue in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria seems not to be rosy. The encounter has been confronted with quite several challenges; ranging from theological (unresolved nature and type of unity to be sought and different theological/ ecclesiological interpretations), ancient memories and prejudice, problem of conservatism, proliferation and proselytism, and non-reception of the fruits of dialogue, ardent quest for power (inter politics among Christian blocs) and romance of Church leaders with politicians, which is today been referred to as "The Politicisation of religion and the Religionisation of politics" and among others. The trust of the paper is therefore to explore the ecumenical imperatives of Raimon Pannikar's 'Dialogical Dialogue' towards a sustainable ecumenical dialogue among Christian Churches in Nigeria. It may now be necessary to start by saying something about the key concepts.

Literature Review

The review of literature under this section of the study was approached from two major perspectives. The first studied concepts of ecumenical and ecumenical dialogue. The second present a review ecumenical dialogue and encounter in Nigeria with the intension of highlighting the achievements and challenges. Etymologically, the adjective "ecumenical" and its noun "ecumenism"; are derived from the Greek word *O'ikoumene* and the Latin "Oecumenicus"

connotes “inhabited earth” or the whole inhabited world (Onwubiko, 1999, Abe, 2000; Oshibanjo, 2000; Pazhayampallil 2004). In its Greek usage, the term originally refers to the Greek world of the Roman culture or Byzantine Empire and later to the Christian world in the then-divided Roman Empire (Ibeabuike, 2006). The term later assumed ecclesiastical significance when Roman emperors convoked general councils that involved all the then ‘inhabitations’ of the world (Anokwulu, 2010). In this traditional sense, the term became equivalent to ‘universal’ and it is in this later sense that the qualification ecumenical was originally, and still used in Christianity in terms such as ‘ecumenical council’ and ‘ecumenical patriarch’; in the meaning about the totality of the larger church rather than being restricted to one of its constituent churches.

In more recent times, the concepts ecumenical and ecumenism most popularly refer to activities or movements that involve different Christian denominations collaborating or seeking unity. It often pertains to efforts aimed at fostering greater understanding, cooperation, and dialogue among various branches of Christianity, to promote Christian unity despite doctrinal differences. At some other point, the concept is used in a broader sense to refer to inter-faith movements striving for greater mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation among the world religions. Whether used from the more restricted and broad sense, one thing remains obvious about the concept of ecumenical. It is the concern for mutual understanding and reunion of religious people and groups, it does not necessarily intend towards reconciliation of adherents of different religions or denominations to organic unity but simply to promote better relations between distant religions or denominations (Philips, 2001).

Dialogue is understood as a communicative process where individuals or groups engage in open and respectful conversation to exchange ideas, perspectives, and information, ecumenical dialogue therefore presupposes the exchange of ideas, beliefs and perspectives between representatives of different Christian traditions. This can involve theological discussions, shared reflections on faith, and efforts to find common ground or understanding among diverse Christian communities. Ecumenical initiatives can include interdenominational dialogues, joint worship services, and shared social or humanitarian efforts. The four major forms of ecumenical dialogue are; the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, and the dialogue of doctrine, and then, the dialogue of experience (Arinze, 1966). The principles of ecumenical dialogue, and by extension, religious dialogue include; mutual respect, common ground, sincere and honest listening, openness to truth and in love, an honest search to understand, know and learn, commitment to unity, prayer and spiritual encounter, inclusivity, reconciliation and unity in truth, and among others (Dupius, 1997; Nwanaju, 2003; Francis 2014; John Paul II, 1995). Ecumenical dialogue remains an important dimension of religious dialogue and religious encounters of religious people.

The earliest ecumenical move towards fostering mutual understanding and collaboration among Christians in Nigeria was begun by the Protestant

Missionaries in Southern Nigeria, an impulse largely believed to have been instigated by the challenges and difficulties the Missionaries were encountering in the mission field. The Missionaries had come to realize that for them to make any further inroads in their assignment they needed the support of one another. Since the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, meetings have been held about finding a more cordial relationship and cooperation among the Missionaries in the South. The ecumenical currents at the international level during this period, as many would have it, influenced ecumenical activities in Nigeria greatly.

The earliest proposal towards organic unity among Christian Churches in Nigeria was made nine years after the Edinburgh conference of 1910 by Dr. Dean of the Church of Scotland; a proposal believed to have been instigated by the spirit of the conference (Anokwulu, 2010). The proposal though welcomed, could not be sustained. Some reasons were advanced for the failure of this proposal, these include; the absence of a commonly perceived national threat, the absence of a sufficiently politicized religious leadership with a nationalistic vision in any of the three Christian blocs and the limitations imposed by the colonial administration on socio-cultural interaction among Nigerians from the South and the North (Kalu, 1978); lack of interior conversion and ecumenical dispositions on the part of the leading protagonist and their congregations. Whichever school one may wish to toe, the proposal as some would maintain, was not entirely a failure. The birth of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) was traced to this earliest ecumenical impulse.

The ecumenical spirit of the Second Vatican Council was another international current instrumental to awakening the dying ecumenical spirit among Christians in Nigeria. While the Council was on, a change of attitude was believed to have been witnessed among Catholic Christians towards their Protestant counterparts in the North. For example, the Bishop of Kaduna Province, under John MacCarthy S.M.A had on April 2, 1968, in response to the ecumenical directives of the Second Vatican Council inaugurated a Commission on ecumenism mandated to oversee the reception of the Decree Unitatis Redintegratio (U.R) in the province. A similar ecumenical response was also witnessed in the Diocese of Maiduguri. Since the Second Vatican Council, there have been changes in attitudes among Catholic Pastoral Workers towards their Protestant counterparts, an experience largely expressed through exchange visits and friendly interactions. The granting of one of the Catholic Church's premises to a Protestant Community for Sunday services by the Catholic Bishop of Maiduguri was regarded as one of the fruits of ecumenical relationships between the two Churches.

Also, the move by some Northern Church leaders in the same period culminated in the formation of what could be referred to today as the first ecumenical movement in Nigeria known as the Northern Christian Association (NCA), later renamed Christian Association of the North (CAN), was believed to have had some ecumenical significance not minding the fact that the impulse was more of political than ecumenical. It was political in the sense that it was originally

initiated as an agenda to resist the religious imposition of the then Sardauna of Sokoto by Church leaders in the North. Just like the Southern experience, the Northern ecumenical impulse could not be sustained too. The first reason for the failure was the fact that it was “initiated as a protection from the Muslim proselytism and political alliance (Idigo, 2002:18). Nevertheless, Kunuba (2008) attributes the failure of the Northern ecumenical impulse to what she described as the “quick to embrace” among the Northern Christians.

In Eastern Nigeria, the related ecumenical encounter was also recorded. At the time Vatican II was going on, Catholic and Protestant Pastoral Workers in Enugu met to discuss common points of belief and practice and also agreed on scheduled regular meetings. Enugu later hosted the meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 12th to 21st January 1965. This was graced by two prominent priests from the Vatican as observers (Arinze, 1966). Before the Enugu meetings, there have been remarkable ecumenical encounters and interactions between the Catholic Bishop of Owerri, Joseph Brendan Whelan and his Anglican Counterpart, Bishop G.E.C. Cockin. The result of this encounter was the mutual invitation by the two bishops to address their priests and religious on Christian unity and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council respectively. The first inter-denominational symposium was held between the Federation of Catholic Students and their Protestant counterpart-; the Students’ Christian Movement and the first public common prayer between Catholics and Anglicans in 1966, the year following the Second Vatican Council, held in several cities in the zone during the week of prayer for Christian unity were counted as among the ecumenical initiatives recorded in the zone at this period.

After the Civil War, ecumenical encounters and visions were championed by the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN). The CCN seized this opportunity to impress itself positively upon Catholics, especially in the way the CCN helped to rehabilitate the mostly Catholic Igbo after the trauma of the War. This kind gesture by the CCN and the openness of the Catholics to interaction by the ecumenical imperatives from the Vatican Council, brought about the trust necessary for the two Christian groups to establish the first national ecumenical project in 1971, known as the National Institute of Moral and Religious Education, popularly called Project T.I.M.F, established to train teachers in moral and religious education. The success of this project saw the establishment of another ecumenical body- the ‘Christian Health Association of Nigeria’ by the two Churches. Notwithstanding these collaborations by the two Churches, the interaction among Christian Churches as many would observe, remained largely on a cautious note until the mid-70s when the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was formed (Enwerem, 1995).

The birth of CAN no doubt provided a very big prospect for ecumenism and ecumenical relations in Nigeria. Even though the original vision of forming CAN was not ecumenical in the strict sense, it was, as Rengshwat (2014) describes it, merely formed as a Christian ‘interest-protection association or pressure group.

The activities of the unity-conscious custodians in CAN, as many hold, moved CAN from a gathering to protect the interests of Christians towards ecumenism. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) promoted cooperation among its members, especially, in the areas of joint ownership of projects. Some of these projects include; the Christian Health Association of Nigeria Pharmacy Project (CHAN-PHARM Project), using which the Churches can participate meaningfully and more inexpensively in health-delivery services to the poorer classes in the country, working on a well-balanced Christian Education that will protect the morality of the Nation as slated in the Constitution of the association (Ekandem, 1988as cited in Enwerem, 1995). Additional platforms of cooperation as Enwerem highlights include; the Week of the 'Church Unity Octave' (Jan. 18-25), during which the Protestants and Catholics meet at one another's Churches on a rotational basis to pray for Christian unity and hear talks directed towards breaking down traditional barriers of division among the Christian Churches, the establishment of two standing committees geared towards a joint translation of the Bible into different Nigerian languages, and the production of a Christian syllabus for primary and post-primary schools in the country. Through these concerted efforts and collaborations, numerous other achievements have been recorded in recent years.

Despite the above ecumenical encounters and aspirations among Christian Churches in Nigeria; believed to have been instigated by unity-conscience custodians in CAN, the association, as many posit, is better known today for its role in defending Christianity than for its ability to unite Christians to a level of spiritual interaction and fellowship. CAN's impact, they argue, is felt mostly in the area of politics rather than in ecumenism (Enwerem, 1995; Gaiya, 2004; Rengshwat, 2014). The list of factors that have challenged a sustainable ecumenical dialogue among Christian churches in Nigeria include; theological differences, historical tensions, cultural variances, lack of trust, proliferation and proselytism, quest for power (Internal Politics), romance of Church Leaders with politicians, misconception and stereotypes, fear of dilution and among others.

Research Methods and Sources of Data

This study was a reviewed paper. It was carried out to determine how the principles of religious dialogue enunciated in Raimon Panikkar's model of religious dialogue tagged "the Dialogical Dialogue" could enhance ecumenical dialogue and encounter in Nigeria. As such, historical qualitative research, which allows access to past and present ecumenical experiences in Nigeria in the context of the present model, reflect and provide possible answers to current issues and problems challenging ecumenical dialogue and relationships in Nigeria was adopted for the study. Data collection was derived from both primary and secondary sources; such as Church documents, journal articles, books, conference papers and Theses. These were analysed deductively.

Findings

Raimon Panikkar came up with a model of conflict resolution termed the 'Dialogical Dialogue'. The model has two major aspects; the religious attitudes of religious people and the rule of the religious encounter.

Religious Attitude of Religious People

In this first aspect, Panikkar (1978) explores various religious attitudes found among religious people and their ecumenical implications. Raimon Panikkar considers his work not as an elaboration of a theory of religious encounter, but as part of that encounter itself. It is out of this praxis that he proposes five attitudes and models for the proper rhetoric in the meaning of religious traditions; these are exclusivism, inclusivism, parallelism, Interpenetration and Pluralism.

Exclusivism: A believing member of religion according to Panikkar somehow considers his religion (belief) to be true and the claim to this truth has by implication a certain form of exclusivity. The difficulties associated with this attitude, he observes, is that "it carries with it the obvious danger of intolerance, hybris, and contempt for others: we belong to the club of truth" (IRD 5).

Inclusivism: The inclusivist attitude tends to reinterpret things in such a way as to make them not only palatable but also assimilable. For the inclusivist, "you can be concrete in your allegiances and universal in your outlook" (IRD. 7). One of the difficulties with this attitude as Panikkar highlights is that it also presents the danger of hybris; because it is only me, for instance, who has the privilege of an all-embracing vision and tolerant attitude. I am the person who allots to the others the place they must take in the universe, in other words, I am tolerant in my own eyes but not in the eyes of those who challenge my right to be on top. Thus, for Panikkar, although there are still many tendencies in several religious traditions that consider themselves all-inclusive, there are today only a very few theoretical and philosophical formulations of a purely inclusivist attitude.

Parallelism: This contains according to Panikkar, the assumption that "different creeds, despite meanderings and crossings run parallel, to meet only in the ultimate, in the eschaton, at the very end of the human pilgrimage" (IRD. 8). As parallel paths, our urgent duty to religion would be not to interfere with others, not to convert them or even to borrow from them, but to deepen our traditions. The positive sides of this attitude would mean tolerance, respect for others and non-judgmental positions.

Interpenetration: Panikkar observes that the more we come to know the religions of the world, the more we are sensitive to the religiousness of our neighbour, all the more we begin to surmise that in every one of us, the other is somehow implied, and vice versa; that the other is not so independent from us

and is somehow touched by our own beliefs. That is, as Panikkar concludes “we begin to realize that our neighbours’ religion not only challenges and may even enrich our own, but that ultimately the very differences that separate us are somewhat potentially within the world of my religious convictions” (IRD. 9). The nature of the world today, Panikkar observes, points to the fact that we are somewhat intertwined and that without some links with particular religions, our religion would be to a certain extent incomprehensible to me. He captures this below:

Religions do not exist in isolation but over against each other. There would be no Hindu consciousness were it not for the fact of having to distinguish it from Muslim and Christian consciousness. In a word, the relation between religions is neither of the type of exclusivism (only mine), inclusivism (the mine embraces all the others) or parallelism (we are running independently toward the same goal), but one of a *suigeneris perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, that is, of mutual interpenetration without of the proper peculiarities of each religiousness (IRD. 9).

Pluralism: This is the fifth and the last religious attitude of religious people. This, according to Panikkar is the attitude of not breaking the dialogue with the other opinions because having renounced any absolutization, it keeps the intra-religious dialogue permanently open. The aim of the intra-religious dialogue according to him, is understanding; not to win over the other or to come to a total agreement or a universal religion. Hence, for Panikkar, “pluralism stands between unrelated plurality and a monolithic unity. It takes very seriously the fact that during the last six to eight thousand years of human history, our fellow beings have not come to an agreement concerning religious beliefs” (IRD. 10-11).

Rule of Religious Encounter

In the second aspect of the dialogical dialogue, Panikkar (1995) explores the rules of any true religious encounter among religious people. Dialogical dialogue according to Panikkar, “only proceeds based on a certain trust in the “cosmic confidence” in the “other qua other”, and even in a kind of “cosmic confidence” in the unfolding of reality itself” (IH. 174). In Panikkar’s (1993) term, “radical otherness” does not eradicate “radical relativity” or the primordial interconnection of all human traditions” (CE. 60). But it should not, indeed and cannot, he further stresses, assume a single vantage point or a higher view outside the traditions themselves. The ground for understanding needs to be created in the space between the traditions through the praxis of dialogue.

Again, the dialogical dialogue, as Panikkar (1978) further observes, is not a mute act of love. It is a total human encounter with an important intellectual component. There is no intention to convert, dominate, or even know the other for further ulterior motives because it will end up destroying the dialogical dialogue. It involves trusting the other and considering the other a true source of understanding and knowledge. The listening attitude toward my partner, the

common search for truth, and the acceptance of the risk of being defeated, converted, or simply upset and left without a notch are according to Panikkar, pragmatic devices to enable us to live in peaceful co-existence. For Panikkar therefore, to understand a person's ultimate convictions, we must have to share them also. He expresses this by what he calls the principle of 'Understanding as Convincement' (Understanding as being convinced of the other's truth). There are, according to him, "evidently certain indispensable prerequisites for dialogical dialogue. These include; a deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forgo prejudice in the search for truth while maintaining profound loyalty towards one's tradition" (Panikkar 1981; UCH. 35).

The starting point of dialogical dialogue, according to Panikkar, is the intra-personal dialogue by which one consciously and critically appropriates one's tradition. Without this deep understanding of and commitment to one's tradition, there are simply no grounds for the dialogical dialogue to proceed. Secondly, one needs a deep commitment and desire to understand another tradition which means being open to a new experience of truth since "one cannot understand the views of another if one does not share them" (UCH. 43). The inter-personal dialogue according to Panikkar focuses on the mutual testimonies of those involved in the dialogue, keeping in mind that, "what the other bears is not a critique of my ideas but witness to his own experience, which then enters our dialogue, flows with it and awaits a new fecundation" (Hall, 2003:4). These notions of testimony and witness, according to Panikkar (1995), highlight the fact that dialogical dialogue is primarily the meeting of persons; the aim is "convergence of hearts, not just coalescence of minds" (IH. 173).

Consequently, it is the experience of religious dialogue itself that is all important. In the encounter, each participant, according to Panikkar, attempts to think in and with the symbols of both traditions so that there is a symbolic transformation of experiences. Both partners are encouraged to "crossover" to the other tradition and then "cross back again" to their own. One learns to think and understand based on the symbol systems of more than one own tradition. In so doing, they mutually integrate their testimonies within a larger horizon, a new myth. Not only does each begin to understand the other according to the other's self-understanding but "there is growth and dynamism in the manner that each tradition understands itself" (IRD. 70). Although religions and cultures are profoundly unique, they may represent transformations of a more primordial experience that make each tradition a dimension of the other. If this is the case, then dialogical dialogue, according to Panikkar, may not only uncover hidden meanings within another religious system; it also discovers hidden or repressed meanings within one's own. Dialogical dialogue, he concludes, challenges once and for all the notion that religions are closed and unchanging systems.

Discussion

The dialogical dialogue is very significant to ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria. Apart from addressing the correct attitudinal orientation or disposition of religious people going into religious or ecumenical dialogue, it captures the guiding rules and nature of true dialogue. Concerning attitudinal orientations found among religious people, Panikkar identifies five major attitudinal orientations; exclusivism, inclusivism, parallelism, interpenetration and pluralism. While the first two attitudes (exclusivism and inclusivism) embody the danger of intolerance, contempt for others, and hybris (only me who has the privilege of an all-embracing vision and tolerant attitude), the third and fourth attitudes (Parallelism and Interpenetration) even though have positive sides, Panikkar saw pluralism as an ideal attitudinal orientation in religious encounter and dialogue. It is, as he observes, the attitude of not breaking the dialogue with the other opinions because having renounced any absolutization, it keeps the intra-religious dialogue permanently open; the aim of which is understanding; not to win over the other or to come to a total agreement or a universal religion. Collaborating with Panikkar, Nganwuchu & Allison, (2021) observe that as a worldview, religious pluralism holds that one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and as such, recognizes that some level of truth and value exists in other religions. By implication, to get the ecumenical dialogue right in Nigeria, the parties in the dialogue must be disposed to correct attitudinal orientation- Pluralism. This will go a long way in determining the outcome of the encounter.

Regarding the rules and regulations that should guide the encounter, Panikkar identifies trust, total human encounter, intra-personal dialogue, inter-personal dialogue, and symbolic transformation of experiences as indispensable. Dialogical dialogue as Panikkar posits, only proceeds based on a certain trust in the "cosmic confidence" in the "other qua other", and even in a kind of "cosmic confidence" in the unfolding of reality itself. Radical otherness according to him, does not eradicate radical relativity or the primordial interconnection of all human traditions. The dialogue must be a total human encounter with important intellectual components and not a mute act of love. The intention of the encounter, he observes, is not to convert, dominate or to know the parties for ulterior motives, but it entails trusting the other and considering the other as a source of understanding and knowledge. Therefore, to understand a person's ultimate convictions, we must have to share them. This is what he calls the principle of "Understanding as Convincement", which is understanding as being convinced of the other's truth.

He further traced the starting point for dialogical dialogue to intra-personal dialogue, which entails consciously and critically appropriating one's tradition. He believes that without this deep understanding of and commitment to one's tradition, there are simply no grounds for the dialogical dialogue to proceed. In addition to a deep understanding of one's tradition, there is also the need for a deep commitment and desire to understand other traditions. This entails being

open to a new experience of truth since one cannot understand the views of another if one does not share them. Following the intra-personal dialogue is the inter-personal dialogue. This, according to Panikkar, focuses on the mutual testimonies of those involved in the dialogue, keeping in mind that what the other bear is not a critique of our ideas but witness to his own experience, which then enters our dialogue, flows with it and awaits a new fecundation. In so doing, the dialogical dialogue becomes simply the convergence of hearts, not just the coalescence of minds.

Another important aspect of the rule is the symbolic transformation of experiences. Panikkar saw the experience of religious dialogue as all-important because, in the encounter, each participant attempts to think in and with the symbols of both traditions so that there is a symbolic transformation of experience. As such, both parties are encouraged to crossover to the other tradition and then cross back again to their tradition. The benefit of this crossing over is that people learn to think and understand based on the symbol systems of more than one own tradition. A deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forgo prejudice in the search for truth while maintaining profound loyalty towards one's tradition remain for Panikkar indispensable prerequisites for dialogical dialogue.

Conclusion

Pluralism, from the exploration, remains the correct attitudinal orientation of religious dialogue in its different dimensions (intra- and inter-religious). This attitude becomes so important because of the inevitability of human diversities (cultural, religious, political etc). As such, there cannot be a plural society without a mutual encounter of the parts (traditions, ethnic, religious, and political worldviews). It is this indisputable value in the "other" that Panikkar explores in his "Dialogical dialogue". That there exist diversities (otherness), according to him, does not eradicate the fact that there is no dialogical point (relativeness), as such; radical otherness does not eradicate radical relativity or primordial interconnection of all human traditions. "The Dialogical dialogue" proceeds therefore on a certain trust in the 'cosmic confidence' in the 'other qua other', and even in a kind of cosmic confidence in the unfolding of reality itself. If the correct attitudinal orientations and regulations of religious dialogue as enunciated in the dialogical dialogue are adhered to by Christian Churches in Nigeria, ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria will advance to a level higher than what it used to be. The encounter will become rosy.

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