

Contextualization Paradigm in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: A Panacea for Multi-Religious Barriers to Evangelization of the Christian Faith in Cross River State, Nigeria

Enebieni Enebieni Eko, Ph.D.¹ and Dimgba Dimgba Esowe, Ph.D.²

^{1,2}Department of Religious Studies, Clifford University

Owerrinta, Abia State, Nigeria

¹Email: pastorekobi@gmail.com

²Email: ddeso2001@gmail.com

Abstract

This research divulges information on some resistance to distinguishable success of Christianity in Cross River State, which is a multi-religious state as a result of some incursions and activities of some religious bodies that are anti Christianity. It proffers possible measures that could positively encounter them. The study is descriptive, and makes use of primary and secondary sources. It applies missiological and theological perspectives, and adopts the Apostle Paul's contextualization paradigm in 1 Corinthians 9:9-23, which he employed in the ancient Church at Corinth, a multi-religious environment with notable cultural and religious intolerance. The study suggests possible approaches that will encourage religious harmony for a working and enabling environment to evolve, thereby facilitating evangelization of the people of Cross River State with the true gospel.

Keywords: Contextualization, Multi-religiosity, Christianity, Cross River, Nigeria, Gospel.

Introduction

Christianity is the religion of Christ. It is interchangeably referred to as the Church or the Christian Church. Its major charter found in Matthew 28:19, 20, which was bequeathed to it by Christ, the founder of the Church states that: Go therefore and make disciples of all the

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. This charter constitutes the mission statement of the church. In carrying out her mission, the Church has to encounter cultures and people of various nations, traditions, and religions of the world. One of such places that the Church is doing mission is Cross River State. Christianity in Cross River State has been a blessing since its inception, but it has also suffered some setbacks in its growth.

Effiong Aye discloses that from April 10, 1848 when foreign Missionaries berthed at the shores of Cross River State to the present day, there are visible indicators of activities of various local, foreign and national Christian denominations and missions in the state, whose presence should have made the state to be dominated by the teachings and practices of true Christianity. The seeming rejection encountered by the white missionaries who brought Christianity at its entrance into western and northern Nigeria because of the dominance of African Traditional Religion and Islam respectively and their perception that Christianity was a white ideology (Ogolla Maurice) was not experienced by foreign missions that came to Cross River State. B. E. Duke avers that the missionaries were very much in good terms with the kings of Calabar; “they also supported several developmental programmes instituted in the land, provided such programmes were not contrary to the Christian belief” (2, 3). Ekei Essien Oku reports that, King Eyo Honesty II requested that the Efik children be educated like the Whites (39); this cooperation encouraged white missionaries to work in Cross River State.

Aye in Enebiemi E. Eko asserts that the first group of Christian missionaries to Cross River was the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland under the leadership of Reverend Hope Waddell at the invitation of Efik chiefs (186). Even today, there are villages that monumentally preserve the cemeteries where some European missionaries who laboured and died in the state were buried. An example of such places is Ikot Ana village in Umon, Biase Local Government Area. The next set of Christian missionaries was the Roman Catholic Mission, which visited Cross River State, particularly the northern axis of the State in the early 20th century (Eko 219).

The Catholic Missionary Society established a lot of hospitals and schools in the State to the extent of winning the hearts and confidence of the people they encountered with the religion they brought.

By the advent of all these developments the impact of Christianity should have been felt by the people it encountered and ought to have convinced them to do away with African Traditional Religious beliefs that the missionaries saw to have been inhuman and unhealthy. This study discovered a loophole in the transmission of the gospel to the generations that succeeded the times of the foreign missionaries and the infusion into Christianity of traditional beliefs during that span of time. This religious inconsistency has opened up Cross River State to other religions and fraternities making it difficult for the expected conversion of people to the Christian faith. Cross River State is now a multi-religious setting, accommodating other religions and fraternal groups such as Eckankar, Rosicrucian (AMORC), its primal rival - the African Traditional Religion, Islam, and many shades of Christianity.

The trajectory of harmony which existed among the traditional rulers, the people of the state, and the white missionaries who brought Christianity to the state to the advantage of the spread of Christianity has also waned giving way to influences of these new religions and their practices, celebration of diverse traditional and cultural festivals, negative influences of partisan politics, cultism, formation of various prayer houses, and the like. Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Benjamin Kye Ampadu report that at the instance of the arrival of Rev. Hope Waddell in 1848 assisted by Revd. Hugh Goldie and William Anderson a lot of work on humanitarian services and the establishment of training institutes began. It was at same period that the Hope Waddell Institution and Duke Town Secondary School were established. Hope Waddell and his team learned *Efik* (the native language of Calabar people) so as to communicate the gospel in the language of the people. These missionaries, like their counterparts in other African territories, taught the people they evangelized belief in God, how to terminate evil and 'obnoxious' behaviours, vocational skills, vernacular literature along with Christian missionary activities, health practices, education, and how to suppress slave trade.

In 1876, when Hope Waddell left for his home country, Mary Slessor followed the same footsteps of her predecessors. She

specialized in the adoption of twins and subsequent prohibition of killing of twins and the introduction of the native court system (Samuel Adu-Gyamfi et al). Aye in Eko discloses that missionaries like Goldie, Alexander Robb, Anderson, Edgerley and others had laid “a strong intellectual foundation in their evangelization scheme ... during the second half of the nineteenth century” (192). These developments spread throughout the State. By extension, the early establishment of educational institutions in the State, such as the Hope Waddell Training Institute for combating illiteracy as well as the translation of the Holy Bible into Efik language by Rev. Goldie aided in the teaching of the indigenes of the State the word of God.

Aye asserts that “in general, the school preceded the church because it was easier to get to children to come to school to learn than to get to their parents to come to the Church, therefore teaching was a necessary step to advance” (165). Consequently, the main research questions are “what are the factors which militate against the growth of the Christian Church in Cross River State? How do these factors affect evangelization and conversion to the Christian faith in the state? What approaches could be adopted for true Christianity to be revived in Cross River, so that the Gospel will be relevant and acceptable by adherents of other religions in the state? In responding to the questions above, this research: (1) investigated possible causes of lack of growth of Christianity in Cross River State? (2) suggests likely approaches to be adopted in order to make it easy to communicate the truths of the Gospel to people living in the state and (3) recommends potential channels of communication and interaction between Christianity and other religions, fraternal groups, and the people of Cross River State to encourage responses to the Gospel.

Cross River Territory

Nigeria is made up of 36 states, and Cross River State is one of them. Cross River is a state in the South-South geo-political zone in Nigeria. “Cross River State is on a latitude of 6°10'2" N and longitude of 8°39'36" E of Greenwich Meridian” (John Kingsley et al.) The projected population of Cross River State for 2012-2016 as presented by the National Bureau of Statistics in the Demographic Statistics Bulletin of 2017 discloses that the state had a population of 3,866,269 people (National Bureau of Statistics). The name, Cross River State,

came from Cross River, one of the major geo-physical features in the State (Encyclopaedia) This river flows from the Cameroon mountains, meandering through most of the Local Government Areas in the State, and empties itself in the Atlantic Ocean. It has many tributaries and streams, which form a waterway; and in the past served as a highway of migration, commerce and civilization for the people of the state. The natural features at the emptying of itself in the Atlantic forms the Cross River Basin. The Cross River has played a very significant role in acting as a vehicle in bringing about the socio-cultural exchanges between groups in the State (Onor 145).

Politically, what is today known as Cross River State was reorganised from the former South Eastern State created on May 27, 1967 and renamed Cross River State in February 1976, a composition of the present Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. The erstwhile Cross River State existed as an entity until 1987, and was excised into two independent States: Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. The “new” Cross River State, has as its capital, Calabar. There are 18 Local Government Areas in the State, namely Akpabuyo, Odukpani, Akamkpa, Biase, Abi, Ikom, Yakurr, Obubra, Boki, Ogoja, Yala, Obanliku, Obudu, Calabar South, Etung, Bekwara, Bakassi and Calabar Municipality. Cross River State is subdivided into three major geographical groups namely: Lower Cross River – comprising Calabar South and Municipality, Akpabuyo, Odukpani Local Government Areas and Bakassi clusters; Middle Cross River comprises Akamkpa, Biase, Yakurr Local Government Areas clusters, while Upper Cross River includes areas covered by Obubra, Ikom, Boki, Etung, Obudu, and Ogoja Local Government Areas. There are several villages in Cross River State. Some of the main towns in the State include: Akamkpa, Calabar, Ikom, Obubra, Odukpani, Ogoja, Okundi, Ugep, Obudu, Obanliku and Akpabuyo. (“Cross River State, Nigeria”).

Methodology of Study

This study is a qualitative research and adopted the lifeworld research method. Brooks, (2015) states that Edmund Husserl introduced the lifeworld approach of study which examines peoples’ day to day experiences in order to arrive at research conclusions in matters of certain phenomena of life. We also applied some

theological tools in studying Paul's contextualization approach in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 as it concerns Missiology to arrive at the recommendations that encourage a Bible based Christianity and inclusive evangelization in Cross River State. The study also made use of the evangelistic missionary mandate found in Matthew 28:19-20 as given by Christ as the essence of Gospel propagation by the Christian Church.

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature review is on some works done on factors that have militated against the spread of Christianity that are relevant in this research. Miracle Ajah asserts that preceding the Nigeria Civil War and the taking over of schools in 1970 by the federal government, "Nigeria's leaders benefitted from the free education offered by the missionaries, which became the bedrock for Nigerian nationalism and independence," and that most people have argued that "the sudden takeover of the schools by the government brought about the collapse of education that was hitherto reputed for high standards in learning and morality." This intrusion of the federal government to stop missionary operated schools opened doors to the introduction of various teachings that are juxtaposing with Christian teachings. The effect of this overturn of the Christian religious education was the revival of the long subdued battle with human inclinations to ancestral worship, tradition, and other vices. Christianity lost so many schools which constituted a major channel for communicating and inculcating Christian values and morals. The methodology adopted by the missionaries and the nationals who succeeded them not only addressed the brain of their students but also their heart; they adopted faith and learning paradigm.

The establishment of schools was one of the entry wedges for the missionaries, and through it they could get to the children when it was difficult to reach their parents at first. There were many missionary schools established in the south east and Cross River State in particular, though these are fondly and sarcastically identified today with western education, yet in Nigeria so many are still being sent abroad for the same western education. Toluwalase Ajayi evaluating Christian values and African culture presents the nature of Christian values to have emanated from and focused on revelation and Christ. They include, "intrinsic values, such as a belief

in a transcendent God as the creator and end of man, the fall and redemption of man, the Trinity, Christ as man's ethical ideal, scripture as divinely inspired, and the existence of grace." Ajayi sees these values as ends in themselves to the Christian, they are also normative in nature, and are practised in the perspectives of Christ and the teachings of the Church. By these views the Christian is considered to have "dual sources of truth, law, knowledge, and values namely, nature and grace, reason and faith, man and God." This is because Christ alone is the way, the truth and life." To the Christian, "God is the ultimate source of everything."

Ajayi's assessment of Christianity is that, it is a religion whose "immense consequences" depend on "one's fundamental options, goals and values" and its "morality, ethics and values ... are based on Christ." The Christianity that is referred to here is devoid of Western culture. The big question that arises is, how do these values play out in the "relationship between what is valued and what is worthy to be valued"? At what point is the line drawn between "absolutism versus relativism, exalted moral idealism versus interest in the world as it is, rationalism versus irrationalism both what is valued versus what is valuable and what is valued versus what is actually done"? In other words, at what point should Christianity accept or reject African values, intrinsically? To answer this pertinent question it is necessary to run through what constitutes African values first. According to Ajayi, the traditional African values and beliefs that are derived from African culture include: [p]olygamy, belief in one supreme God as well as many other minor deities, love of children, music, dancing, respect for old age and authority, belief in a future life, marriage and funeral celebrations. It is these values that gave the Africans a distinct cultural personality and enable him to make some contributions to world knowledge, history and civilization.

The important concerns which evolve as Christianity encounters African culture are: Is Christianity expected to sieve or discard all that is African in encountering African culture? Are there some values that could be left to remain African in the event of this encounter? Are there possibilities for African culture and Christianity to live together? Are there any risks in this encounter? Ajayi asserts that, there seems to be a zero tolerance of Christianity on African traditional culture toward a total conversion that will foster Christianity to remain effective in African soil. However, he opines that the good and bad effects of Christianity on Traditional African

values and culture, which he saw as the weakness of Christian religion on African society, are exposed in the following: Christians have equally played some negative cultural roles in their religious zeal e.g. the dwindling moral life in our society today may well be traced to the weakness of Christianity in punishing evil. The Christian faith has destroyed the belief and fear of the wrath of the gods and the ancestors. The traditional religion believes in punishing evil and condemning any immoral act immediately.

To buttress this assertion, we remember, when a valuable item was stolen in Ikot Ana in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, a few elders in the village, then, suggested that the lost item should be sought for through a means which could identify and expose the culprit(s) with the use of some quantity of alligator pepper chewed and spat on a bunch of broom by a designated medium-person, who was the custodian of the mystical power. Young people were lined up for investigation. Immediately after the application of the search-medium, the young person who stole the lost item started shouting and complaining of severe peppery sensations in his eyes, and confessed that he stole the item. Many Africans believe that the abandonment of such heritage at the emergence of Christianity has encouraged people to do evil with impunity in modern times.

Bernard GechikoNyabwari studied the effect of Christianity on African belief on witchcraft, magic, sorcery and the effect of witchcraft causing phenomena such as accidents, conflicts, death, domestic and public aggression, and loss of property, sickness and failure. According to him, these phenomena are symptoms of mystical powers and the presence of witchcraft. Witchcraft and sorcery are hated in many places in the world, for example in the Northern province of South Africa and Britain because of their antisocial evils. The perception people have about witchcraft creates fear, and witches are hunted and eliminated in these places. Some Africans including African Christians who believed in the effect of witchcraft and their mystical powers also believed that there are witches who possess extra powers to stop the manifestation of these phenomena; or at its worst, among these people are Christians who own magical powers or amulets. Moreover, the influences of witchcraft are suggested to impact the social, economic, political and spiritual developments in African.

Gechiko Nyabwari concluded that, “the coming and establishment of Christianity in Africa seems not to offer lasting solutions” to the belief on witchcraft, magic, sorcery and their influences. For example, there are data revealing that some Christians are either suspected or caught in the practice of witchcraft, as these Christians are afraid of the witches - and not being able to beat the witches they simply joined them. According to GechikoNyabwari, it seems obvious to think that “Missionaries” only “persuaded the Africans to join Christianity without first, adequately teaching them the causes of mystical happenings like death, accidents, loss of poverty, sickness and failure.” The inability of Africans to properly examine Christianity in the perspectives the Missionaries presented it, especially the inadequate teachings on causes and solutions to the influence of witchcraft at the expense of the inherent generosity known of Africans, only persuaded them at the moment to “dropped their social, religious and cultural practices to join Christianity with a hope of practicing faithful Christianity which they thought could address their heart demands.” The result of this weak foundational upbringing of Africans into Christianity by the Missionaries in spite of Africans’ commitment to Christianity only caused a lot of them at the long run to “feel insecure in their personal, physical, health and property safety” (online).

Gechiko Nyabwari seems to aver that Christianity that came this way, only succeeded in making African Christians susceptible to any ideology or religion or occult that would promise something “practical” than their perception of Christianity, while still professing Christianity in the eye of the onlookers. This study reveals the weakness of the form of Christianity brought by the Missionaries with reference to South Africa and not Cross River State, as regards witchcraft and its fear on some Christians who resorted to other religions for help, despite the values of Christianity, its source and focus. The reaction of advocates of Christianity in Cross River State to witchcraft may have been different. However, the study informs on what makes Christianity appear weak as it encounters Africans and African culture, thereby creating room for other religions to exploit decisions for Christianity in South Africans. John Gilchrist, reporting on the gulf between Islam and Christianity raised some points about this disagreement. He claimed that Islam’s incongruity with Christianity dates back to the time of Muhammad its founder. Islam’s holy book, the Qur’an, contains “numerous polemical

passages confronting Christian beliefs, not only opposing them but proposing rational arguments to disprove them.” Other points of departure from Christianity include a challenge against the integrity of the Bible, the aspersion against the doctrine of the Trinity, a frown at the social structure of Christianity, yet at some point claimed that Muhammad is foretold in both Old and New Testaments as the last prophet of God (Allah). The positions taken by Islam against Christianity are published and distributed by the former to all and sundry globally.

Manie Bosman discloses that, the Christianity which started in Nubia (Sudan) in the first century by the 6th century had “experienced a phenomenal growth after several missionaries was sent to the region” to the extent that in due course the whole Sudan “became a predominantly Christian kingdom.” Bosman also asserted that the “Muslims victimized the Christian populations in almost every African country that they conquered, and by the seventeenth century most of the Christians had converted to Islam.” For Sudan, “although it was declared an Islamic state in 1983, it is still divided into an “Islamic” north (65% of the population) and a “Christian” south (23% of the population).” These assertions portray that fear of death, oppression and persecution may have caused so many Christians in so many African territories to abandon the Christian faith for Islam. However, Helen Chapin Metz confirmed that with the expansion and invasion of Islam, Sudan was conquered by Islam in A.D 642 and again in A.D 652. A large proportion of North Africa is today controlled by Islam including Egypt.

Murray Rubinstein probing into the existence of New Religious Movements states that New Religious Movements are fraternal religious groups that have evolved in recent times with promises of enlightenment into the unknown, spiritual contact with the divine, and freedom from spiritual attacks. In other words, they are the “products of and responses to modernity, pluralism, and scientific world view.” New religions are “countercultural,” meaning that they are regarded by people and themselves as substitutes for “mainstream religions of the Western society, especially Christianity in its normative forms.” Some of the New Religions include Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, Eckankar, Freemasonry, Grail Movement, et cetera. Their proposal appeal to the fearful causing them to seek refuge from spiritual attacks and search for “better wisdom and self actualization.” According to Earle E. Cairns, at

the height of their ideologies is the philosophical view of God as an “intellectual abstraction”. New Religious Movements advocate religious reform. They claim to have got their roots from ancient religions and simply revived into modern religions. They are spread all over the world and in Africa, and Cross River State.

Contextualization Paradigm in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Mark R. Mullins, in explaining what “Syncretistic Movements” are, asserted that, “the legitimate cultural reshaping of Christianity is referred to as the “inculturation” or “contextualization” of the Gospel,” a sort of cultural adaptation. Christian Contextualization paradigm is an approach in Missiology, which explains a process of responding fully to the gospel within the structure of one’s situation. It is an attempt to make the gospel relevant to the circumstance or situation of those to whom the message is being brought, and yet retaining the vital truth of the gospel (298). Dom Nwachukwu claims, there are both cultural contextualization and theological contextualization (*referred to as Christian contextualization in this study*), as the two main levels of contextualization. The former deals with “institutions, of family, law, education, and the observable level of cultural behaviour and use of artefacts”, while the latter looks at worldview and cosmology, and at the moral and ethical norms, that is, at the deeper levels of culture (119). Both perspectives are intertwined in this study and are very relevant.

Bertil Wiklander pictorially presents Paul’s fascinating illustration of Christian contextualization in Acts 17:22-34, as follows. The approach used by Paul was different from his usual way of discussing the Gospel with the Hellenistic Jews, whose internal conceptual worldview enabled them to “hear and understand” the Word of God. But this time he was among learned Greeks at the Mount Hill, Areopagus, and had to use a different approach in presenting the Gospel. (Acts 17:16-33). At this non-Jewish territory, Paul did not present the Christ to the learned Greeks until he had first of all established a common ground between himself and his audience. Therefore, developing a trust and a common ground is the first step in contextualization of the Gospel. “If people don’t trust us, they will not hear us.” Paul moved on to examine to know their mode of worship, “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious...” (Acts 17:22). He spoke of an idol with an altar inscription, “to an unknown god,” but avoided

unknown god,” but avoided any criticism against their polytheistic lifestyle and beliefs. By this approach, Paul was using the conceptual worldview of his audience. No matter how that expression sounded to them, he argued on their own “turf” or territory or cultural perspective to make them hear, understand, and obey the Word of God. Bertil Wiklander deduced two objectives that were accomplished by Paul:

1. The contents (wording) of Paul’s proclamation was in harmony with the conceptual worldview of his audience, enabling them to hear and understand. The contents or wording established a common ground, thereby providing the soil in which the word of God could be sown.
2. His purpose was in harmony with his profession. The argument he present led to a proclamation of Jesus Christ, the risen Saviour of the world (Acts 17:31). The result of the Gospel encounter with that culture was that some postponed the discussion, others scoffed at him, yet some of those who listen to him believed (13).

Kenneth V. Neller postulates abuse of right [Greek "**ξουσία**"] or freedom [Greek "**λευθερία**"] which was at the centre of the problem of the Church in Corinth as the essence of Paul’s first letter to that Church. Paul taught them the “correct understanding of freedom” and “the denunciation of one’s right” in Christ, so that they could truly and effectively win souls and retain converts in the church. The events which precipitated 1 Corinthians and Paul’s approach to the church’s problems in the initial part of the letter are fairly well understood. It seems that a basic cause of the Corinthian division was the misunderstanding and misuse of Christian [**ξουσία**] or [**λευθερία**]. This problem led some of the Corinthians to be totally self-centered and consequently to disregard morality, ethics, appearances, order, reverence, and each other’s feelings. The theme of Christian right or freedom thus arises frequently as Paul addresses various circumstances and questions and this postulate forms the context of Paul’s discussion from Corinthians 8:1-11:1).

First Corinthians Chapter 9 is the climax of Paul’s discussion on freedom or liberty in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth. Neller asserts that, “[f]reedom is here thought of not as a right, but s

a renunciation of one's right for the sake of other's." Paul uses himself as an example of one who is free in Christ, and having willingly taken Christ's self-denying manner by enslaving himself to all men in order that he might win "the more," was successful in leading other people to the Christian faith. This is what he meant when he said: [A]nd to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:20-22, NKJV).

Paul was showing the Corinthian Christians that their attitude toward people in the Church and outside was not winsome, which needed a change. He has listed three concerned groups that should be affected by winsome attitude in the context of his discussion in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: Jews (including proselytes and God-fearers), Gentiles or Greek, and the Weak. Neller's study shows that the third in the group "the weak" is a reference to the church as in – 1 Cor. 10:32; 1:22-23a; 1:23b -24; 12:13, and 9:20-22. All these three were prospects to be evangelized through empathy and self-denying love. The context which Paul uses the "weak" [Greek "ασθενή"] in 1 Corinthians 8 is different in application from the "weak" [Greek "ασθενή"] in 1 Corinthians 9:22, though the same Greek word is used. In the later usage Paul identifies himself with the "weak" in 1 Cor. 9 - not that he is weak in moral or in compromise, but weak by being empathetic, self-discipline, full of spiritual maturity, and sensitive to and not offending his prospects for the sake of the gospel. Paul gave this approach on winsome attitude as an instruction to the church in 1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give no offense, either to the Jew or the Greeks or the church of God," as a policy. This later use of "weak" differentiates it from the self-acclaimed "strong" - that have knowledge but have no love (8:1). The "strong" were not empathetic toward their fellow members, the Greeks or Gentile and the Jews who they sought to convert to the Christian faith.

Paul uses chapter 9:19-23 to put into context the whole of chapter 9. In verses 20-22, Paul use of the phrase that, "I might win" [Greek "κερήσω"] indicates that the essence of his empathetic attitude is to win the Jews, the Gentiles or the Greek, and the weak, inexperienced

members in the Church. The Greek word "κερήσω" - that "I might win," is the cognate of another Greek word "**κερδαιν**" that "I might gain." Neller elucidates that

has been identified as a technical missionary term meaning "to win an unbeliever to your faith." However, Daube in Neller concludes that, **κερδαιν** can refer either to the winning of unbelievers to a faith in God or to the winning back of the believing who have strayed away (cf. Matt. 18: 15)" Ultimately, Paul's application of this model of soul winning paradigm was deliberately adopted for the salvation of all he came in contact with, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (129-142). Paul's perspective of contextualization involves tolerance with cultures or religions that counter Biblical Christianity. It involves mingling with such people with the major purpose of teaching the biblical truth, not syncretising and/or condemning them. Contextualization takes into consideration the ethos of understanding the one to be reached with the truth: his belief system without throwing aspersion on him. It is Christ's method as summarily stated and recommended by Ellen G. White: "Christ's method alone will give the true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

Ogolla Maurice in discussing the challenges facing religions in Kenya, chose three religions in his case study to include African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. There used to be an impression that Christianity was better than African Traditional Religion, whereas the Kenyans saw Christianity which came with the European missionaries to be clothed with western culture. In other words, "Christianity pits two cultures against each other and then tries to prove that one is better than the other." Those who propagated this ideology forgot that African Traditional Religion is an indigenous religion. Ogolla disclosed that this dichotomy is being solved through "Africanization of Christianity," especially as an ongoing process. This is simply, the idea of "contextualizing or indigenizing Christianity through what people [call] inculturation by bringing good and agreeable African cultural and religious practices to dialogue with Christianity for a better life in Africa."

However, the goal of contextualization paradigm thrives through dialogue in the presentation of the Gospel without sacrificing the essence of the Gospel. In Kenya, Christianity has its major challenges to include “syncretism, secularism, materialism, modernity and education just to mention a few.” Those who syncretise combine varied religious beliefs and philosophy, making it difficult for them to completely devote themselves to the Christian beliefs and practices. There is also divisiveness in Christian dogmas and practices creating confusion for those who could have accepted Christianity. Secularism creeps into Christianity as a result of modernity, education, to mention but a few. The Gospel through contextualization paradigm will encounter these forces.

Islam, which is shown in this study to have conquered a large part of Africa through wars, according to Ogolla, “did not insist on African abandoning their cultural practices totally. Islam’s challenge in Kenya includes negative attitudes of people of other religions due to the presence of Muslims and its sects. Islam has many sects including: Qadariya, Nejjariya, Zabariya, to mention but a few, differing on doctrinal lines, each claiming an understanding from the teachings of Prophet Mohammed. These differences include, attributes of God and his unity, predestination and God’s justice, God’s promises and threats including revelation, reason, apostleship and Imam, etc. Christianity in Cross River State was syncretistic at the point of entrance to Cross River State, which could be regarded as an approach to giving room to the Efiks to join Christianity. For instance, in Calabar as reported by Ekei Essien Oku in Enebienu E. Eko, the government of the Efik people was run through a fraternity cult called *Ekpe*. *Ekpe* was marked with “invulnerability” and “sanctity in Efik culture.” Some of the Missionaries were initiated into *Ekpe* cult just to appease and entreat the people to accept the gospel. The effects of this syncretic approach by the Missionaries are still extant. For example, some Efik indigenes converted to Christianity find it difficult to disassociate from *Ekpe* cult while claiming to be Christians. It makes it easy for those persons to be swayed by any other religion as a test of faith (187). This approach has its problems - that of intra dialogue already discussed in this study, a situation whereby converts to Christianity hold on to two world views.

Gilchrist avers that there are the dos and don'ts that a Christian must follow when approaching a Muslim in a dialogue. These principles can be adopted when dialoguing with people of other faith or within the Christian faith. Below are the dos and don'ts guidelines. Examples of wrong approaches and attitudes: There are many ways in which Christians damage their witness to Muslims of which three will be considered here. 1. The Spirit of Triumphalism 2. The inclination to demonise and misrepresent Islam 3. Negative and militant attitudes towards Muslims. Important principles in Christians' approach to Muslims. At a more practical level let us have a look at certain principles of witness we should endeavour to express while either witnessing to Muslims or engaging in argument with them: (i) fairness, patience and gentleness; (ii) avoid quarrelling and disputations; (iii) be serious about your faith; (iv) be biblical in your responses; and (v) use objections as an opportunity for witness.

Implication of the Research

Three perspectives with their implications have been considered below as extracted from the above discussions and findings in this research:

1. In a multi-religious milieu such as Cross River State, the challenge to true Christianity is now higher than when Christianity first came with the United Presbyterian of Scotland Mission in 1848, especially with the recent presence of other religions and fraternal groups. Therefore, Christianity must be truly biblical in its teachings to be able to be focussed on the mission of presenting the contents of the true Christian faith. The tenet of true Christianity should include the following:

- a. Anchoring its teachings on the Old and New Testaments Scriptures; believe and worship only God the Father as the Source and Sustainers of creation, the Son - Jesus Christ as the only Saviour - solution to sin problem through his atoning and vicarious death, and Mediator between God and created human beings; and the Holy Spirit as the Actualizer of the work of salvation in the hearts of human beings.
- b. Patterning its messages after the footsteps of the early Apostles', which centres on the Jesus Christ and the grace he provided to humanity for salvation and a holy living; and

hope of the promise of Jesus Christ coming again to end sin and suffering.

- c. Teaching adherent not to exalt human beings or leaders as God, in spite of their spiritual positions.
- d. Being self-less, sacrificial, and caring for the suffering, the wounded, and the hungry. It is winsome, and inclusive.

2. Christians must dialogue with other religious groups on fundamental issues concerning salvation, life issues, health, and the hereafter. The implication is that, the Christian Church has carried out little or no religious dialogue with other religious bodies in the communities; this shortfall has limited the knowledge of other religions about Christianity, making them to equate it with other sectarian groups. Dialogue that is “[i]nterreligious and interfaith ... can play a role of catalysts and a future trend in cultural diplomacy” (Biljana Popovska et al). There will be the need for Muslim-Christian dialogue and Christianity with African Traditional Religion and other religious traditions. According to Cardinal Tauran, quoted by Archbishop John Onaiyekan, “genuine inter-religious relations are not between institutions, but between people.” In other words, dialogue is between adherent to the Christian, Muslim, African Traditional Religion, and other religious affiliations. For Muslim-Christian dialogue to succeed in Nigeria, let alone in Cross River State, people of these religions must accept. Despite the yet unresolved challenges of some recent moves by some politicians to introduce the Sharia in some states of the Federation, [that] every Nigerian is equal before the law, and all religious groups have equal rights. In a situation where both Christians and Muslims take their respective faiths very seriously, this is the only way for us to continue to live in peace and harmony (Oasis).

Charles A. Kimball indicates five models in the study of dialogue between Muslims and Christians: Parliamentary, Institutional, Theological, Community, and Spiritual models. Three out of these five forms are suitable in this case study: (i) Theological dialogue” - here “discussion of the meaning of one religious values and public education ... designed to encourage common action” takes place. (ii) Community dialogue” - this one focuses on “proper relationship between religion and the state, the rights of religious minorities, issues arising from interreligious marriage, appropriate approach to mission and witness, and religious values and public education

... to encourage common action.” (iii) Spiritual dialogue” - considers “developing, nourishing, and deepening spiritual life through interfaith encounter.” Activities such as observing the worship of others or sharing perspectives on the meaning of fasting or prayer should be emplaced. A more ambitious initiative might include participation in joint worship experiences.” Currently in Nigeria, there is a high-powered body called “The Nigerian Inter-religious Council” (NIREC), made up of 25 leaders each from the Christian and the Muslim faiths. Archbishop Onaiyekan in his report on the work of the NIREC, said:

This Council of Fifty has done a lot, not only to diffuse many instances of potential conflict, but above all to promote working together for peace and justice in our land. While acknowledging our dogmatic differences, we have identified many common values and convictions around which we can rally ourselves for common action. Furthermore, we share common concern for the challenges that afflict all Nigerians, irrespective of faith: e.g. poverty, disease, especially Malaria and HIV/AIDS, bad government and corruption in high places. We recently set up a Foundation to facilitate our interfaith participation in the fight against Malaria, in collaboration with government and international agencies. This opens up wide prospects for the future.

These steps taken by the NIREC at the national level should be followed at the state levels. Dialogue between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) is sometimes considered an easy task because some Christians feel that the conversion of a follower of African Traditional Religion is an easy task. Comboni Missionary Sisters avers that “[s]uch conversion does not always take place. Those who convert to Christianity still need what Cardinal Arinze has called “pastoral attention” to help them become integrated both externally and internally in the new religion.” For a total conversion of both followers and converts from African Traditional Religion to take place two forms of dialogue have been suggested, namely: dialogue ad extra, and dialogue as intra. Knitter in Comboni Missionary sister defines dialogue extra as “the interaction of mutual presence ...speaking and listening...witnessing the commitments, the values, and the rituals of others.” It involves, “witnessing to our deepest convictions and listening to those of our neighbours.”

Dialogue intra is an internal. It presents an example a convert from African traditional Religion having two world views - one world view is base on African Tradition and the other world view is on his new faith -Christianity. Being a Christian he turns to Christianity for a solution and when the solution to problem is not forthcoming he goes back to African traditional Religion. He returns back to Christianity when his problems are solved. Dialogue intra is said to be non-verbal, and its purpose is described by Bolaji Idowu in Comboni Missionary Sister, as that whose aim is “to integrate the two world views so as to give the African Christian an integrated religious personality.” Pope John Paul in Comboni Missionary Sisters With reference to prescribe approach for witnessing to followers of African Traditional Religion, enjoined that Christian witnesses that, “[t]he adherents of African traditional Religion should be treated with great respect and esteem, and all inaccurate and disrespectful language should be avoided.”

Toluwalase Ajayi conclude that “[t]he type of Christianity needed in African today among other things is one that answers the real fears and needs of the African people, one that integrates their good cultural values with Christians one, one that answers or attempts to answer the questions raised by the people’s historical and cultural situation” (p. 19). For dialogue among religions to be an experience there will be a need to study these world religions, gather all interested religions in this initiative, and invite those who should participate. It will involve agreement and how to run the initiative. It requires organizing and acceptance as a possibility. Dialogue with other religions will provide an enabling environment for friendship fora with leaders and members of these religious and fraternal groups to reconsider their belief systems. The other possible methods should include: (i) being open to fellowship freely with members of other religions; (ii) avoidance of criticism in the presentation of the Gospel messages by adopting caring attitude aimed at meeting the hearers’ needs, and encouraging confidence and friendliness.

3. Practical perspectives of the Gospel should be exhibited. When physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the people witnessed to are met, irrespective of religion or fraternity, there is bound to be expression of true love in a community or state. The implication is that, the Christian Church has not yet successfully adopted indoctrination and impacting paradigm, such as the opening of

schools and making them affordable for every young person, irrespective of religious affiliations, to have access to attend, and in these schools the Christian faith is taught.

- a. Christianity is an organized religion. Members of the Church in Cross River State should be proactive in planning to reach out to the vulnerable of the society with gifts and donations.
- b. Motherless baby's homes should be built in strategic places in the state with educational facilities made available for the training of children.
- c. Educational facilities should be provided available outside those made for motherless infants. Christian sponsor should be connected for funding. They should have accountability in the running of all the facilities.
- d. Scholarships should be given to qualified children without any discrimination of any sort.

There should also be the opening of centres of influence, such as mobility facilities, clinics, food/groceries, community services, youth programmes, gymnastics, games, et cetera, where serious lifesaving and life-changing impacts are made on communities' socio-cultural views. These are specialized perspectives of the gospel ministry, which require trained workers to adopt them. Until the people of Cross River State are made to see clearly, and deeply feel the essence of the way of life/lifestyle espoused and taught by the Christian Church, conversion from other religions and fraternal groups will still be infinitesimal and slow.

- a. There are many channels that are opening wedges for soul winning. There are those that can be reached with the gospel through sporting activities. The running of these activities can be organized to begin and end with religious programmes such as Bible reading, prayers, take-home assignments, et cetera. Clubs can be religiously organized to share love and aids to the less privileged in the society. Talents can be located through sporting activities organized by the church. Through these medium souls could be touched for Christ. However, those that lead in all these are to be trained with one goal of soul winning.

- b. Business centres could be opened for people or to engage people of other religious affiliations. Love attracts when it is identified. People will leave their hates for whatever, if they find genuine love there.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study is based on contextualization paradigm in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, a panacea for multi-religious barriers to evangelization of the Christian faith in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study has presented a brief survey of selected religious groups and other factors that hamper and challenge the growth of true Christianity. The environment, Africa vis-à-vis Cross River State, have been found to be comparable to Corinth and any other place, where contextualization of Christianity can be applied as a panacea to ameliorate the low evangelistic impact and conversion rate to Christianity in order to fulfil the mandate of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. The study stresses that Christianity must be inclusive and go into dialogue with other religions to be able to win the confidence of other religious adherents. It is pertinent, therefore, to recommend the contextualization paradigm in this study as an approach for presenting the Gospel in a multi-religious environment such as Cross River State.

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