RELIGIOUS EDUCATION VIS-À-VIS RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS
A REFLECTION ON CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

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BEING A SUB-LEAD PAPER PRESENTED AT THE THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR UNIVERSAL MORAL EDUCATION, NIGERIA (AUMEN) & STUDENTS’ ADVOCACY AGAINST DESTRUCTIVE ATTITUDES (SAADA), HOLDING AT NNMADI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA ON THURSDAY 10TH AUGUST, 2017

INTRODUCTION
I feel delighted to be invited as a guest speaker in this year's third Annual National Conference of the Association for Universal Moral Education Nigeria. I thank the organizers of this conference, especially the mother founder, Rev. Sis. Dr. Mary-Jude, Therese Nwodo for this singular honour. I am particularly happy for being the guest speaker on a very crucial theme "Religious Instruction and or Moral Education" in our dear country Nigeria whose ship of state is moving without a compass and whose corruption index has grown to Iroko heights. This conference presents an opportunity for deeper reflection on the dreams and aspirations of our founding fathers on the state of Religion vis-à-vis religious education in Nigeria. It affords us the opportunity for the assessment of the journey so far as well as an outlook for the days and years ahead in the area of Religious instruction. Although, I was commissioned to speak on the topic "Religious Instruction," I decided to reframe the topic thus: Religion vis-à-vis religious instruction in Nigerian schools: a reflection on the Christian Religious Instruction.

This paper is therefore postulation of the stages and the attendant levels of consciousness leading to that which is called Religious instruction. My approach to this topic is as multi-dimensional as what I consider Religious instruction to be.

I shall begin with exposing the origin and the meaning-content of the term Religion vis-à-vis religious teaching and its historiography in Nigeria's Religious Educational Enterprise. Next, I shall explicate the
terminologies prevalent among leaned Religious Educators in their quest for a viable nomenclature for religious teaching and learning exercise in Nigeria. Thereafter, I shall adopt a theoretical framework in the teaching/learning of Religions, otherwise called the method of CATECHESIS, this being an analytical framework for the understanding of the nature and values of Religious Instruction in its reference to the quest for holistic religious education in Nigeria for the main purpose of engendering a new soul, a new motif, a new weltanschauung and a new humanism for Nigeria citizens.

The points which are made in this paper are not new or are they difficult or contentious. The only credit which I claim is that of being objective. Yes, the phenomena discussed are very widespread and obvious as can be deciphered here and there in our Sunday School Teachings, religious seminars, pulpit sermons and others, where we often notice mix-ups between terms like “Religious instruction,” “Religious Education,” moral instruction and Religious training, etc.

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION
As I have indicated elsewhere (Madu, 2008), Religion originated in man’s quest for the answer to the mysterious of existence. Such mysteries like the origin of life, the age of the world, what happened beyond human existence, origin of evil and so many others have confronted man throughout history.

Of course, man having been confronted with these mysteries of existence discovered that he could not find answers with his rational appetite to these mysteries of life. Yet, as a curious answer seeking animal, man had to go beyond himself in search for the answers to these mysteries of life. Thus, he assumes the existence of a supernatural and transcendental being, who as it were, was adjudged by man to be capable of giving answers to the mysteries of life was satisfied. Against the above backdrop, man came to be convinced that this power sustains the universe and all therein. I am equally inclined to think that this intellectual curiosity of man to seek for answers to the mysteries of the universe gave impetus
to man’s belief in the supernatural force/forces or what I may refer to as the genesis of man’s religious experience. This recognition of the Supreme Being by man is general to all humanity and as such a universal phenomenon. This is what I refer to as “Religion qua Religion”. With man’s recognition of a supernatural force pervading the created universe, names were given to this force within the context of cultural environment. Thus, we have different names for this force, for instance, God, Deus, Chukwu, Olodumare and Allah etc.

The recognition of this supernatural being is one thing while approaching him for a closer relationship with man is another thing altogether. The fact remains that man believes in God (the supernatural Supreme Being) who is spiritual and immaterial and who cannot be subjected to observation or empirical proof. This accounts for man’s inability for a comprehensive knowledge of him. However, over the years, humanity has been searching for this supreme reality in whom he believes exists. In the course of this search, so many pathways which I call “Religious Systems” have been developed. Watch Tower (1990) calls this systems “pathways” to God. Watch Tower maintains:

During the thousands of years of mankind’s history, man’s search for God has led down to many pathways. The result has been the enormous diversity of religious expression found world-wide, from the endless variety of Hinduism to the monotheism of Judaism, Islam, and Christendom and to the oriental philosophies of Shinto, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism (p. 1).

These religious pathways or systems suggest that the knowledge of God by man is only partial for this is dependent upon the angle that man is viewing him. This indicates equally that the pathway through which humanity reaches to this “one reality” are many. It is this “Many” as I have referred earlier as “Religious systems” which cohere to the same “One Reality” that is Religion Qua Religion (Madu, 2003).
Thus, Religion qua Religion is one but religions as a system are many, for example, Judaism, Islam, African Traditional Religion and Christianity. All these systems are born in time and space with founders, Creeds and doctrines. So we can say that Religion qua Religion is a universal phenomenon while Religious system is particularistic to those who profess them. As religious systems are historically and geographically circumscribed, one may not be out of place to maintain that religious system operates within a cosmological framework that is particularistic to that system. So any teacher of Religion must be careful to discriminate between Religion qua Religion and Religion as a system.

Since religious systems are cosmologically anchored, we may understand and appreciate why religious system may be hostile and intolerant to one another (case of Islam and Christianity), why each proclaims certain creeds and dogmas, why they proselytize and brain wash their members; why they manipulate both human society, the spiritual world and the physical world.

These they do by determining certain “ends” that must be attained, prescribing the “means” by which such ends are to be reached. For instance, the Christian world-view can provide such techniques as sacraments, rites, and ceremonies to reach her determined ends.

In our dear country, Nigeria, each religious system in the country, operates within the above framework. Each one breeds a strong sense of self-assurance as well as having their members, on a routine basis constructing and reconstructing the world after their own image.

Any religious educator must therefore take cognizance of the “one” and “many” in Religion so as not to mix up the universals, the particulars and the alternate levels of religious experience among human. It is noteworthy to state here that in Nigeria, particular religious systems have continued to influence their votaries. In fact, both the individuals and the government had in various ways, recognized this important influence these religions have had on the people active moral and spiritual
development. It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian government has not failed to recognize the importance of Religion in her educational policies over the years of her existence, (Madu. 1997).

RELIGION IN NIGERIA’S EDUCATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Recognizing the value of religion in the lives of man, the teaching of religion, not minding the nomenclature of this exercise was deemed expedient by our colonial masters:

Thus, they set up at different times, committees, to look into the educational programmes of the colonies. To this Fafunwa (1974) writes:

In 1923, the African Educational Reform Advisory Committee was formed in Britain by our British colonial masters. The committee issued out an educational policy for the colonies in 1925 known as the 1925 memorandum on Education in British colonial territories (p. 124).

This memorandum as I pointed out somewhere (Madu. 1997) was significant as it set up the principles on which the educational systems of the dependencies were to be based. This memorandum was also significant in the history of religious studies in Nigeria, for it was the first government policy that recognized the importance of religious training and moral instruction as captured in number three of the twelve memoranda as cited by Fafunwa thus:

Religious training and moral instruction should be regarded as fundamental to the development of a sound education and should be accorded complete equality with secular subject (p. 124).

In the above documents two terms “religious training and moral instructions were all subsumed in religious studies”. With this policy,
religious and moral instructions found comfortable foothold in Nigeria’s educational school curriculum.

Again, in 1948 the “Education Ordinance” was promulgated in Nigeria. The ordinance which was signed by Sir James Mcpherson, the then Nigerian Governor was the first ordinance to affect the whole country (Fafunwa, 1974). Lekwat (1984) maintains that this ordinance provided for pupils religious protection clause and parental religious consent as well as protecting religious instructions in schools (p. 76). The pupils religious protection clause as well as parent consent clause were quite significance. These clauses indicate that pupils should be taught tenets of the religious system that they belong to, for instance, Muslim pupils should be taught Islamic tenets while Christian pupils should be taught Christian religious tenets and principles.

In the 1950s, governments moved fat to centralized education but a protection for religious instruction was assured. The revision of the Richard’s constitution in 1952 spurred the promulgation of the Education ordinance of 1952. In this ordinance, the control of education was given to the state with a religious protection clause for the interest of the mission, (Lekwat, 1984). This was evident in all the regions. For instance, in the U.P.E areas of Awolowos west, religious instruction was protected in the Western Nigeria Education Law, No. 6 of 1952; in the East, it was protected in the Nigerian Education Law No. 8 of 1956 while in the Northern Nigeria, it was No. 17 of 1956. In Lagos, the religious protection law was in an Educational promulgation Act No. 26 of 1957 (Lekwat, 1984). The 1960 constitution of Nigeria guaranteed the freedom of religion in the society as well as teaching it in schools (Federation of Nigeria, Annual Volume 1960). The main of teaching religion in schools was earlier in 1956 emphasized by the Ashby commission when it proposed to retain religious education in schools as an instrumental agent for developing Nigeria to be a voice to be reckoned with in the Christian and Muslim world (Lekwat, 1984).
After the independence in 1960, all the regions set up their own educational commissions. Taiwo (1980) notes that commission did not interrupt the teaching of religion in schools. He says that:

The voluntary agencies were given constitutional rights to inspect religious teachings so as to ensure the quality of what was taught to the students in school (p. 132).

This means that the voluntary agencies monitored the teaching of religion to be in tandem with their beliefs and practices in school. In other words, religious teachings in schools were to be particularistic, that is, each religious group or even denomination was to teach their followers the tenets of its religious convictions.

This provision was also included in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. Specifically section 38 of the constitution is very vocal on this. It says:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom to manifest or propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (p.22)

Continuing, the constitution states in section 38, sun-section 2 that:

No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own or a religion not approved by his parent or guardian (p.22).

The 1999 constitution recognizes the significance of religious affiliations in Nigeria and warns that religious instructions should be particularistic to religious system as well as to intra-religious denominations.
So right from the foundation of Nigeria with Lord Lugard’s amalgamation policy of 1914, religion vis-à-vis religious teachings in our schools have been recognized by Nigeria government as a necessity.

In as much as Nigerian government advocates that religious teachings should be particularistic, it means that Islamic Religion, Christian Religion and indeed Traditional Religion should be taught to the votaries of such religions.

For me in this paper, I have opted to discuss the teaching of Christian Religion in our schools. This is based on the fact that I belong to this Religious group as well as the fact that I have been teaching this subject in tertiary institutions in Nigeria for over three decades.

However, in the course of teaching this subject, I together with earlier scholars have been confronted with various problems in its study especially in the area of its nomenclature. Lekwat (1984) identified three problems which he categorized as philosophical, professional and policy bottlenecks. While the philosophical problem underscores the varied terminologies used for the subject, the professional ones are concerned with the quality of the teachers of the subject and the policy areas concern the aim and objectives of the course and its realization or otherwise of its expected outcomes in the lives of Nigerians.

At this juncture, I shall go into the memory lane to articulate the history of the development of the study of Christian Religion in Nigerian schools. Lekwat (1984) identified eleven names for this single school subject. These include:

- **Bible Knowledge**: users here maintain that the subject is purely of biblical content-fact. This was given to it by the early missionaries.
- **Christian Religious Knowledge**: this was given to it when government took interest in the subject because of its biblical content-fact also.
Religious Knowledge: this name was given to the subject by the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) based equally by the factual-content of the bible.

Religious Instruction: This is a name persisting in government circle because of its religious content facts and because it was taught like the church religious instructional classes.

Religious Education: Education for life based on religious principles. In secular usage, it is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied aspects i.e. beliefs, doctrines and rituals. However, in England the term refers to the teaching of religions generally.

Moral Education: Education as action based on the principle of right and wrong. This is anchored on the fact that religion teaches the principles of good and bad.

Moral Training: this is anchored on the principle that religion is an influencer to good behaviour.

Ethical Education: Education as action based on what ought to be or the application of rules that determine the choice of voluntary agents.

Ethical Instructions: this is anchored on the teachings of human conducts in a particular social setting.

Christian Religious Studies: this is a study that is anchored on the tenets of the Christian Religion within the framework of intellectual scholarship.

Religion Studies: this is the general study of religious in its universal perspective as it pertains to beliefs, worship and morals. This is also within the framework of intellectual scholarship.

Moral Instruction: this entails teaching on human conduct with or without any particular religion. This may be cultural or even tribal.

One may be wondering why so many names for one single subject. This may be explained in connection with the fluid, enigmatic and elusive nature of Religion which makes individuals or even groups of people to call the subject by any name that fits their purpose at any given time. However, whatever name that is given to the subject, the most
important factor remains in “teaching it to people in the society.” Although, so many terminologies have been stated, I am inclined to endorse the term Christian Religious Studies as the most viable term for the subject, for in this, both the content fact and the intellectual scholarship are involved. If this study is systematically imparted into the minds of the citizens of this country, I am confident that the outcome will be a very positive one. This needs a specialized content-fact teaching of Christian Religion to people by an expert in the knowledge of Christian Religion.

The content-fact teaching subsumes both the raw material to be imparted to the people as well as the art of imparting these raw materials. To realize the objective of this content-fact teaching, the choice of the catechetical method of religious instruction was adopted in the paper.

THE CATECHETICAL METHOD OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
Catechesis deals with the art of imparting religious instructions to people. It is an interdisciplinary subject concerned with the Christian doctrine, the teacher and the taught. Strictly speaking catechesis concerns itself with the passing on of the deposits of the Christian faith to different classes of Christian, the young, old, male and female, learned and unlearned, black and white. The subject indeed implicates the teacher, the taught and the raw materials to be imparted and of course, the expected outcome of the teaching process. In other words, Christian religious instruction begs for the following questions:

- Whom do we instructor teach
- What do we teach
- Why do we teach
- How do we teach
Whom do we teach?
These are human beings be they students or church members etc. the religious instructor in this wise, is expected to have adequate knowledge of the human nature and its essential differences from brutes. He is equally expected to have a good knowledge of individual differences among people in age, ability and temperament.

What do we teach?
This is the tenet of the Christian Religion ended in the Bible and Christian tradition.

Why do we teach?
It points to the whole purpose of education as they are related to the destiny of man and goals of the society. In our case, it entails Christian solicitation, good character formation, self-realization, good human character formation, self-realization, human relationship and responsible citizenship.

How do we teach?
This requires our knowledge of teaching techniques and psychologies of learning.
When all the above considerations are sewn together, we see that the teacher of Christian Religious become the major influencer in the teaching-learning process of Christian Religious Studies.
The teacher, of course, has goals or objectives to achieve as we maintained above and therefore he is expected to have the requisite professional requirements to realize the goals.

THE PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENT OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTORS
These include the following:
- Educational Requirements: this includes knowledge qualification, e.g. a degree certificate in Religious Studies, and must continue to update his knowledge through seminars, conferences and in-service trainings.
Next to this requirement is the psychological qualification which helps the religious instructor to understand some development of the minds of the youths and those taught. Secondly, the religious instructor needs to comprehend his own psychological maturity compared to the maturity of the students. This means that the instructor must be able to bridge the psychological gap between an adult instructor and a young learner.

Again the religious instructor should have some grasp of the social background of the learners e.g., tribes, ethnic groups, customs etc. these must be respected.

**RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATION**

These include: Commitment to Christians principles e.g., belief in the supreme God, faith in the Bible which is accepted by Christian as the major text book of Christian religious studies, faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God, a sincere belief in the ministry of teaching, belief in the Christian responsibility of promoting church expansion, i.e. the “Great Commission” and faith in the ministry of prayer for national peace.

Next to the commitment to Christian principles is the personal interest in the teaching of Christian truth. This is demonstrated by the teacher love for the learners. In fact, Christian love is the acid test of being a Christian.

The above requirement endorse and validate the Christian Religious teacher as another Jesus Christ, a religious teacher par excellence who was himself an embodiment of the Truth, desirous for service, who believed in teaching, who was a master of his subject matter as well as a master of Human nature.

A Christian Religious Instructor in line with his role model Jesus Christ, must therefore take into consideration the essential element in the teaching-learning process which we have earlier mentioned. At the end of the teaching-learning process, the student would be
expected to demonstrate the outcome of their learning in both the cognitive and affective domains of religious instructions. In other words, they will be able to showcase a good dose of knowledge, comprehension and application of what they learnt as well as being able to exercise analytic, synthetic and evaluative appraisals of the Christian Religion. This implies that at the end of the study, the learner would be adjudged as repositories of Christian Religious education and therefore in position to apply this to life's existential situations.

Christian Religious Education is therefore the fruit of Christian Religious Instruction and it provides one the ability to meet life's challenges posed by the mysteries of Christian Religion. Thus one can posit without any fear of contradiction that the great aim of Christian Religious Education is “Action” and not necessarily knowledge. Based on the above, an articulation of the dividends of religious instruction on our Christians and students becomes necessary. These include:

- Formation of right ideals to the learning as they understand clearer the nature of God and his attitude towards humanity.
- Students develop strong conviction on what they believe in
- Conversion to God, an experience which we may refer to as a birth, a new heart and a change of mind
- The spirit of harmonious relationship is engendered among people.
- Development of virtues like honesty, humility, unselfishness, kindness and the spirit of sacrifice, which makes for the nobility of character steadfastness in conduct and joy in living.

In the light of the above, Christian religious instructors, it carefully assimilated and applied in our lives would be a veritable tool for interpersonal and harmonious human relations in Nigeria. This is anchored on the premise that Christian Religious Instructors comprehend every phase of human nature—thought, feeling and will. The instructions are imparted to the learners for service in every phase of their activities, be it personal, domestic, ecclesiastical and
professional. Indeed, the realization of these dividends in our country would mean the bringing of the kingdom of God on earth here.

**Concluding Reflections**
As we have said earlier, Christian Religious instruction can allude to the art of imparting Christian Religious Information to people as well as the formation itself. In all, the information collected in the brain has to be organized to be any use to show that learning has taken place. Learning has to do with the process of relating one piece of information or one experience to another. thus, in the process of Christian religious instruction, the teacher feeds the learner with doses of Christian religious messages and his ability to apply this message in his relationship with other people and God indicates that he has acquired Christian Religious Education. Thus, Christian Religious Instruction prepares the recipient for Christian action which according to Second Vatican Council in its Declaration on Christian Education is indeed the true education which is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final end...
In today's Nigeria therefore, the need for religious instructions to Nigerians on the three dominant Religious system therein, i.e Islam, Christianity and Indigenous Religions cannot be over emphasized. I am optimistic that the internalization of the instructions in our lives and living out their principles would be a very potent positive therapy to the virus of corruption that is ravaging our dear country, Nigeria today.
Brothers and Sisters, I am done. Remain blessed.

**References**

