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# *Gravissimum Educationis* and African Anthropological Poverty

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## INTRODUCTION

The social and cultural history of Africa was impacted by a number of external factors and events so deeply people are still feeling their effect across the world. The four centuries slave trade –trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic, colonialism and the formation of modern nation-state in Africa, the new religions of Christianity and Islam as well as globalization especially economic globalization’s integration of African economy to the world economy changed the structure of traditional African societies. Literatures such as Chinua Achebe’s trilogy: *Things Fall Apart*,<sup>1</sup> *The Arrow of God*<sup>2</sup> and *No Longer At Ease*,<sup>3</sup> and historical books such as Basil Davidson’s *African Genius*<sup>4</sup> and *Black Man’s Burden*,<sup>5</sup> narrate stories detailing the intersection of these events and factors towards social transformation for good or ill of Africa. Political and economic factors contributed to the integration of African economy to the global economy with attendant consequences positively and negatively on Africa. These phenomena as a whole influence African self-image as well as the perception of other people about them.

One of the least researched areas in post-colonial Africa is the psychological effect of slave trade and colonialism on Africa's self-image.<sup>6</sup> Because they were conquered and overwhelmed by the might of the European military, Africans suffer what the Cameroonian theologian Engelbert Mveng calls "anthropological poverty." This means indigence in being, a condition by which a people are robbed of their ways of living and existing, a situation whereby persons are bereft of their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, faith history, and made to live unauthentically. Decades after colonialism, Africans need to be freed from the timidity of wanting to be like other people and of playing the second fiddle in the scheme of things. In order to accomplish this, a reorientation of African mind made possible by authentic education that promotes human dignity is not only important but also urgent and necessary. Since a significant number of Africans have become Christian, and have received Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1958)

<sup>2</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Chinua Achebe, *No Longer At Ease* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Basil Davidson, *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Social and Cultural History* (Boston, Toronto, and London: Little, Brown and Company, 1969)

<sup>5</sup> Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, Random House Inc., 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Ngugi wa Thiongo, "Learning from Slavery: The Legacy of Slave Trade on Modern Society *UN Chronicle* 46 (2009), 6-7.

education in many and in various ways, I will argue that the Vatican Council II's declaration on Christian education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, emphasis on right education attuned to a more mature sense of responsibility toward ennoblement of lives and aimed at pursuing authentic freedom, has the potential of contributing to the re-education of Africans. Aware of the contemporary challenges of Catholic intellectual tradition in pluralistic societies and cognizant of the advances of Christian education in Africa, this paper suggests ways of implementing the riches as well as enriching *Gravissimum Educationis* towards overcoming Africa's anthropological poverty. The first part of the paper using Achebe's trilogy and Davidson's books situates African social and cultural history. The second part examines anthropological poverty as the impact of these factors on African psyche and African educational system. The third part introduces *Gravissimum Educationis* and its potentials for healing African anthropological poverty.

#### AFRICA'S SOCIAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

Basil Davidson's *African Genius* offers a rare glimpse into the social and cultural history of pre-colonial Africa. Davidson's historical anthropological account laced with examples from different African cultures, showcase the wisdom of Africa's traditional societal structure. Africa's world is one of creative adaptation to the harsh environment surrounded by such physical problems as encroaching deserts, and some diseases most people of other cultures will find difficult to handle. The formative origins of Africa's ancestors is the cradle of human civilization since Africa is the immediate birthplace of *homo sapiens* and therefore is the center of Stone Age world. African traditional religions have notions of the Supreme Being, which formed the centerpiece of African unity, community and moral order. African religious beliefs also are mechanism of social control and contains within them metaphysical principles dealing with the reality of and freedom from evil often resulting from sorcery, witches and wizard and natural calamities.

Various rites of initiation integrate the young and adult into community life and values creating sense of identity that links the living and the dead members of the family and community. Creative use of and respect for the land not only improves agriculture but also balances the ecosystem, as Africans know survival depends on respect for the environment. The dynamic political structure based on kinship relations (either egalitarian or organized under central authority) as well as harmony with nature and communal ethos guarantees individual rights within the confines of the common good of the community. This guards against abuse of power through checks and balances morally weaved into the system. It checks greed,

instills self-confidence, self-satisfaction and sense of national pride that brings about stability in the social order. Whether led by gerontocracy (council of elders) or aristocratic, most political set up are democratic allowing members of the community to participate in decision making process. Trade and commerce evolved from within communities to long distance trading with specialists emerging in various skills, merchandise and medicine. Education consists of adaptive skills impacted during initiation rites, communal relationship and respect gained from informal parental upbringing, open and bold sexual mores and purity learnt as members of age grades.

In no way is Davidson telling the story of unchanging societies. On the contrary, African village communities morphed into kingdoms and some into reputable empires like the Kanem-Bornu in North Eastern Nigeria and the Asante Empire of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, etc., in various ways almost the same time as the early Anglo-Saxon and Frankish kings and kingdoms. At times institutional changes like the rise of Asante Empire are made possible by other events like the Arab conquest of North Africa in seventh and eight centuries that boost trade and further migration of peoples. There developed in some of these places kingdoms that evolved institutionally plural societies made up of diverse lineage groups. Kings wield spiritual as well as political authorities charged with the spiritual welfare, security and protection of lives and property as well as guarantor of peace and justice in their domains. Davidson is meticulous in comparing this process with the founding of kingdoms in Anglo-Saxon and Frankish kingdoms in order to show the similarity with African kingdoms: "If Anglo-Saxon England accepted conquest by four thousand Norman knights, it was less for their military strength than for their careful accommodation with the Anglo-Saxon socio-moral order. African conquerors behaved no differently in the kingdoms they took or founded."<sup>7</sup>

External factors like long distant trade across the Sahara and the Atlantic, not only consolidated the emerging kingdoms and empires, it brought along Islam and matured in the process becoming global with Egypt as the center of trade that brought European inland to Africa. These brought about commercial, political and religious change in Africa. Even though huge and resulting to the increased wealth of trading cities of Western Sudan, the Western Sahara and the Maghrib, Songhai, etc., the changes at this stage were

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<sup>7</sup> Davidson, *The African Genius*, 194.

not as dramatic as the second wave of change on account of the arrival of the Europeans, annexation and subsequent colonization.

The brutality of the wars of conquest of various African kingdoms and empires by various European armies and companies, the killings and rape, the forced labor and heavy taxations were met with resistance both directly in the battlefield and indirectly through various peace treaties. At the end of the day even in the face of stubborn resistance, African communities, kingdoms and empires were conquered. This set back many progressive empires like the Ashanti a millennium behind. In their wake, colonization left behind terrible fear of the Europeans and their guns. Africans became timid and even envious of the political clout of their European occupiers. Because the structures of the colonial government was meant to benefit the colonialists and not the people, post-colonial institutions of governments were set up to benefit the few elites and their praise singers. For this reason, Davidson argues, liberation after independence from colonialism was not true liberation; it ultimately led to alienation of the people from the state.<sup>8</sup> And so, just like the oppressed in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, many African nationalists and leaders desired to be like the colonial masters lording their authority over their own massively alienated peoples for their self-aggrandizement.<sup>9</sup>

But before we begin any blame game, it is important to mention how Western imperialism left Africa very little room for maneuver to adjust to problems raised by external challenges especially the challenges of European imperialism. From the trade in raw materials at the coast, to the one in the interior of Africa, its replacement with slave trade and subsequent colonialism has left the relationship between Africans and the Europeans in a master-slave relationship. In the words of Basil Davidson, in the entire process, Africans had "in fact no sufficient chance for adjustment."<sup>10</sup> Africans were completely dispossessed of their natural and human resources, their history, their social-political organization, their economic policies, their rites and rituals, their land tenure system, their meaning making process, their reality by "Western enclosure (colonization) and dispossession (territorial expansion and expropriation)."<sup>11</sup> Thus Africans were alienated from themselves, their traditions and cultures, patrimonial political

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<sup>8</sup> Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, London: Continuum, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Davidson, *The Blackman's Burden*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 66.

institutions, social order, progress and development. It will cast a long dark shadow on Africa's self-identity.

Chinua Achebe's masterpiece novel, *Things Fall Apart* captures concretely Africa's social and cultural history using an African people, the Igbo, of southeastern Nigeria, known for their egalitarian democratic republican spirit, thus, validating Davidson's massive historical account. Precolonial African culture exemplified in the village life of Umuofia comprehensively in clear-cut democratic setting offers members of the community opportunities for self-fulfillment. Even though his father was poor, Okonkwo's hard work and wealth earned him respect and a place among the elders. This community incurably but critically religious is guided by justice and fair play and practiced just war theory second to none. "And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle – the Oracle of Hills and Caves."<sup>12</sup> Agriculture and trade was the mainstay of its economy. Thus it rewards industry and success. Its social life, with acute regard for sacredness of life, sense of community and hospitality, makes promotion of the common good second nature in such a way that the poor are not abandoned to their fate.

Things fell apart in this fairly homogenous community on account of contact with white people (European colonialists and Christian missionaries). Not only did the Europeans disparage African culture and sought to substitute it with Eurocentric values and religions, they created such endemic fear in people through their more advanced military might. In the end, Okonkwo died alone shamefully by committing suicide, fighting a lost battle against imperialistic forces and strange religion. Initially, Christianity was abhorred as betrayal of African ancestral tradition. "To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination,"<sup>13</sup> Okonkwo piqued about his son Nwoye who joined the new Christian religion in Mbanta, his land of exile. Herein is contained instance of the clash of cultures on account of the lack of interface between Christianity and the traditional religions of Africa. The masquerades protesting the desecration perpetuated by the over exuberant fundamentalist convert to Christianity, Enoch, rejected the suggestion to leave the matter to the jurisdiction of the missionary, Mr. Smith:

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<sup>12</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 12

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

We cannot leave the matter in his hands because he does not understand our customs, just as we do not understand his. We say he is foolish because he does not know our ways, and perhaps he says we are foolish because we do not know his. Let him go away.<sup>14</sup>

Hopefully, holistic inculturation of Christian faith into African cultures in mutual self-mediation akin to interculturalism will enrich both religions. Until then, “the little church was at that moment too deeply absorbed in its own troubles to annoy the clan. It all began over the question of admitting outcasts.”<sup>15</sup>

Other challenges of Christianity to culture include disparagement of African cultures and religions as heathen, manifested in destruction of their sacred value structures like taboos, burning of shrines and sacred spaces, promotion of ethos different from the communal value system in marriage and family, social order and stratification, politics and economy, rule of law and judiciary. “An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter’s dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan,” laments one of the oldest members of the *umunna* in Mbanta who rose to thank Okonkwo (in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*).<sup>16</sup> The once closely-knit communities were divided between adherents of the new religion and those who persisted in the religion of their ancestors. Things have fallen apart, the center can no longer hold. And the situation is dicey:

‘It is already too late,’ said Obierika sadly. ‘Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government. If we should try to drive out the white men in Umuofia we should find it easy. There are only two of them. But what of our own people who are following their way and have been given power? They would go to Umuru and bring the soldiers, and we would be like Abame.’<sup>17</sup>

Just like the staunch resistance against wars of annexation and deceitful treaties of protection, put up by such empires like the Ashanti, Kanem-Bornu, Mali, etc., many other communities were left with little option than acquiesce to the European imperialism in much of Africa. The psychological impact of such too swift and dramatic changes in homogenous societies of Africa is enormous. The transvaluation of values positively and negatively affects Africans’ self-worth. It equally affects the overall attitude of members of international community towards Africa. Primarily, it gives rise to two opposed but linked principles of change, the dual inferiority and superiority complex competing for supremacy in the minds of Africans and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 147

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 157-158

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 165.

the rest of humanity towards Africa. Often most Africans succumb to inferiority complex and more often than not, most people feel more knowledgeable than Africans and the black race as a whole.

#### ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY

Ordinarily African poverty is interpreted materially from the perspective of underdevelopment, of not measuring up to the development project, of living in the conjured figure of less than \$2 a day, that is, of having such low Gross Domestic Product that its people are considered destitute materially. Consequently, Africa needs help. In an expression of how European Christians misunderstand African Christianity, Rick de Gendt asserts: "Africa is dying."<sup>18</sup> Africa is often thought of as a land of darkness characterized by "poverty, famine, wars, sickness, endemic underdevelopment, illiteracy and so on."<sup>19</sup> Understood this way, African history and culture is distorted to the advantage of imperialistic political hegemony of dominating foreign powers. African ancient civilizations are wiped out. African peoples become the creation of development, of modernizationist neoclassical economic paradigm. African progress is measured from the perspective of free trade, of the inflow and outflow of foreign capitals, of per capita income per head.

Engelbert Mveng, the Cameroonian theologian provides alternative paradigm for considering African poverty quite different from mere material perspective above. African poverty is not material but anthropological, attitudinal, internally ingrained, psychological, resulting from the rash, and forceful, domineering, and imperialistic imposition of the occupying powers that pauperizes African self-image. For instance, Africans were intimidated, denied their self-identity; forced to belong to different countries by arbitrary border demarcations which has solidified and has remained almost unchangeable. At times this breeds border disputes, results to porous borders, which in turn threaten security in most African countries. Thus Africa exists in the world constructed by the European imagination for whom the black man symbolizes evil and therefore has to be displaced.<sup>20</sup> As aptly articulated by Bill Ashcroft:

Colonization robbed African countries of their 'place-ness' replacing or overlaying the 'life-place' of a people with 'colonized space.' ... Perhaps no continent has been fragmented more clearly by colonial

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<sup>18</sup> Rick de Gendt, "African Christianity in European Public Opinion," in *Towards the African Synod*, Giuseppe Alberigo and Alphonse Ngindu Mushete, ed. *Concilium* 1992/1 (London: SCM Press, 1992), 105

<sup>19</sup> Rose Zoe-Obianga, "When Will the Church in Africa Become African?" in *Towards the African Synod*, Giuseppe Alberigo and Alphonse Ngindu Mushete, ed. *Concilium* 1992/1, 88.

<sup>20</sup> See, Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Pilcox (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

boundaries than Africa. Newly independent post-colonial states simply occupied spaces which had been negotiated between colonial powers during European expansion, and thus have no more cultural and communal logic than they had as colonies. Indigenous communities are divided, renamed and reconstituted, caught within geographical areas which have no relation to their social makeup, traditions, or needs. Where state boundaries have caught through the territories of ethnic groups, these boundaries have remained, institutionalizing ethnic tension and communal violence.<sup>21</sup>

The level of disorientation occasioned by the pauperization of Africans accounts for Mveng's 'anthropological poverty.' African poverty runs deeper than lacking one form of material good or another. It permeates the innermost fabric of their being remotely controlling their thoughts and actions. According to Mveng:

When persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions (that is, when they are robbed of their own ways of living and existing) – they sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or interior goods or possessions but strikes at the very being, essence, and dignity of the human person. It is this poverty that we call anthropological poverty. This is an *indigence of being*, the legacy of centuries of slavery and colonization. It has long banished us Africans from world history and the world map.... Meanwhile our indigence of being fuels the industries of misery while they forge the chains of our new enslavement. And the chains grow heavier by the day.<sup>22</sup>

African material poverty cannot therefore be separated from African anthropological poverty. In fact, African material poverty is a result of African anthropological poverty. Centuries of slavery demean African identity and objectify them as objects, articles of trade, perpetually meant to serve or be put in their place. Every black man bears this burden. It wounds and feeds the superiority consciousness underlying European and North American mythic consciousness. It perpetuates servitude and inequality and advances the blame game against blacks as lazy and less intelligent and therefore, as naturally inferior to Europeans. At the same time, while it depletes and robs Africans of potent forces for their advancement at a time in history when the rest of the world was developing, African slave labor was churning wealth to the owners in the 'developed' world.<sup>23</sup> For Walter Rodney, the loss of millions of able-bodied African men and women is actually the cause of Africa's underdevelopment.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Piketty's economic analysis of chattel slavery is revealing:

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<sup>21</sup> Bill Ashcroft, "The Boundaries of the State: Africa and Modernity," in *African Identities: Contemporary Political and Social Challenges*, Pal Ahluwalia and Abebe Zegeye, ed. (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Engelbert Mveng, "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World," in *Paths of African Theology*, Rosino Gibellini, ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 156.

<sup>23</sup> According to Laura Murphy, "Conservative estimates established by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database determine that between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, nearly twelve million African people were held as cargo on ships destined for the Americas and slavery." Laura Murphy, "The Curse of Constant Remembrance: The Belated Trauma of the Slave Trade in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fragments," *Studies in the Novel* 40 1/2 (2008): 52. Basil Davidson's estimate is even bigger – about twenty one million spread over a long period. Cf. Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1961, 1980), 271.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974), 113.

What one finds is that the total market value of slaves represented nearly a year and a half of US national income in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, which is roughly equal to the total value of farmland. If we include slaves along with other components of wealth, we find that total American wealth has remained relatively stable from the colonial era to the present, at around four and a half years of national income.<sup>25</sup>

Because those who inherited wealth and managed it well have more advantage over those who had to start from scratch, one is not wrong to argue that the wealth of the ‘developed’ world flows from the sweat of African black ancestors sold into slavery. Africa gained nothing in return for the export of slaves. The means of exchange being non-productive could not advance the type of capital accumulation that would have advanced African economy.

Furthermore, in addition to the immediate impact on African societies, the traumatic effect on African societies, cultures and institutions, economic, demographic, political, and social order continues well into the twenty-first century. The long-term effects of trauma is intergenerational. The wound of the mind according to psychoanalysts from Freud to the present is unlike the wound of the body, which heals quickly. Instead as experts in post-traumatic stress disorder attests, psychic wound distorts the mind repeatedly affecting the life of the individuals who experienced it and that of their community and subsequent generations.<sup>26</sup> Basil Davidson acknowledged the pivotal nature of the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on African experience and history economically, politically, psychologically, socially, religiously, culturally, personally, and holistically on African personality.

What I have tried to do is to show, in the light of modern research and analysis, how the progress of Europe not only had no comparable development in Africa, but was indeed made possible only at the expense of any such progress in Africa. For it is in this story that one may come to understand why the ‘technological gap’ between their leading states and most advanced communities – widened across this period, across these slaving years, from a narrow difference to an abyss; and why colonial conquest could follow so swiftly, and, as it often seemed at the time, almost automatically; and why it became possible for Europeans to regard Africans as being ‘primitive,’ ‘without culture,’ and ‘incapable of achieving civilization on their own.’<sup>27</sup>

The impact on Africa, which continues up to the present time, is part of Mveng’s anthropological poverty. It is responsible for the vicious cycle of impoverishment in Africa accounting for “indigence of living” culminating “in an anthropological and political indigence.”<sup>28</sup> Because of the anthropological poverty sustained by political and economic hegemony of imperial political economy, Africans imbibe the consumerist culture and acquire taste for foreign goods and habits that perpetuates their dependence on

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 159.

<sup>26</sup> Cf., Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1961, 1980), 283-284

<sup>28</sup> Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 159.

foreign assistance and humanitarian aid. Their political institutions are corrupted being imposed in the first place and therefore lacking meaning and unable to evoke patriotic commitment. The indigence in being is total. Mveng's assertion still holds true of Africa:

The crisis in Africa, consequently, is that of states overwhelmed by debts, gagged, without money, without power, without sovereignty. It is that of empty banks, closed businesses, unemployed civil servants, white and blue-collar workers thrown out into the street. It is that of peasants in rags hauling their bags of cacao, their bags of coffee, their bags of cotton, looking for someone who will take them in exchange for a little gasoline for their storm lantern, a little soap and salt for their wives, until the next harvest! Finally, it is the despair of youth, on the university campuses, in high schools and boarding schools, right down to the elementary schools, accusing their parents, their directors, their leaders, all of their elders, shouting, brandishing placards with threatening slogans, under the anemic gaze of crowds as helpless as themselves. Such is the visible manifestation in Africa of the structures of sin.<sup>29</sup>

Anthropological poverty accounts for Africa's underdevelopment beyond mere material poverty and it pervades Africa destroying Africa's social, political, cultural, educational, economic and religious institutions.

#### THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

One of the major agents of social transformation in much of Africa is Christianity which in many ways has been a force for good socially by curbing such evil practices as killing of twins, and rescuing those thrown into the evil forest.<sup>30</sup> They also contribute to provision of quality healthcare, building hospitals, advocating for justice and equality, reconciling peoples and preaching peace and mutual coexistence in the light of the Gospel message of love. Most importantly, they are involved in education, building schools and other institutions of learning: primary, secondary and tertiary. In fact, from the very beginning, religion and education went hand in hand. In Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *No Longer At Ease*, the early Christians benefitted from western education, which gave them an edge in the new dispensation of post-colonial Africa as Mr. Brown, the Christian missionary, in *Things Fall Apart* had argued and prophesied urging the people to send their children to school because "the leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learnt to read and write."<sup>31</sup> Chimamanda Adichie testifies with reference to the Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria, the cultural context of Achebe's *Things Fall*

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 162-163

<sup>30</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 142, 146.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 171

*Apart*: “the missionaries brought schools to which many families sent their children, aware that a Western education would be central in the new colonial world.”<sup>32</sup>

Different church historians have tried to summarize the methods of evangelization adopted by the Holy Ghost Fathers in Eastern Nigeria. All are in agreement except that each gives them different names. For I.R.A Ozigbo, the missionaries adopted a four-point program: 1. The provision of medical services, 2. The redemption and rehabilitation of slaves, social outcasts and the helpless, 3. Education in literary and vocational training, 4. The deliberate play on the psychological and aesthetic susceptibilities of the evangelized.<sup>33</sup> Fred Nnabuife categorized the missionary methods within this period as the ‘Indirect’ and ‘Direct’ means of evangelization of the Spiritians in Africa. Among the indirect means of evangelization include: a. Charitable works, b. Economic activities, c. Schools, d. Medical services.<sup>34</sup> The missionary use of school as means of evangelization was a tremendous success in spite of the rivalry between the Catholic Church and Protestant Christianity. According to Ikenga Ozigbo, “it is almost impossible to give the number of mission primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. They run into many thousands.”<sup>35</sup>

The same could be said of other African countries.<sup>36</sup> Trisha Posey, Director of the Honors Scholars Program and Associate Professor of History at John Brown University in a review essay (2014) consequent upon a visit to a couple of Christian university in Africa asserts, “Christian higher education in Africa has experienced explosive growth in the past three decades. Forty-six Christian universities have been founded in Africa during this time, constituting over one quarter of all new Christian universities started around the world.”<sup>37</sup> Early Christian education was for the purpose of catechesis, especially to prevent Catholic youths from proselytization from Protestants. For this reason, Christian education was primarily in limited liberal arts: reading, writing and arithmetic. Colonial education (which often

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<sup>32</sup> Chimamanda Adichie, Introduction, to *Labyrinths* by Christopher Okigbo (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Educational Publishers, 2013), Kindle Edition. Education using foreign languages is often extolled with little consideration of its negative consequences on African anthropological poverty, especially in the thought that those Africans who speak the language hold the key to the future progress of the continent. Cf. Jim Harries, “The Contribution of the Use of English in Africa to Dependency in Mission and Development,” *Exchange* 41 (2012): 279-294.

<sup>33</sup> I.R.A. Ozigbo, *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931* (Onitsha: Etukokwu Publishers Nig. Ltd., 1988), 58.

<sup>34</sup> Fred Nnabuife, “The Church in Nigeria Today,” in *The Relevance of the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigerian Society* R.C. Onwuanibe, ed. (Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>35</sup> Ikenga R. Ozigbo, “An evaluation of Christian Pioneering Techniques with Particular Reference to Nigeria,” *The Nigerian Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1994): 50.

<sup>36</sup> Cf., Jill Olivier and Quentin Wodon, “Faith-Inspired Education in Ghana: A Historical Case Example,” *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 12.2 (2014): 27-37.

<sup>37</sup> Trisha Posey, “Crossing Boundaries: Christian Higher Education in Africa —A Review Essay,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 43.4 (2014): 394.

collaborated with Christian education) concentrated on education for the purpose of providing support staff for the colonial administration. The 1922 Phelps-Stokes Commission suggestion of vocational education for Africa was abandoned in the lead up to decolonization for the training of educated Africans for post-colonial independent Africa.<sup>38</sup> Various African countries have vacillated between government takeover of mission schools and return of such schools when they are run aground back to various Christian denominations.<sup>39</sup>

There is increased recognition of the importance of Christian education for social transformation of Africa. Unfortunately, the result has not been encouraging. Christian education has not been able to make significant difference in terms of morals, science, technology, agriculture, and sustainable development. According to Lois Semenye,

When we examine the Christian education that is offered in East Africa, it does not measure up to what has been described above. Many shortcomings are unearthed. Many Christians are not living a Christian lifestyle. If they were, we would not be experiencing many ills in this region. Some of these ills include killings, corruption, rape cases, massacre, genocide, tribalism, famine, poverty, political upheavals and the like.<sup>40</sup>

The challenges Semenye mentions above involve issues of African identity. They arise because of the unresolved crisis of African anthropological poverty, which make Africans turn on one another in the battle for the survival of the fittest.

Early Christian missionary involvement in education was influenced by the dialectic of Christian monogenism, Christian religious exceptionalism and subtle adoption of neo-Darwinist anthropological theories of racial differences. Christian missionaries were convinced African cultural religious institutions were heathen and therefore ought to be destroyed. Also, they espouse the Christian anthropological view of the equality of humanity as created in the image and likeness of God. At the same time as well, many of them were influenced by the classicist Eurocentric view of culture, which upholds the idea of one culture, the Western culture as the ideal culture. Because of this, most missionaries saw colonialism as the light at the end of the tunnel for the 'dark continent,' that is, as the divinely appointed instrument to bring

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<sup>38</sup> Hanns Vischer; Anson Phelps Stokes, *Phelps Stokes commission, Africa 1923-1925* (Great Britain: Colonial Office, National Archives 1923).

<sup>39</sup> Cf., Jacinta Chiamaka Nwaka, "The Catholic Church, The Nigerian Civil War, and The Beginning of Organized Lay Apostolate Groups Among The Igbos Of Southeastern Nigeria," *Catholic Historical Review* 99.1, (2013): 78-95; Evanson N. Wamagatta, "Changes of Government Policies Towards Mission Education in Colonial Kenya and Their Effects on the Missions: The Case of the Gospel Missionary Society," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 38 (2008): 3-26.

<sup>40</sup> Lois Semenye, "Trends in Christian Education in East Africa," *Christian Education Journal* 3.10 (2013): 74. Bosede, Foluke, OLA came to similar conclusions with regard to Christian education in West Africa. Cf. "Trends in Christian Education in Anglophone West Africa: Nigeria," *Christian Education Journal* 3.10 (2013): 63.

civilization to Africans.<sup>41</sup> In the midst of this, Christian missionary activity in Africa also took place within the modernist evolutionary view influenced by Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Neo-Darwinist theories of racial difference, which placed Africa as inferior race lower than the Europeans subtly, influenced Christian missionary encounter with Africans.<sup>42</sup>

Scores of literatures bear witness to the Christian missionaries' and colonial attitudes' on education in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. M.J. Ashley's article on missionaries and education in South Africa exposes the conglomeration of these attitudes to Christian social evolutionism in the resolve of the missionaries to educate Africans according to their mental capacity on account of their race:

Darwinist type thought led to inevitable attributing to Africans certain mental and character traits which were group-based and relevant to the appropriate stage of development they were seen to have attained. It was common to think of Africans as children, needing time to grow up. "The Caffres must be treated like children ... children in knowledge, ignorant of the relationships of civilized society ..."<sup>43</sup>

Little wonder Christian education involved removing people from their traditional cultural, economic and political institutions towards the creation of Christian culture along the line of modernity - the Western culture. Some missionaries actually set up Christian villages as strategy of evangelization to separate Christian converts from the corruption of their pagan cultures.<sup>44</sup> Formal education was to become very crucial to societal transformation towards 'civilization' – adoption of alien cultural, religious, political, economic, social, educational value system considered modern. Ashley's description of South Africa equally applies to virtually all African countries. According to James Amanze, the impact on African cultures were devastating leading to revolts and occasional disorientation:

The attitude of the Christian missionaries in Africa towards African culture was practically the same everywhere and among missionaries of different denominations namely, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Methodists, Lutherans, Moravians and others. Christian missionaries advocated complete eradication of African culture. African converts were told not to venerate their ancestral spirits, engage themselves in rain-calling ceremonies in times of drought, offer libations to God through the ancestors, use traditional medicines, observe agricultural rituals, participate in initiation ceremonies and other cultural practices. They were asked to break with the past and embrace European or American culture wholesale. Failure to abide by the new rules quite often resulted in church discipline in the form of

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<sup>41</sup> See Denis Linehan's criticism of Irish image of Africa as expressed in their trafficking in images that paint Africa as needing salvation from the darkness occasioned by paganism. Cf. Denis Linehan, "Irish Empire: Assembling the Geographical Imagination of Irish Missionaries in Africa," *Cultural Geographies* 21.3 (2014): 429–447.

<sup>42</sup> John M. Cinnamon links missionary activities to slavery, colonialism and argues this partly accounts for the type of education in early missionary schools in Africa. Cf., John M. Cinnamon, "Missionaries, Enslavement and Antislavery," *Social Sciences and Missions* 26 (2013), 3-8.

<sup>43</sup> Michael J. Ashley, "Features of Modernity: Missionaries and Education in South Africa, 1850-1900," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 38 (1982): 49-58.

<sup>44</sup> Clarke P.B., "The Methods and Ideology of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1905," in *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, O. K. Kalu, ed. (London: The Longman Group Limited, 1980), 36.

suspension or excommunication. This negative approach to African culture alienated many African people. Many African traditionalists resisted embracing Christianity while others broke away from the mainline churches and formed their own churches which have come to be known as African Independent Churches. In such churches people believe and practice their Christianity in African ways.<sup>45</sup>

In some instances, Christian education intensified racial tensions resulting to subsequent violence and at times in places like Rwanda to genocide. Peter Celestine Safari for one, demonstrates how the Catholic Church's misinterpretation of race in Rwanda laid the foundation that fueled the Rwandan genocide. According to Safari, the Catholic Church got caught up in the ethnocentric and regional divisions in Rwanda culminating in divisions between the Hutu and Tutsi clergy and religious men and women. This entanglement is traced to the Church's involvement in religion and politics in Rwanda. In sum, the church bought into the German and Belgium (Rwanda's colonial overlords) distortion of Rwanda's political religious myth with a Hamitic theory that brought about conflict and hatred among formerly mutually co-existing tribes in Rwanda: Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. This resulted in the first violent ethnic tensions of 1959 resulting to the killing of thousands of Tutsi. Safari's vivid description attributes the genocide to the Catholic Church's misinterpretation of Rwandan kingdom and backing of the Hutu cry against marginalization under the guise of social justice.

Ethnic tensions, which had been especially building among local clergy and educated Hutu and Tutsi in secular institutions, finally resulted in a political crisis of 1959 in which the Hutu, supported by the colonial government and the Catholic Church, abolished the Tutsi monarchy. The King (Kigeri Ndahindurwa) was deposed and thousands of ordinary Tutsi were killed, while many more took exile in neighbouring countries. Tutsi homes were set ablaze and mission stations were turned into sanctuaries for the surviving Tutsi. The power structure changed and Rwanda entered independence in 1962 with an all-Hutu government.<sup>46</sup>

The subsequent accusations and counter accusations against the Catholic Church by the new Hutu regime was because the church hierarchy remained Tutsi. A whole lot of complex factors precipitated into so much hate and blame game during and in the aftermath of the genocide. Safari's position is that misinterpretation of Rwanda's traditional religio-cultural and political institutions based on distorted anthropology and race relations is to blame for the genocide and is responsible for the massacre of many Tutsi's in churches where they had run for safety even with members of clergy and religious complicit in the genocide. Of importance to our subject matter is that slave trade and colonization brought about serious issues of identity for Africans leading to indigence of being. At the end of the day, as in Rwanda, and in other places, it gave rise violence, wars, and in some cases, genocide.

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<sup>45</sup> James Nathaniel Amanze, "Paradigm Shift in Theological Education in Southern and Central Africa and its Relevance to Ministerial Formation," *International Review of Missions* 98.1 (2009), 124.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Celestine Safari, "Church, State and the Rwandan Genocide," *Political Theology* 11.6 (2010): 877-878.

## GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

One of the most significant changes of Vatican II was the shift of the church outwards towards society away from its inward attitude of church against society.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, the goal of the opening of the windows of the church was to foster closer collaboration with other Christians rather than combating the hegemony of Protestantism.<sup>48</sup> The church aimed at evangelization in the modern world, figuring out ways of spreading the Good News in the secular world. In the light of the historical consciousness, which recognizes the importance of context in the appropriation as well as expression of Scriptural truth, Vatican Council II's attitude to education became one of empowering the poor, opening Catholic education to non-Catholics and non-Christians as well, that humanity as a whole might bear witness to the Good News.<sup>49</sup>

The focus of evangelization in Vatican II became instruction on faith and morals towards holistic education. The Decree on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) acknowledges the changes brought about by modernity and accordingly shifts its concern with an all-round education of young people and adults, i.e., "with the whole of man's life, even the earthly part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling."<sup>50</sup> In addition to helping them grow in the knowledge of the mystery of salvation as well as enhance communal spirituality through worship, Christian education enables Christians participate in the "Christian formation of the world by which natural values, viewed in the full perspective of humanity as redeemed by Christ, may contribute to the good of society as a whole."<sup>51</sup>

In this short declaration on Christian Education, the Council Fathers reiterates the role of parents as the primary educators of their children supported by civil society, the state and the church. Of particular importance to our subject matter, African anthropological poverty, is the recognition of religious and cultural plurality of modern society and the declaration that Christian education be done from the perspective of the cultural ambient of each people.

Since every man of whatever race, condition, and age is endowed with the dignity of a person, he has an inalienable right to an education corresponding to his proper destiny and suited to his native talents, his sex,

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<sup>47</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed, *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America, 1966), n. 4, 11, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3; *Lumen Gentium* 15.

<sup>49</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Address on the occasion of the solemn opening of the Most Holy Council (October 11, 1962)" [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_spe\\_19621011\\_opening-council.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html) accessed December 13, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Declaration on Christian Education, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, ed. (New York: The American Press, 1966), 638.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 2

his cultural background, and his ancestral heritage. At the same time, this education should pave the way to brotherly association with other peoples, so that genuine unity and peace on earth may be promoted. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which, as a man, he is a member, and in whose responsibilities, as an adult, he will share.<sup>52</sup>

Even though the declaration did not go further to expatiate on this, its acknowledgement of other cultures besides the Western culture is very much in tune with Vatican II's shift from classicist culture to modern notion of culture characterized by recognition of plurality of cultures.<sup>53</sup> It calls on Catholics to look for the seeds of the gospel in all cultures and recognized the mutual self-mediation possible between faith and cultures.<sup>54</sup> This continues the integral humanism that marked the shift from deductive to an inductive approach in the Catholic social teaching tradition. With Vatican II, holistic human development became part and parcel of evangelization. Christian anthropology in this humanistic approach saved the church from its dualistic approach to evangelization and set it in the path where defense of justice became its central moral concern. The 1971 Synod of Bishops carried this further in its statement that action on behalf of justice is a 'constitutive dimension' of evangelization. One can also read into *Gravissimum Educationis* a recognition by the Council fathers, of the failure of pre-Vatican II Christian education built on the imperial idea of the mission of the church (Christendom) as handing on of culture to people like Africans who were presumed to have had none. Thus the declaration's emphasis on holistic education that helps Christians "take an increasingly active part in the life of society, especially in economic and political matters."<sup>55</sup> It hoped through promotion of justice to reach people of other religions. Hence, the declaration on Christian Education clearly affirmed the need for Catholic schools to offer their educational services to "the poor or those who are deprived."

Acknowledgment and adoption of modern notion of culture enables the Vatican Council II to open Catholicism to other world religions, recognize the possibility of salvation in our separated brethren and people of other religious faiths.<sup>56</sup> Thus instead of antagonism and demonizing others, it calls for dialogue and mutual coexistence. This equally involves change in catechesis and principles of Christian education in

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., n. 1, p. 639

<sup>53</sup> Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, (New York: Guild Press, 1966). *Gaudium et Spes* n.52-62 is devoted to culture as well as its relationship to the faith, revelation, and the Gospel.

<sup>54</sup> Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church [*Ad Gentes*] 8, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott, S.J., ed. 594-595.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 637-638

<sup>56</sup> "The Declaration on the Relationship of the Catholic Church to Other Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), n. 2" in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott, S.J., ed., 661-663.

much more accommodating way than in the enclosed pre-Vatican II church. Interfaith education was not seen as giving rise to syncretism and the loss of Catholic identity. One therefore does not need to be culturally European in order to become Christian. As Paul VI declared during his first visit to Africa: “In this sense you may and you must have an African Christianity”<sup>57</sup> In other words, African cultures are veritable sources of continuous education for African peoples.

#### TOWARDS THE HEALING OF AFRICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL POVERTY

Fifty years after the declaration on Christian Education it is clear a lot has changed in the method of Christian education in Africa. Christian education benefits Christians and non-Christians, as enrolment is not limited to baptized Christians alone. The number of Christian schools and higher education has increased astronomically it is almost impossible to keep tab on the number. Dioceses, religious organizations, parishes, private individuals own and run schools. However, the focus has not been on restoration of African identity. Because it goes undetected, African indigence of being has even increased with economic hardship and maladministration making African youths lose hope in Africa.

Since anthropological poverty debases Africans by destroying their dignity as children of God, healing anthropological poverty will consist of restoring their dignity as persons, as sons and daughters of God. According to Mveng, this will entail overcoming the mechanism, the structures of sin responsible for continuous cycle of impoverishment in Africa.<sup>58</sup> This will of course include transforming the political system, socioeconomic order, overcoming the greed and corruption of the African elite, dissemination of information to the masses so that they know from onset what is happening. These boil down to changes in education by enabling people retrieve Africa’s suppressed philosophy, culture, arts and history. Ayi Kwei Armah underscores this as prerequisite for Africa’s intellectual awakening.

Any such awakening, it should be needless to point out, will ultimately take practical political and social forms. However, our recent history reminds us that no matter how huge the energy that goes into it, any attempted political awakening will be abortive unless it is preceded by a preparatory process of cultural rebirth, the kind of renewed self-awareness that enable a people long and relentlessly misrepresented — as essentially childish, stupid, incapable of management, averse to challenging intellectual undertakings, with an aptitude only for the easier occupations of rhythmic work, music and dance, seeing life only as eternal entertainment — to reevaluate and re-imagine itself as fully human, fully intelligent, and therefore capable of facing and solving the problems now blocking our path to a future of our own.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Paul VI, “Eucharistic Celebration at the Conclusion of the Symposium Organized by the Bishops of Africa,” n. 2 [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/homilies/1969/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_hom\\_19690731\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1969/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19690731_en.html) accessed December 13, 2015

<sup>58</sup> Mveng, “Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World,” 159-160.

<sup>59</sup> Ayi Kwei Armah, “Remembering the Dismembered Continent,” *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire* 15.1 (2015): 107.

*Gravissimum Educationis* call for education in the light of the culture of the people is therefore a step in the right direction. Implementing this towards emphasizing African culture and its positive values as well as arming people with correct critical history of the circumstances of African past and present has potential of awakening love for the continent and curb the African thirst for foreign ideology and consumer goods. Over centuries, Eurocentric based education has exalted foreign nations as heaven on earth for Africans thus accounting for distaste for everything African. This of course is part of the ‘miseducation of the negro,’ to make them hate themselves, their culture, their people, and consider of value only what is foreign.<sup>60</sup>

Education in African culture should include the study of African social and cultural history as articulated by such critically balanced and adept writers like Basil Davidson, Cheikh Anta Diop,<sup>61</sup> Ali A. Mazrui,<sup>62</sup> M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu,<sup>63</sup> etc. Even though this is often taken for granted, it is mind boggling to realize that with the sole aim of internationalization of African education, African history and culture, the most important aspect of what should constitute African history is not given the attention it deserves. Part of African past that must be recalled is the calculated effort of foreign powers to keep Africa down and the ideologies churned out to disparage Africa and make it inhabitable. To borrow once more from Armah, the dismemberment of Africa extends to the social and psychological penetration of African customs and mind through colonial education that infused the ideology of division as basic characteristic of African condition.<sup>64</sup> Prolonged and painstaking education in African history especially African pre-colonial history “when Africa produced its most systematically structured political, social cultural and intellectual achievements,”<sup>65</sup> hopefully will begin to correct this. This will not be easy but it will go a long way. African novels especially from the African Writers Series equally deserve more attention and critical study as concrete attempt of authors to make sense of African anthropological poverty. Education in African culture also has potential of stemming the tide of corruption. This is because attempt to make up for their

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<sup>60</sup> Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro* (Lindenhurst, NY: Tribeca Books, 2013), Kindle Edition.

<sup>61</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989).

<sup>62</sup> Some of Ali A. Mazrui’s books include: *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown & Co, 1986); *A Tale of Two Africas: Nigeria and South Africa as Contrasting Visions*, James N. Kariuki, ed. (London: Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd., 2006).

<sup>63</sup> M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu, *The Social Anthropology of Africa: An Introduction* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1975).

<sup>64</sup> Armah, “Remembering the Dismembered Continent,” 111.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

indigence in being, their inferiority complex, etc., pushes some African leaders into massive looting of their countries' resources to provide security from poverty for themselves and their children in the foreign countries of their dream (of course because of their miseducation). Also as *Gravissimum Educationis* declared, such study of African culture should incorporate the positive relation of African cultures to other cultures and peoples of the world. I will borrow from inculturation theology to suggest that emphasis be placed on interculturalism. This means the interaction of cultures in such a way that mutually benefits the cultures and religions involved.<sup>66</sup> Because culture is dynamic, African cultures will benefit from other world cultures and religions, just as those will benefit from African cultures. Most post-Vatican II papal statements (some of which we have mentioned earlier) enjoin Africans to have African Christianity. Concerted effort in this direction is very important at the grassroots. This is more so important as there appears to be reversal of the minor gains of inculturation in the face of Pentecostalism that pushes Eurocentric cultures as Christian gospel and culture.<sup>67</sup> We only need remind ourselves of the dangers of being stuck in classicist cultural mindset. As Mveng's careful analysis states:

Culture is essentially a way of conceiving the human being, the world, and God. It is culture that bestows on faith its categories. The culture of the West has never accepted the existence of other cultures. Its conception of the human being and the world reduced the rest of humanity to simple instruments for the realization of its own projected undertakings: its intentions for the human being, its intentions for society, and its intentions for the political, economic, and cultural organization of the world.<sup>68</sup>

And so just as other Third World countries,<sup>69</sup> Christian education in Africa should embark on aggressive "decolonization" of education in Africa. By 'decolonization' Mveng means, "the gospel must be decolonized and restored to the peoples of the Third World."<sup>70</sup> We do not need less but more holistic inculturation of the gospel, and of inculturated Christian education in Africa. As the often marginalized and forgotten continent, Christianity and Christian education in Africa must be inculturated. The declaration on Christian Education must be implemented in order to bring about the positive changes of Vatican Council II to the every growing numbers of people converting to Christianity.

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<sup>66</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, "Towards A Holistic Approach to Inculturation Theology," *Mission Studies* XVI-2.32 (1999): 100-124.

<sup>67</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>68</sup> Mveng, "A Cultural Perspective," in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 73.

<sup>69</sup> Prominent Asian liberative theologians especially from postcolonial theological perspective recommends decolonization of theology in order to make it relevant to people of various cultures. Cf., Jonathan Y. Tan, "Asian Liberative Theologies," in *Introducing Liberative Theologies*, Miguel A. De La Torre, ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 56-57.

<sup>70</sup> Mveng, "A Cultural Perspective," 74.

## CONCLUSION

By relating African anthropological poverty to circumstances of drastic changes in Africa's social and cultural history especially the twin factors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism as well as other politically and economic hegemony of the dominant foreign powers, this paper in no way excuses Africans from responsibility for the crippling corruption bedeviling post-independent African countries. At the same time, because psychic wound does not heal easily, Africans carry the scar of the anthropological crisis in their thought and action. This paper has been devoted to discussing this crisis using Africa's cultural and social history as backdrop.

In the light of the epochal changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, this paper has singled out the declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) as having the potential of contributing to the healing of Africa's anthropological poverty. My position is premised on the recommendation of article 1 of the declaration on the right of human beings to be educated in their culture. Because Anthropological poverty arises primarily on account of the distortion of Africa's identity by the external forces we reviewed, it is hoped that reinstating education based on positive evaluation of Africa's cultural values will contribute to the process of healing Africa's anthropological poverty.

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