

Christianity and Culture Collision

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*Particularities and Trends
from a Global South*

Edited by

Cyril Orji and Joseph Ogbonnaya

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To all who labored to plant the seed of the Christian faith in Africa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ix
Foreword	x
Dr. Robert Masson	
Introduction	xii

Part I

Chapter One.....	2
A Semiotic Quest for a Transformational World Church Cyril Orji	
Chapter Two	39
World Christianity in a Fourth Stage of Meaning: The Example of Simon Kimbangu John Dadosky	
Chapter Three	51
The Dialogical Praxis of <i>Gaudium Et Spes</i> and <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> as a Basis for Africa’s Social Transformation Idara Otu	
Chapter Four.....	68
Africans, “Who Do You Say I Am?”: Addressing the Challenges of Inter- Cultural and Religious Dialogue in African Christianity in the Light of <i>Nostra Aetate</i> and <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> Olisaemeka Rosemary Okwara	

Part II

Chapter Five	90
<i>Gravissimum Educationis</i> and African Anthropological Poverty Joseph Ogonnaya	

Chapter Six.....	114
The Church and the Laity after the Second Vatican Council: Has Anything Changed? Francis Ezenezi	
Chapter Seven.....	133
The Balkans and Muslim-Christian Encounter for Peace Jusuf Salih	
Chapter Eight.....	151
Embracing the Pragmatic in African Indigenous Religions: New Perspective for Interfaith Dialogue Simon-Mary Aihokhai	
Part III	
Chapter Nine.....	164
Partnership in Theological Education <i>Missio Cum Gentibus et Inter Gentes</i> : Duquesne University, Spiritan International School of Theology, Dominican Institute and Tangaza College Elochukwu Uzukwu, C.S.SP. and George Worgul, Jr.	
Chapter Ten.....	177
Questions of Special Urgency: Understanding Holy See Interventions at the United Nations on Africa's Development in the Light of the Theological Principles of <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> Emeka Xris Obiezu, OSA	
Chapter Eleven.....	201
Liturgical Inculturation and <i>Actuosa Participatio</i> : What We Have Done and what we have Failed to do in Africa Mary Reginald Anibueze	
Chapter Twelve.....	218
Concluding Reflections Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, S.J.	
Bibliography.....	224
Contributors.....	250

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FOREWORD

Christianity brings “good news to the world” only when the news is genuinely new and really transforms the world. In our so-called Information Age, we are inclined to think of “news” simply as the communication of new data (an addition to the world of facts), rather than as the emergence of new understanding that changes the world for us and upsets what conventionally is taken for fact. Moreover, Christianity’s good news is “saving” and a “revelation”, only to the extent that it constantly opens and re-opens to us an ineffable abundance of goodness and truth that otherwise transcends our possibilities and understanding. The man Jesus was good and world-shaking news for the first generation of Christians, not because he fit the expectations of the day for a Messiah, but because what he did, said, embodied, and underwent prompted a radically new and transformative understanding of Israel’s hope, of Jesus’s identity, and of God. This sort of tectonic opening of head, heart, and hands to God’s ineffable mystery and mercy requires personal appropriation and generational re-appropriation. There will be no “new evangelization” or “new enlightenment” without the emergence of understanding and practice that is tectonic and dynamic in this way. New understanding of this sort is not simply a deposit of timeless facts and rules that can be passed as ahistorical data from person to person, or from generation to generation.

I found this insight about the tectonic and dynamic character of Christianity’s good news for the world confirmed again and again as I listened to the papers at the conference on world Christianity at Marquette in October 2015. The conference was organized by my colleague Dr. Joseph Ogbonnaya and Marquette alumnus Dr. Cyril Orji to mark the 50th anniversary celebration of the Second Vatican Council.

Ogbonnaya and Orji have given this book, drawn from the conference, a provocative title, invoking images of “culture collision,” “particularity,” and the “global South.” While these themes are certainly focal in the chapters, the contributors’ analyses are so enriching and provocative, at least on my read, because they prompt for profoundly new understandings of apparently polar themes: inculturation, universality, and world Christianity. My recent study of the metaphoric foundations of religious conceptualization and theological reasoning, as well as my earlier work on Rahner’s thought, agrees with the lesson I take from these essays. First,

there is no authentic inculturation if it is not a bridging of cultures from both directions that expands the horizon of both through the emergence of a new world of understanding and practice. Second, there is no authentic universality except through what emerges in the particularities of human history and cultures. Finally, talk of world Christianity is largely aspirational, a project rather than an accomplishment, which requires the kind of analysis provided in this volume. The second Vatican Council marked a decisive moment in the emergence of a new understanding of world Christianity, but the Council marked a beginning rather than an achievement.

Since the emergence of world Christianity is not an epiphenomenon but central to the question of how the gospel is good news for today's world, I expect that readers concerned about the theological issues related to the possibilities for a genuinely new evangelization will find this volume as helpful as I did. The volume will be of interest, of course, to students and scholars of African ecclesiastical history, world Christianity, and inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

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INTRODUCTION

The papers in this volume are selected essays that emerged out of the conference on World Christianity held at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI in October 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary celebration of the Second Vatican Council. The growth of Christianity in non-Western cultural traditions amplifies the demographic shift of Christianity from the Northern to the Southern Hemispheres. While there are various interpretations of this shift from the medieval imperial Christendom to a global church that recognizes and acknowledges the multiplicity of cultures and diverse ways of being Christian, the one common area of agreement still remains that the movement of Christianity to places that were hitherto non-Christian has necessitated the need to speak of World Christianity. In the Catholic Church, no movement or renewal has fostered the spread of World Christianity like the landmark event of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962-1965). The Council took place at a time when many of the Churches of LaFricAsia (Latin America, Africa, and Asia) were in transition from European rule, and leadership of these churches was passing from Western European missionaries to indigenous ones. The epochal changes of the Council, together with indigenous responses to Christianity, accelerated the movement from medieval Christendom to World Christianity. Like the apostle Paul, who worked tirelessly to incorporate non-Jews fully into the Christian faith, the documents of Vatican Council II truly opened the windows of the Church and “let in fresh air” in the words of the venerable Pope who convened the Council, Saint John XXIII.

The fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II should be celebrated with a review of what the Churches of LaFricAsia have made of the conciliar documents, and how to accelerate the growth of these churches in the face of contemporary global challenges. This is especially important in the light of the reforms of Pope Francis, aimed at practical implementation, i.e., seeking a holistic Christian faith and practice. According to the Vatican Statistical Year Book 2011, from the year 2000 – 2008, the population of African Catholics grew 33%, compared to Europe which remained generally stable (an increase of 1.17%). Asia also increased by 15.61%, Oceania by 11.39%, and (Latin) America by 10.93%. Thus, one cannot resist asking pertinent questions like: How has the Vatican Council II

impacted the Catholic Churches in LaFricAsia? What are the ecclesiological, theological, liturgical, biblical, pastoral, politico-social, economic, and cultural impacts of the Vatican Council II on these churches? Have the documents of the Council helped to promote religious freedom, gender equality, the participation of the laity, priestly and religious life, etc.? Concerning Africa, what is African Christianity contributing to the implementation of the Council's documents? Which aspects of African Christianity ought to be strengthened in light of the reforms of Pope Francis? How does World Christianity respond to the challenges of globalization? Are there any aspects of the African culture that could nourish the universal Church? In light of liturgical inculturation, which has been influenced by the activities of the African Independent Churches and Pentecostalism, in what ways will the dynamic spirit-filled worship of African Christianity enrich the Church liturgy? Can interreligious dialogue engender peace in Africa, especially in light of the increasing assault on Christianity there? These are the questions the contributors in this volume shed light on. We hope students and scholars of African ecclesiastical history and World Christianity, as well as those interested in inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, will find this volume helpful.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I gives the theoretical underpinning of the questions raised above, part II foregrounds these theories in African ecclesial life, and part III deals with implementation.

Part I: Theoretical Underpinning:

In chapter one Cyril Orji shows how innovations needed to move Christian theology forward have been plagued by methodological problems and inadequate attention to historical mindedness. He argues that as Christianity moves inexorably southwards the manner of conveying the Christian message has to be re-thought in light of new findings in anthropology and the social sciences. Drawing from the American semiotician and pragmatist C.S. Peirce (1839-1914), and the theological method of Bernard Lonergan (1904-84), he argues that the conceptual gridlocks that have hindered innovations in Christian theology can be overcome, if careful attention is given to the kind of advances that both Peirce and Lonergan suggest, an innovation which, according to Orji, can lead to the Second Enlightenment that the World Church needs.

In chapter two, John Dadosky draws from Bernard Lonergan to examine some of the emerging religious consciousness of our time. He examines Lonergan's reference to Simon Kimbangu (1887-1951) as an example of someone who was "a witness as a prophet in whom the Spirit of God was manifested, and has opened the revelation of Christ through African religious experience in fresh ways." Dadosky places Lonergan's

comments in the context of what he (Dadosky) had previously developed from Lonergan's four stages of meaning--one of heightened attention to intersubjectivity, community, and transcendent value. Dadosky argues that Lonergan's adverting to Kimbangua gives a clue as to what Lonergan understood as an example of genuine inculturation, and indicates where Lonergan was going with contextual theology beyond his notable critique of classicist culture.

In chapter three Idara Otu continues the theme of transposition already discussed by Orji and Dadosky. He takes as his locus the theme of the Church in Africa as the "Family of God," suggesting that the theme itself demands a transformative praxis of mediation and action. Drawing from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he contends that the Church in Africa must renew its pastoral response to the social issues facing the continent. He envisions the African church as a miniature social conscience for African society. Using the principles of social solidarity and social dialogue enunciated in *Evangelii Gaudium*, he argues that the principles are themselves transformative praxis, and can complement the three-fold ecclesial strategies of pastoral exhortations, advocacy for prayers, and witness of hope employed by ecclesiastical leadership in Africa.

Chapter four concludes the theoretical underpinning of our volume. The essay by Rosemary Okwara examines some models of dialogue, the notion of a common theistic belief, and the quest for authentic, integral, and universal salvation of human people especially, and explores how they can empower African religious and cultural life. She employs insights from *Nostra Aetate* and *Evangelii Gaudium* and uses them as a basis for creative dialogue. She concludes by showing how the paradigms of recent approaches to Christian faith as culturally and anthropologically conditioned can foster African Christians' dialogue in the African shift to cultural and religious pluralism.

Part II Foreground:

The essay by Joseph Ogbonnaya in chapter five introduces the four essays that foreground the theories initiated in part I. Ogbonnaya examines the psychological effect of colonialism on the African psyche and suggests that Africans suffer from what the Cameroonian theologian Engelbert Mveng calls "anthropological poverty." This means indigence in being, a condition by which people are robbed of their own ways of living and existing. Anthropological poverty also conveys a sense of being in which a person or persons are bereft of their identity, dignity, freedom, thought-patterns, history, and language. For Ogbonnaya, anthropological poverty has birthed inauthenticity. Still he thinks such inauthenticity can be

overcome, but only through education that promotes human dignity. He therefore argues that *Gravissimum Educationis* – the Second Vatican Council document that emphasizes education that is attuned to a mature sense of responsibility and authentic freedom — can play a leading role in this task of re-education of Africans that he envisages.

In chapter six Francis Ezenezi explores and analyzes the strengths and limitations of current ecclesiological practices of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, with respect to the role of the lay Christian faithful. He thinks the church needs to do more to empower the laity. He suggests different ways of overcoming this and other deficiencies in the Nigerian church. His vision of the Church in Nigeria is one that is participatory and prophetic.

The essay by Jusuf Salif in chapter seven brings a new perspective to interfaith dialogue. Salif reminds us that Muslims and Christians make up over half of the world's population, and that without understanding between these two religions, world peace will continue to be elusive. He locates the basis for peace in the very foundational principles of these two faith traditions—love of God and neighbour. Muslims believe that all three Abrahamic religions have their divine scriptures: *Tawrāt* was revealed to Mūsā (Moses), *Injīl* to ʿĪsā (Jesus) and the Qurʾān to Muhammad. The oneness of God, though understood differently, is the most important element in all three faith traditions. Using the tragic example of the Balkan Wars as a case in point for the kind of destruction that can befall a society when different religions make no concerted effort to understand and respect the tenets of each one's belief, Salif pushes home the need for dialogue. The Qurʾan uses the term *ahl al-kitāb* (People of the Book) to designate both Jews and Christians, urging Muslims to respect and engage in conversation with all *al-kitab*. His essay develops how this can be a starting point for dialogue.

Simon Aihokhai brings the section to an end by bringing the theme of interfaith dialogue began by Salif to a creative end. Aihokhai draws from Chinua Achebe's literature to frame interreligious dialogue. He frames the logic of violence this way: that those who embrace religious violence root themselves in the narrative of exclusion and that they see people of other faiths as impoverished. Aihokhai dismisses this false narrative, first by scouring through African indigenous religious traditions, second, through anecdotes from Achebe's novel, and third from insights from his fieldwork in Nigeria. Using insights from these tools, he argues that African Indigenous Religions can serve as a corrective to the so-called exclusivist views adopted by the Abrahamic religions in their dealings with the religious other. In the end Aihokhai suggests a new model for engaging

the religious other-- one that is ethical, life affirming, and reflective of deep faith in a God within whose domain lies the wisdom to change human hearts.

Part III Implementation:

The joint essay by Elochukwu Uzukwu and George Worgul, Jr. in chapter nine introduces our last theme --implementation. Their essay brings home the mutual benefits of collaboration. They provide a concrete example of how mutual learning and collaboration can be beneficial to the local churches in Africa and America. One of the inspirational doctrinal statements of Vatican II is found in *Lumen Gentium*, which highlights the beauty of diversity in the experience of local churches. “This variety of local churches with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church” (LG 23). Uzukwu and Worgul, who have been working in the area of collaboration among educational institutes in the US and Africa, highlight the success of their collaborative endeavour. Their essay shows how educational affiliations, like the ones between Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit (Pittsburgh, PA) and three institutes in West and East Africa (Spiritan Intl School of Theology Enugu, Nigeria; Dominican Institute Ibadan, Nigeria; and Tangaza College, Nairobi, Kenya) can be an instance of how the “catholicity” of the Church can be realized. Using the vision of *Ad Gentes* that theological speculation be encouraged and fostered through collaboration, they call for more collaboration between educational institutes in Africa, Europe, and America.

In chapter ten Emeka Obiezu discusses the Holy See’s intervention in African affairs at the UN –interventions focused on the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) – as a concrete example of what *Gaudium et Spes* classifies as “questions of special urgency.” Obiezu’s paper appreciates these interventions as part of positive reception of the Council’s teaching on the Church in the Modern World. His paper assesses the effects and challenges of these interventions from the standpoint of the theological and pastoral principles of *Gaudium et Spes*.

Mary Reginald’s paper in chapter eleven examines what the African continent has done, as well as what the church has yet to do, with regard to implementing *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican II’s document of Sacred Liturgy. She argues that liturgical inculturation has been on-going in Africa even before the Council, at least among the so-called Independent Churches. Inculturation only blossomed among the “mainline churches” after the Council. She therefore sees *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as “a sign and symbol of the values and priorities” of the Council that can be appropriated by the African Church. She thinks a full complement of the

Council's document will lead to true internal and external *actousa participatio* in Divine Liturgy on the part of African Christians.

Chapter twelve was a short paper given by Orabator at the conference. His address sums up the theme of the conference and relates it to contemporary ecclesial events like the synod on the family and Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

A SEMIOTIC QUEST
FOR A TRANSFORMATIONAL
WORLD CHURCH

CYRIL ORJI

Statements credited to Pope John XXIII on his deathbed (May 24, 1963) may have captured the motivations behind the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council—that monumental gathering that changed the face of Catholicism in the mid-twentieth century.¹ John XXIII was said to have

¹ According to Avery Dulles, responses to Vatican II have revolved around “acclamation and vilification.” Those who hail the Council “see it as having liberated Catholics from a long night of oppression, thus restoring to the people of God their rightful liberties,” while those who vilify it “blame it for shattering the unity and order of the church and introducing an era of contestation and doubt.” This range of opinions should be understood in the context of varied responses to pre-conciliar Catholicism by so-called traditionalists and progressives. While progressives, according to Dulles, “caricature the pre-conciliar church as tyrannical and obscurantist, traditionalists idealize the pre-conciliar church as though it were a lost paradise.” Dulles sees these differing opinions as arising from a conflict of interpretations of the Council’s documents, which are not easy to interpret. Dulles suggests the following four reasons for the difficulty of interpretation of the conciliar documents: (1) In trying to achieve unanimity and express the consensus of the college of bishops without promoting the ideas of one particular group, the Council “sought to harmonize differing views, without excluding any significant minority. In some cases they adopted deliberate ambiguities.” (2) In his opening speech (October 11, 1962), John XXIII “declared that although the church had sometimes condemned errors with the greatest severity, it would best meet the needs of our time “by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.”“ The Council, in following this instruction, “did not dwell on the negative implications of its doctrine” and framed its teaching “so as not to offend any large group, except perhaps atheistic Communism.” (3) “The council occurred at a unique moment of history, when the Western world was swept up in a wave of

remarked that: “A deeper understanding of [Christian] doctrine has brought us to a new situation.... It is not that the Gospel has changed, it is that we have begun to understand it better.”² In what seemed radical at the time, the Pontiff declared that: “Today more than ever, we are called to serve man as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere the rights of the human person, and not merely those of the Catholic Church.”³ Influenced by the events that occurred at the dawn of modernity (revolutions in science, industrialization, World War II, etc.), the Pontiff also suggested that: “The moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look ahead.”⁴ Remarkably, the phrase “the signs of the times”⁵ occupies a prominent place in the last of the 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council that was promulgated in 1968 by Paul VI, the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, known by its Latin name *Gaudium Et Spes* (Joy and Hope). We

optimism typified by Pope John XXIII himself. The “new humanism” was confident that if free play were given to human powers and technology, the scourges of poverty, disease, famine, and war could be virtually eliminated. Christians, on this theory, had no good reason for standing apart from the rest of humanity.” Some progressives, therefore, interpreted Vatican II as an invitation to “throw in their lot with all the forces making for humanization and progress.” (4) In the years following the Council “the communications media favored the emphasis on novelty. Progressive theologians were lionized for writing books and articles that seemed to be breaking new barriers and demolishing the old edifice of pre-conciliar Catholicism. In this atmosphere, early interpreters of the council suggested that the documents contained revolutionary implications not apparent on the surface. Some propounded the hermeneutical principle that where there are ambiguities in the council documents, these should always be resolved in favor of discontinuity. Others used the device of preferring to follow the “spirit of Vatican II” at the expense of the letter.” See Avery Dulles, “Vatican II: Myth and the Reality,” *America* (February 24 2003), online:

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/423/article/vatican-ii-myth-and-reality>; accessed July 3, 2015.

² See <http://www.vatican2voice.org/2need/deroo.htm>. Accessed July 2, 2015.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This often quoted phrase is biblical in origin, although it occurs in only one place in the Christian Bible: “The Pharisees and the Sadducees came, and to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, “When it is evening, you say “it will be fair weather; for the sky is red.” And in the morning, “It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.” You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matthew 16: 1-3).

read in *Gaudium Et Spes* that “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (GS, no.4).⁶ In the aftermath of the Council, the phrase “the signs of the times” became much debated and much discussed. In their attempts to outdo the other, traditional (conservative) and liberal (progressive) Catholics have exploited the phrase and have at times offered different interpretations of what was intended by the Council by “the signs of the times.”⁷

In spite of differing interpretations of the Council’s documents that have emerged in the post-Conciliar era, what is clear is that *Gaudium Et*

⁶ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁷ According to Avery Dulles, in the first decade following Vatican II “innovationist hermeneutic” was the clear dominant literature. But by the middle of the 1970s, another school of interpretation began to surface. This was led by distinguished theologians like the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), and Joseph Ratzinger (who later became Pope Benedict XVI). These distinguished theologians “banded together to found a new international review, *Communio*, which was widely viewed as an attempt to offset the progressive Dutch-based journal *Concilium*. Writers for *Communio* preferred to interpret Vatican II with what they called “a hermeneutics of continuity,” emphasizing the diachronic solidarity of the council with the whole Catholic tradition.” To overcome polarization between progressives and traditionalists, according to Dulles, Pope John Paul II convened an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985, the year that marked the twentieth anniversary of the close of the Council. The extraordinary Synod enunciated these six principles as guidelines for interpretations of the documents of Vatican II:

1. Each passage and document of the council must be interpreted in the context of all the others, so that the integral teaching of the council may be rightly grasped.
2. The four constitutions of the council (those on liturgy, church, revelation, and the church in the modern world) are the hermeneutical key to the other documents—namely, the council’s nine decrees and three declarations.
3. The pastoral import of the documents ought not to be separated from, or set in opposition to, their doctrinal content.
4. No opposition may be made between the spirit and the letter of Vatican II.
5. The council must be interpreted in continuity with the great tradition of the church, including earlier councils.
6. Vatican II should be accepted as illuminating the problems of our own day.

See Dulles, “Vatican II: Myth and the Reality.” Online:

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/423/article/vatican-ii-myth-and-reality>; accessed July 3, 2015.

Spes suggests a novel reading of the “signs of the times.” But while the Council, in the phrase, suggests, a new understanding of the Church and the Church’s role in the modern world, it did not clarify how the key word “sign” is to be understood. The term “sign” is a technical term in the science of semiotics. Semiotics can shed light on how the Church is to understand and interpret “the signs of the times.” Today there are changes occurring in the Christian landscape. We are now witnessing resurgence of Christianity in cultures that were previously non-Christian, fuelling the emergence of Christianity as a world church. Thus, in light of the new reality of Christianity as a world church and this reality as a new “sign of our time,” this paper argues that the semiotic model of sign theory of the American philosopher, scientist, logician, and pragmatist, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) can mediate Christian understanding of the Church and the Church’s relation to modern cultures. “The entire universe,” according to Peirce, “is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.”⁸ We are not only surrounded by signs, Peirce argued, our lives are also

⁸ Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol.2 (1839-1913), edited by the Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 394. For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Peirce’s works, when citing Peirce’s primary works I will refer to the critical editions. There are two main critical editions used in this essay: the *Collected Works* and the *Essential Peirce*. See *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Volumes I-VI, ed., Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935) and *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Volumes VII-VIII, ed., Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). Regarding the *Essential Peirce*, the Peirce Edition Project began in 1982 at Indiana University. Its aim was to systematically organize selections of Peirce’s work. The Project has produced two volumes covering the years 1867-1893 and 1893-1913 of Peirce’s work. See *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Vol. 1 (1867-1893), eds., Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: 1992) and *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Vol.2 (1893-1913), edited by the Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). Hereafter, when citing Peirce’s work I will follow the standard convention followed by Peirce scholars, which is to give page references to the *Essential Peirce* and volume. For example, EP 1, 9 stands for *Essential Peirce* volume 1, page 9 and EP 2, 10 stands for *Essential Peirce* volume 2, page 10. The convention for citing the *Collected Papers* differs slightly—reference is to volume and paragraph number. For example, CP 1.89 stands for *Collected Papers* volume 1, paragraph 89 and CP 4.90 stands for *Collected Papers* volume 4, paragraph 90.

shaped by the interpretations (and misinterpretations) that we make of the signs.⁹

A subtext of the rise of Christianity in non-Western societies and cultures is the ironic decline of religious attitudes in the West,¹⁰ itself another important, but less examined, sign of our time. A recent Pew survey (April 2015) on religious affiliation in the United States points to a steady decline of Christianity and a continued rise of what is felicitously called “nones” (people with no religious affiliation) in the United States. The free-fall of Christianity is even more disturbing when one considers the fact that younger people are more likely than older ones to be religiously unaffiliated. Only about 56% of the so-called Millennials (people born between 1980 and 2000) identify with any type of organized religion. The Pew research study also found an increase in religious “switching”—changing from a religion one was born and raised with to another religion as an adult. The upsurge in “switching” since 2007 has contributed to a rise in people who identify as atheists or agnostics.¹¹ The decline in US religious attitudes is part of a broader decline of religious attitudes in the western world, particularly Christianity. Thus the Pew research strengthens the work of historians and theologians who have very early on documented how the centre of Christian gravity has shifted inexorably southwards (Africa, Latin America, and Asia), and how the resurgence is continuing unabatedly.¹² Lamin Sanneh surmises that: “The

⁹ Andrew Robinson, *God and the World of Signs: Trinity, Evolution, and the Metaphysical Semiotics of C.S. Peirce* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15.

¹⁰ See Lamin Sanneh and Joel L. Carpenter, eds., *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii. Online:

<http://ir.nmu.org.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/131576/5088dfbdc415b65e6c4c0dc6e5d98258.pdf?sequence=1>; accessed July 25, 2015.

¹¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/#project-ed-growth-map>; accessed May 10, 2015.

¹² See Lamin O. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 2009); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How it Died*

resurgence is not simply a matter of new names being added to the rolls, but of the accumulating pressure to accommodate new ways of life and thinking that are creating massive cultural shifts. By contrast, Europe, and to some extent, North America, once considered Christian strongholds, are in marked recession or retreat. The communities of the North Atlantic are fast becoming the church's arid land, or at least its shrinking base; meanwhile, the societies of the Southern Hemisphere are emerging as new Christian strongholds."¹³

The changing face of Christianity calls for a new understanding or change in methodological analysis of the faith and the modes of expressing the faith. The goal of this paper is to show how the semiotics of Peirce can be a useful tool for this methodological analysis of contemporary Christian faith. Using Peirce's semiotics as a scientific or historical-minded way of understanding contemporary cultures, I argue that the World Church needs a Second Enlightenment – a new cultural hermeneutic – that the phenomenological semiotic-like work of Bernard Lonergan (1904-84) suggests. At a time when Catholic theology was still very much classicist, Lonergan “made the case that the odyssey of the Christian gospel allows for transcultural communication and pluralism of expressions. He suggested correctly that the contemporary world is becoming increasingly diverse, and that if the church is to remain relevant in contemporary society, then it needs to devise new methods of communicating the Christian message.”¹⁴

The terms “tradition” and “innovation,” in reference to Christianity, are used in this paper as “twin virtues,” interacting and continuously interchanging with one another, twin virtues that Lonergan attributed to Thomas Aquinas.¹⁵ I use this dialectical pair of terms to suggest how aspects of modernity, as embedded in tradition, can be assimilated and

(New York: HarperOne, 2009); and *The New Map of the Global Church* (New York: Crossroads, 2015).

¹³ Lamin Sanneh, “The Changing Face of Christianity: The Cultural Impetus of a World Religion,” in Sanneh and Carpenter, *The Changing Face of Christianity*, 3-18, 3-4.

¹⁴ Cyril Orji, *A Semiotic Approach to the Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), xiii.

¹⁵ Frederick E. Crowe, “Insight: Genesis and Ongoing Context,” *Lonergan Workshop* 8 (1990), 61-83, 69. See also Bernard Lonergan, “Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 35-54.

carried forward in the new context of the emerging World Church. Tradition, properly understood, can be a source of innovation in the same manner innovation can be an outgrowth of tradition.¹⁶ As Vincent Colapietro has correctly pointed out with respect to the semiotic approach that Peirce offers, “unimaginative repetition of past patterns of thought or conduct is not characteristic of a truly vital tradition; nor is the automatic (in a sense, mechanical) rejection of such patterns the mark of a truly innovative mind.”¹⁷

Decline in Christian Religious Attitudes Globally

William Temple (1881-1944), the Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury, made the observation shortly before his death in 1944 that the global feature of Christianity was “the new fact of our time.”¹⁸ This prescient remark, coupled with the magnitude of Christian resurgence in the South, has led Philip Jenkins to predict that by 2025 the battle for the most Christian continent will be between Africa and Latin America, and that by 2050 Africa will win that battle.¹⁹ The subtext of this, as pointed out earlier, is that European Christianity continues to be in free-fall to the extent that older Western adults now debate whether there was ever any such thing as “western Christianity.”²⁰

Two main views have emerged regarding the contemporary European religious landscape: the Dominant Majority view, and the Silent Minority view. The Dominant Majority view categorically asserts that Christianity in Europe is in downward spiral—that the Christian “faith is dead or dying.”²¹ Jenkins is a good representative of this position. In his view, what used to be Christian Europe is inevitably drifting toward “rapidly growing Muslim immigrant communities.”²² He suggests that a serious study of the state of contemporary Christianity is needed, if Europe is to avoid an alarming scenario of spiritual desolation. The Silent Minority

¹⁶ See Vincent M. Colapietro’s foreword in Vincent G. Potter, *Peirce’s Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), x.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Sanneh, “The Changing Face of Christianity,” 4

¹⁹ Philip Jenkins, “The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity,” *The Religious Educator* 8 (2007), 113-25, 114.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Philip Jenkins, “Godless Europe?,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31 (2007), 115-20, 115.

²² *Ibid.* See also Jenkins, *God’s Continent*.

view, on the other hand, insists that Christianity in Europe has neither vanished nor approached extinction. Proponents of this view argue that the so-called decline in Europe's religious attitudes is rather "intriguing signs of growth within [Europe's] secular framework."²³ They suggest that what those who think Europe is losing its Christian religious traditions fail to distinguish is the difference between decline of institutional churches and survival of the Christian faith. According to their distinction, "religious belief is still an important force for many old-stock Europeans, though expressed with less public fervor than in the United States."²⁴ What this suggests is that a good number of Europeans practice what the British sociologist of religion Grace Davie calls "believing without belonging." Davie's sociological work uncovered discrepancies between religious attitudes that people, particularly British and European Christians profess, which she termed "believing," and the actual church attendance or values, which she termed "belonging." Davie thought the discrepancies could be explained by what she brands "believing without belonging."²⁵ Following

²³ Jenkins, "Godless Europe?," 115.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁵ See Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Davie's view has been sharply criticized as a mere "slogan" that needs to be summarily "retired." See David Voas and Alasdair Crockett, "Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging," *Sociology* 39 (2005), 11-28. Other critics have also pointed out that Davie's concept, in spite of its positive value of helping us to understand religious life in Britain and Europe at large, suffers "considerable limitations. In particular, it seemed more descriptive than explanatory, and it relied partly on statistical measurement of what is in many ways a more nebulous phenomenon." See Chris Ducker, "Believing in Grace Davie: What Does She Bring to an Understanding of Mission in Europe?" Online: http://www.redcliffe.org/portals/0/content/documents/centres/encounters/36/ducker_2011-03_grace_davie_and_europe.pdf; accessed July 20, 2015. Davie is aware of these criticisms, some of which she has accepted in subsequent publications, leading to a nuancing of her position. See Davie, Grace, "Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The factors to take into account," *European Journal of Sociology* 47 (2006), 271-296; "Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge", in Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21-37; "Is Europe an Exceptional Case?," *International Review of Mission* 95 (2006), 247-258; *Europe – The Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, (London: DLT, 2002); "The Persistence of Institutional Religion in Modern Europe", in P. Heelas and L. Woodhead, eds., *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001), 101-111; "Prospects for Religion in the Modern World," *The Ecumenical*

Davie's illuminating but nonetheless confusing distinction, the Silent Minority view argue that for some believers the refusal to "belong" might in the end be "a positive or encouraging sign, as it has separated faith from the bureaucratic structures of comprehensive national churches."²⁶ In a nutshell, what the recent experience of Christian Europe suggests, according to the Silent Minority view, is "not that the continent is potentially a graveyard for religion, but rather that it is a laboratory for new forms of faith, new structures of organization and interaction, that can accommodate themselves to a dominant secular environment."²⁷ Davie's "believing without belonging" is an interesting concept that leaves many questions unresolved. Critics have pointed out, for example, that "the only form of believing without belonging that is as pervasive as Davie suggests is a vague willingness to suppose that "there's something out there," accompanied by an unsurprising disinclination to spend any time and effort worshipping whatever that might be."²⁸

What quantitative and qualitative research seem to provide evidence for is the Dominant Majority — the demise of European Christianity. According to a recent Pew Research study:²⁹

- In 2010 Christianity was the dominant religion in the world, with about 2.2 billion adherents.
- Muslims rank second with about 1.6 billion adherents.
- About 106 million Christians are expected to switch affiliation from 2010 to 2050.
- Atheists and agnostics (religiously unaffiliated) are expected to make the most net gains with about 61 million new followers.
- Christians are expected to see the largest net losses.
- In North America Muslims and those that come under the umbrella of "other religions" (Baha'is, Jains, Sikhs, Taoists) are the fastest growing religious groups.

Review (October 2000), 455-464; *Religion in Modern Europe – A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Jenkins, "Godless Europe?," 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁸ Ducker, "Believing in Gracie Davie;" quoting Voas and Crockett, "Religion in Britain," 24-25.

²⁹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/#projected-growth-map>.

- Christianity is expected to decline from 78% of the overall population to 66% by 2050.³⁰
- The religiously unaffiliated will rise from 16% of the population to 26%.
- By 2050, the US will have more Muslims (2.1%) than Jews (1.4%).
- In South America and the Caribbean, the Christian population will dip from 90% to 89% in 2050, while the religiously unaffiliated will increase from 8% to 9% (net gain of 45 million followers).
- The sub-Saharan African Christian population is expected to double from 517 million in 2010 to 1.1 billion in 2050.
- By 2050, the world's Christians living in sub-Saharan Africa will increase from 24% in 2010 to 38% in 2050, meaning that four out of every ten Christians will be living in sub-Saharan Africa.

A survey by *Le Monde des Religions* a few years ago “suggested that the number of self-described French Catholics had dropped from 80% in the early 1990s to just 51% today.”³¹ The grim picture left the editors of the Magazine no choice but to conclude that in both its institutions and mentalities “France is no longer a Catholic country.”³² The same dingy picture is true of Christianity's future in Germany, where the Evangelical Church of Deutschland has lost over half of its members in the last fifty years. Concerning England, the former archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, has “suggested that if the Church of England were a human being, “the last rites would be administered at any moment.”³³ Regarding Europe as a whole, a 2002 survey about the role of religion in people's lives found that only 21% of Europeans declare that religion “plays a very important role” in their lives (compared with 90% of Muslims in Muslim nations who declare that religion plays a very important role in their lives).³⁴

³⁰ <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/christians-leaving-faith-droves-trend-173818770.html>; accessed April 30, 2015.

³¹ Jenkins, “Godless Europe?,” 115.

³² Ibid. See also Henry Samuel, “France No Longer a Catholic Country,” *Daily Telegraph* (January 10, 2007).

³³ Jenkins, “Godless Europe?,” 115.

³⁴ Jenkins, *God's Continent*, 27.

Table 1: Size and Projected Growth of Major Religions 2010-2050

Religious Affiliation	2010 Population	% World Population in 2010	Projected 2050 Population	% World Population in 2050	Population Growth 2010-2050
Christians	2,168,330,000	31.4	2,918,070,000	31.4	749,740,000
Muslims	1,5999,700,000	23.2	2,761,480,000	29.7	1,161,780,000
Unaffiliated	1,131,150,000	16.4	1,230,340,000	13.2	99,190,000
Hindus	1,032,210,000	15.0	1,384,360,000	14.9	352,140,000
Buddhists	487,760,000	7.1	486,270,000	5.2	-1,490,000
Folk Religions	404,690,000	5.9	449,140,000	4.8	44,450,000
Other Religions	58,150,000	0.8	61,450,000	0.7	3,300,000
Jews	13,860,000	0.2	16,090,000	0.2	2,230,000
World Total	6,895,850,000	100.0	9,307,190,000	100.0	2,411,340,000