

## PART 4. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL MISSIONARY SEMINARY OF ST. PAUL

### 4.1 INAUGURATION LECTURE 2011/2012

#### CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS AND MISSION AMIDST BROKEN BOUNDARIES: ON TENSIONS BETWEEN GLOBAL ETHOS, UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND INHERITED TRADITIONS OF ENQUIRY<sup>1</sup>

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The "New Global Ethic":  
an ethical framework giving a *normative* character to the multiplicity of  
individuals' choices, lifestyles, behaviours, social norms – choices which one  
should be able to make *outside* the framework of traditions and outside the  
conditions of existence in which God placed man and woman.<sup>2</sup>

#### Introductory Remarks

In an increasingly globalised and pluralist world, religiously homogenous academic institutions and Houses of Formation like the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul appear to be the only place where persons who belong to a particular tradition of Enquiry ([Roman] Catholicism) can reflect, engage and be prepared to confront the secular (or post-secular) age, within the specificity of our religious tradition in dialogue nonetheless with the world and its planetary issues and problems. Other academic institutions, like Universities or Colleges of Education, even with Christian roots might have "Religious Studies Department" or even "Faculty of Theology". However, in order to be fully accredited and offered a place in public discourse in this age they have to develop and teach heterogeneous theology or study of religions. They might, in the process, lose their identity and roots.

Within the observed context of theological education and formation, it makes so much sense to reflect on the challenges posed by the so-called "New Global Ethic" to our Roman Catholic Tradition at the beginning of this academic year. I wish to thank, though in absentia, the immediate past Rector of this institution, Revd Fr Victor Onwukeme, MSP, for proposing the topic for this lecture. I thank him for offering his thought which served as a springboard for me. It is instructive to note that the General Staff Council unanimously accepted Fr Onwukeme's proposal at its last meeting last academic year. I am grateful to my colleagues for commissioning me to offer my reflections. I hope I shall justify their confidence and trust.

<sup>1</sup> Being the text of the 2011/2012 Academic Session Inauguration Lecture delivered at the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Gwagwalada Abuja on October 10, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Marguerite Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, trans., Benedict Kobus (Brussels: Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics, 2007), 35.

I titled this lecture Christian Reflections and Mission Amidst Broken Boundaries. In a short while I shall offer inspirations and justification for this. In the meantime, let me present how my reflections shall proceed – in five basic movements. First, I shall offer the background to the topic of this year's lecture. Second, I shall present the inspirations for the title I have chosen. The first and second movements are important, since any rational enquiry is contextual, located in time and locus, hence serious researchers normally discern and present their “locus theologicus.” The third movement explores the so-called New Global Ethic, with Marguerite Peeters? The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution<sup>3</sup> as my primary dialogue partner. By the time I get to this point, you will understand why Ms Peeters' monograph is an esteemed source. At the fourth movement, I shall briefly probe Peeters' construal of The New Global Ethic. The fifth and final movement will take us to the realm of relevance and proposals for an academic institution like NAMISEM, on how to reflect and be witnesses as Christian missionaries in diverse contexts we shall constantly find ourselves in this fluid and broken world. My aim in this lecture is threefold: a] to provoke discussions that will follow us into our various lecture halls and classes; b] to inspire the desire to pursue thoughts on this topic in various scientific researches during this academic year; c] to set the agenda (academic, intellectual, affective) for the formation process intended for the 2011/2012 academic session.

### 1. Inauguration Lecture's Background

Let me start by saying something about an excerpt of Fr Onwukeme's input. While the excerpt (on the screen behind me) gives the immediate context of the topic and the issues involved, I was still curious to know where this was coming from and who Ms Peeters is. She was highly recommended by Fr Onwukeme. I did a Google search on the topic, and found the following:

- i. A booklet titled The New Global Ethics and the Challenges to the Church, by a certain Marguerite Peeters, a Roman Catholic lay woman, based in Belgium, belonging to the Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics, Brussels.
- ii. A news item on the website of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria captioned, “Seminary Rectors Advocate Actions Against the New Global Ethics”. This news item was a recap of a workshop held by the Rectors of Nigerian Seminaries. Interestingly, the workshop was facilitated by one Ms Marguerite Peeters, introduced as a professor at the Urbaniana Pontifical University, Rome.<sup>4</sup> Her interventions/contributions were a summary of her recent monograph which I mentioned earlier.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Marguerite Peters is introduced as “a contemporary scholar and lecturer at the Urban University, Rome, whose works and experience have opened a new vista to the challenges of a cultural revolution of the post modern world.” “Seminary Rectors Advocate Actions Against New Global Ethics”, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, [http://www.csnigeria.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=102:seminary-rectors-advocate-actions-against-new-global-ethics&catid=25:the-project](http://www.csnigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=102:seminary-rectors-advocate-actions-against-new-global-ethics&catid=25:the-project) (accessed 02.07. 2011).

So, I said to myself, "This is it. Now I see the connection between Fr Onwukeme's proposal and Ms Peeters' book which he gave me." Since the workshop was held when the 2010/2011 session was already midway, it makes perfect sense for the former Rector to propose this topic for our Inauguration Lecture for this session – as part of action plan to "Combat" the New Global Ethic (henceforth NGE). I hope the new Rector and the new Vice-Rector, Very Revd Martin Yina, MSP and Fr Pius Ekpe, MSP, respectively will take note of this advocacy.

Do I key into the combative, polemic and somewhat apologetic hermeneutics of Ms Peeters and the Nigerian Rectors? I leave you to answer this question at the end of the lecture.

## 2. Inspirations for Lecture's Title

The title for this lecture was not chosen immediately I agreed to the topic. On the contrary, I simply wanted to stick to the topic as proposed in Fr Onwukeme's memo to me. However some interventions conspired to change my path.

First, on June 22, 2011, my colleague, Fr Patrick Etuk, MSP, delivered a homily during his last Mass for the 2010/2011 session. During this homily, Fr Etuk said (and I'm paraphrasing him): the greatest threat to Christianity is not secularism/secularisation, as a lot of people claim these days. Christianity, Fr Etuk continued, has always been under threat, but the greatest threat is the lack of CREDIBLE WITNESSES, i.e. people who profess Christian principles and consistently and authentically live by them – both in public and in private.

Now I found this quite interesting and striking given the fact that the excerpt I showed earlier of Fr Onwukeme left us with the impression and conviction that the greatest threat to Christianity/Roman Catholicism is secularism/secularisation ("threat is "from outside"), with its unchristian paradigmatic shifts, dechristianisation processes, concretised in Africa with the "Maputo Protocol". Yet, Fr Etuk posited that the greatest threat is "from within".

Second, on June 25, 2011, Archbishop John Onaiyekan, in the course of his homily at the priestly ordination of MSP/OMV deacons, here at the ordination pavilion, taught us that the greatest threat to the Church today is secularism/secularisation ("threat from outside"). To buttress his teaching, the Archbishop mentioned various traditional boundaries that are being broken and transgressed, like marriage, family patterns, lifestyles, the where and telos of sex. He also mentioned the "Maputo Protocol". He told the ordinands that this was the context they were going to be ministering. However, the Archbishop said the way out in this world of broken boundaries is Christian witnessing and authentic missionary work.

Archbishop Onaiyekan's intervention made me to examine the various socio-cultural, epistemic-practical contexts of MSPs. The diversities and complexities brought out the fact of "brokenness" and "tensions" between opposites. We live and work in contexts yet espousing doctrines and principles presented as universal. This puts us within the tensions of "universality & contextuality", "multiculturalism & cultural identity", "inherited traditions & evolving practices", "religious authority & human agency". The way people in our missionary contexts will navigate through these tensions will depend to a great extent on their political theories of government and their epistemological stance about reality and its various dimensions. Hence, effectiveness in these mission contexts will depend on the extent to which we know these theories and epistemological perspectives, and our dexterity in making distinctions between "communitarians & liberals", "individuality & individualism", "relativity & relativism", "immutability & dynamism", "unnatural & reasonable". Beyond these speculative concerns with practical consequences, today's missionaries also find themselves harangued with questions about methodological inconsistencies in their religious and cultural traditions. Missionaries are confronted with some telling paradoxes which many have not really thought through thus making them go defensive, if they are not intimidated. For instance, they are confronted with the great paradox in the Roman Catholic Church entering into alliances with some leaders of Islamic states and Christian denominations on issues with global consequences. Yet, on some global issues, these religious groups do not see eye to eye. Instances abound at the United Nations and other international conferences trying to draw up principles and action guides for a globally just world. Instances of this great paradox might be seen within the context of different views on what constitutes "Global ethic discourse". How many of us here are primed for these complexities and nuances?

It is in the light of these considerations that this lecture has been titled: Christian Reflections and Mission Amidst Broken Boundaries: On Tensions between Global Ethos, Universal Ethics, and Inherited Traditions of Enquiry.

### 3. The New Global Ethic: Peeters' Construal

The NGE did not just burst upon the scene without historical ground. According to Peeters in an undated contribution that summarised her monograph, NGE should be viewed from the historical reasoning that there were global problems requiring global solutions, based on globally accepted – or even enforceable – values, by a truly global organisation i.e. UN.<sup>5</sup>

However, in order to come up with non-traditional and constructivist globally enforceable values and action guides, NGE is highly indebted to a philosophical movement which I hope we shall give more time and space to both in our philosophy and theology departments. We cannot understand, appreciate or even critique NGE appropriately

<sup>5</sup> Marguerite Peeters, "The New Global Ethic: Challenges for the Church," (n.d.): 4.

without being accused of crass and ridiculous apologetics if we do not know, study and understand postmodernity.

### 3.1. Postmodernity and End of 'Closed Narratives'

Postmodernity rejected the Enlightenment's "totalisation" or "absolutisation of concepts and definitions."<sup>6</sup> Though quite difficult to define because it does not desire to be defined since definitions which cast various dimensions of reality in iron is part of what postmodernity critiques. However, this movement in philosophy, theology, cultural studies and life attempts to interpret previous theologies and worldviews as "closed narratives". "Closed narratives" led to Modernity's inattention to the essentially and characteristically other in a pluralist society.<sup>7</sup> This lack of openness for and in plurality has caused untold horrors in forms of ideological and ethno-religious conflicts in such pluralist settings.

### 3.2. Postmodernity's Features

Even if postmodernity resists definition, we can notice some central features which shall be highlighted because these have consequences on NGE as described and critiqued by Peeters. We shall begin with its central feature.

According to Alister McGrath, postmodernity's central feature is "the deliberate and systematic abandonment of centralizing narratives."<sup>8</sup> Hence, postmodernity's mantra: no more grand/metanarratives i.e. no more "absolutes, fixed certainties, or foundations". So, postmodernity has a bias for "relativism or pluralism" in relation to the quest for truth.<sup>9</sup>

Postmodernity prides itself in destabilisation,<sup>10</sup> done through a critical method called "deconstruction": "the critical method which virtually declares that the identity and intentions of the author of a text are an irrelevance to the interpretation of the text, prior to insisting that, in any case, no fixed meaning can be found in it."<sup>11</sup>

There is a popular metaphor used by postmodernity's critics that shows clearly the symbolic meaning of this feature of postmodernity. In presenting the postmodern condition especially the rejection of authority, Archbishop Bruno Forte, of Chieti-Vasto (Italy) uses the metaphor of "the murder of the Father."<sup>12</sup> The murder of the father-figure

<sup>6</sup> Part of what postmodernity rejected as Modernity's absolutised values are: absolutised reason (in its place, there is the glorification of eros emotions), blind faith in science and its laws, optimism and faith in "progress", individualism, human rights, liberal democracy, territorial sovereignty, Marxism, Capitalism. See Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent articulation of a critique of the "closed narratives" and their detrimental effects, see Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition - An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*, trans., Brian Doyle (Louvain: Peeters, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Malden; Victoria; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 73.

<sup>9</sup> Peeters, "The New Global Ethic: Challenges for the Church," 6-7. "Destabilisation" is not the only feature NGE has in common with postmodernity. NGE has the same epistemological pillars as postmodernity: "experience", "subjectivity", "provisionality", "immanence". Cf Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 30-35.

<sup>10</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 74.

<sup>11</sup> While he has presented his reflection on these metaphors in various forms, for the sake of this audience I shall rely on the text of his lecture presented in Jerusalem (Israel) on March 30, 2011 during a Seminar themed "The Role of Religious Leadership in Secular

has led to "a society without fathers", with no importance for vertical relationships. What is the logical implication of this "murder":

The critique of the "father-lord" figure thus leads to the complete rejection of God (and also, in a certain sense, of religious leaders). Just as on earth there must be no fatherhood creating dependence, so in heaven there may be no Father of all. This collective murder of the Father is carried out in the conviction that human beings must manage their own lives for themselves, moulding their destiny with their own hands.<sup>13</sup>

By this rejection, we might understand what religious contributors calls "radical secularism".

At the end of postmodernity's deconstruction, there is only one conclusion: norms traditionally taken for granted as 'given' even from above, are human constructions, within particular traditions of enquiry, at a specific point in history, and meant to envision what the good life was at that point in human history and development. These norms, therefore, cannot be held up as valid and exceptionless for all time, contexts and history.

### 3.3. New Global Ethic's Features

From the foregoing presentation of postmodernity, we can understand now the definition of NGE offered at the beginning.<sup>14</sup> From this definition, we can see how NGE is highly indebted to postmodernity. In the following paragraphs I shall present two of NGE's major features of NGE, and we shall see how close these are to postmodern positions.

Inspired by postmodernity's rejection of authority and „murder of the father-figure“, NGE's point of departure is that there are no anthropological or ethical given, talk less of a Giver God. Implicit in this rejection, according to Peeters, is that the human person as a constructed subject has no given vocation, essential individuality and personality.<sup>15</sup> In the realm of ethics, therefore, primacy is given to human choices, not based on any transcendental principle or belief. Logically, the human person, according to NGE, "ought to be able to choose, for example, to be heterosexual today and homosexual tomorrow. He should be able to choose his "form" of family, and reconstitute his family whenever he desires."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Society". Archbishop's text was published online by *Zenit News* on April 9, 2011. See Archbishop Bruno Forte, "Called by God, He Must Respond With Total Faith, Loving His People", *Zenit News* ZE11040901 (April 9, 2011): 1-5, quotations on 1, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Supra* note 1.

<sup>15</sup> Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 36.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

As stated earlier, postmodernity's stock in trade is 'breaking boundaries' through its deconstruction and destabilising exercises. If 'metanarratives' of 'the good', 'evil', 'good life', 'difference', 'dignity', 'ethics' etc are deconstructed, it is important to reconstruct, because deconstruction without reconstruction is moral irresponsibility since deconstruction creates epistemological and ethical vacuums. NGE's reconstruction as a process seeks to 'rebuild' the global order according to "the virtual, changing and arbitrary choices of groups and individuals."<sup>17</sup>

In the following subsection, I shall present two concrete instances where and how postmodernity and NGE have been put to use. The first is global in context (i.e. the Millennium Development Goals), while the second is contextual, focusing on Africa (i.e. the Maputo Protocol).

### 3.4. Millennium Development Goals

NGE expressed itself at the turn of the millennium via an attractive strategy – the Millennium Development Goals (henceforth MDGs). The widely publicised MDGs are indeed laudable. There are eight basic goals<sup>18</sup>:

- Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty
- Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education
- Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
- Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality
- Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

These goals are meant to be achieved by 2015.

Various organs of UN are using the MDGs (which is wide in scope and accent) "to implement the Cairo and Beijing objectives" (which are quite reductionist – promoting erotic revolution, and radicalising „bedroom politics).<sup>19</sup> MDGs therefore is a "Trojan Horse" which we have to embrace with bold stated caveat emptor.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 38

<sup>18</sup> See "MDGs: What They Are"; <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/index.htm> (accessed. 03/10/2011). Alternatively see

<sup>19</sup> Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 134.

<sup>20</sup> Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 134.

### 3.5. The Maputo Protocol

I have referred to this document severally today. Now it is time to examine it. This document's full name is Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.<sup>20</sup> It is popularly known as 'Maputo Protocol' because it was at Maputo (Mozambique) the Second Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union adopted this document.

According to Peeters, Maputo Protocol encapsulates the postmodern God-absent universal rights culture which began with the Cairo and Beijing Conferences in the 1990s. The most provocative and – perhaps most outstanding – is article fourteen (art. 14) which makes the Protocol "the judicial instrument most favourable to abortion rights in the world."<sup>21</sup>

The full text of article 14 is presented below:

Article 4	<p><b>A Health and Reproductive Rights</b></p> <p>"1. States Parties shall ensure that the right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"a) the right to control their fertility;</li> <li>"b) the right to decide whether to have children, the number of children and the spacing of children;</li> <li>"c) the right to choose any method of contraception;</li> <li>"d) the right to self-protection and to be protected against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS;</li> <li>"e) the right to be informed on one's health status and on the health status of one's partner, particularly if affected with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, in accordance with internationally recognised standards and best practices;</li> <li>"f) the right to have family planning education."</li> </ul> <p>"2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"a) provide adequate, affordable and accessible health services, including information, education and communication programmes to women especially those in rural areas;</li> <li>"b) establish and strengthen existing pre-natal, delivery and post-natal health and nutritional services for women during pregnancy and while they are breast-feeding;</li> <li>"c) protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus."<sup>22</sup></li> </ul>
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When Peeters, Archbishop Onaiyekan, and Fr Onwukeme refer to the wickedness and anti-life nature of Maputo Protocol, especially article 14, they are really referring to and have in mind art. 14, no. 2c. Peeters observes that as at 2007, twenty-one countries out of the listed fifty-three member-states have ratified Maputo Protocol. As at July 7, 2010,

<sup>20</sup> African Union, *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Adopted by the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union)* (Maputo: African Union, July 11, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Emphasis mine.

forty-six countries have signed the Protocol, while twenty-eight have ratified it. Nigeria signed it on December 16, 2003, ratified it on December 16, 2004, and deposited the ratified copy at the AU Secretariat on February 18, 2005. Peeters claims that all countries that have signed and ratified the Protocol are bound to implement it, and by implication, implement art. 14, no. 2c.

But a critical reader of the Maputo Protocol might puncture Peeters' argument which appears to be the standard observation of pro-lifers and some religious leaders. It is not as if member-states that have ratified Maputo Protocol have no room for manoeuvring, or they are completely helpless, or have lost their sovereignty. Let's take a look at article twenty-eight:

Article 28	<b>A Signature, Ratification and Accession</b> "1. This Protocol shall be open for signature, ratification and accession by the States Parties, in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures. "2. The instruments of ratification or accession shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission of the AU."
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I do not pretend to be an expert either in international law or constitutional law. However, the wording of art. 28, no. 1 states that the processes of ratification cannot be done behind closed doors. The processes for ratification have to be constitutionally permissible and the implementation of the Protocol cannot go against member-states' respective constitutions. That is why, though Nigeria signed and ratified the Protocol in 2003 and 2004 respectively, abortion is still illegal and a crime. In other words, Nigeria's ratification of the Protocol does not impose on it an implementation track for art. 14, no. 2c which will not respect the country's constitutional procedures. The way art. 14, no. 2c will be implemented here in Nigeria where abortion is unconstitutional will not be the same as the way it will be implemented in South Africa where abortion is constitutional. The point is international treaties do not necessarily make signatories lose their sovereignty except when external actors apply pecuniary pressures on them to change their constitutional provisions. And there cannot be constitutional changes without referenda and public debates.

#### 4. Probing Peeters' Positions on NGE

Before we formulate our opinions and strategies to counter NGE as Ms Peeters' and Fr Onwukeme passionately propose, we need to take some critical look at some positions and assumptions we have come across so far. For instance, what are we to make of Ms Peeters' near exclusive focus on „bedroom? polities in her engagement with NGE? She says the following are "intrinsically evil choices": "abortion, homosexuality, „free love?", euthanasia, assisted suicide, rejection of any form of legitimate authority or

hierarchy, mandatory „toleration? of all opinions, a spirit of disobedience manifesting itself in multifarious forms.”<sup>23</sup>

By what stretch of Christian (Roman Catholic) imagination is the rejection of legitimate authority or toleration of diverse/different opinions intrinsically evil? To what extent is Peeters promoting “communitarian tyranny”? “Communitarian tyranny” plays out where and when individuals do not have the freedom to revise values commonly held by their community(ies).<sup>24</sup> This is one of the critiques posed by mainstream liberalism against communitarians, like Ms Peeters and co. Liberalism is normally coupled with „secularism, secularisation, secularity? (with these used almost interchangeably).

For Ms Peeters, perhaps Fr Onwukeme, Archbishop Onaiyekan, “secularism, secularisation, secularity” is like a poisoned chalice that we must refuse to drink from. Is this necessarily so? It’s a challenge I want to throw to us to consider this academic year, in the light of what Pope Benedict offers us in *Light of the World*.

#### 4.1. Religion Engaging the Secular in the Postsecular Age: Comparing Peeters and Benedict XVI.

From some statements Pope Benedict made in *Light of the World*, it appears that he is now offering us another approach in the postsecular age which is not as polemic as Peeters’. The Pope proposes “engagement-confrontation”. Christians in a world of broken boundaries due to secularisation must engage “with the clash of two spiritual worlds, the world of faith and the world of secularism.”<sup>25</sup> This is the inspiration behind the establishment of the “Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation”<sup>26</sup> If the Pope calls us and even establishes a Pontifical Council to engage with what he calls “secularism”, then “secularism, secularisation, secularity” is not intrinsically evil as Peeters (and others in that school of thought) wants us to believe, or else the Pope will not be telling us to ask this question: “Where is secularism right?”<sup>27</sup> Engagement with “secularisation, secularity, secularism” is possible if we develop what I call “bilingual competence”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Peeters, “The New Global Ethic: Challenges for the Church,” 7

<sup>24</sup> Ifiok E. Inyang, “Multicultural Citizenship According to Will Kymlicka: A Moral Theological Inquiry” (PhD diss., Rome: Gregorian Pontifical University, 2011), 146.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World. The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times. A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, ed. Peter Seewald, trans., Michael Miller and Adrian Walker (Nairobi/San Francisco: Paulines Publications Africa/Ignatius Press, 2010), 64.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> On a fuller treatment of the “bilingual approach” in a slightly different context, see Walter Brueggemann, “Law as Response to Thou” in *Taking Responsibility: Comparative Analysis*, ed. Winston Davis, *Studies in Religion and Culture* (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 102-103.

To achieve this, what we need is a more sophisticated and complete ethical framework that accounts for the complexity and multidimensionality of "ethical reasoning" in a postsecular age than the one Ms Peeters offers us.<sup>29</sup>

To set the stage for this, ladies and gentlemen, I'll like to invite you to join me in doing a "thought experiment"

#### 4.2. A Thought Experiment

Imagine what it is to be a woman married to a husband who is HIV<sup>+</sup> in a traditional African society. Imagine what it means to be a person, according to CCC 2358, with deep-seated homosexual tendencies in a country like Uganda, Zimbabwe, or even Nigeria.

What comes up for you?

I imagine being a married woman who is at the mercy of her HIV<sup>+</sup> husband, without institutional safeguards for me without being beaten or raped or returned to my father's house... I imagine being a person with deep-seated homosexual inclinations, and finding myself falling in love with persons of my sex, but desire to come out of the closet to reveal that dimension of my personhood, with the possibility of being lynched or imprisoned in Uganda and Zimbabwe, or suffering stigmatisation in Nigeria...<sup>30</sup>

Ladies and gentlemen, I shudder at these imaginations because I fear that it's possible it might be me tomorrow if I find myself a part of a minority, unconventional, or traditionally vulnerable group without institutional safeguard. Who can/should I run to?: My Church or My State or the UN?

What did this thought experiment teach me? First, it taught me that to appreciate authentic faith and practices, I must investigate and discern the causes of vulnerable people's suffering. Second, we must be challenged to be educated and then educate other Christians about institutional and cultural evils in our society: ecclesial, national, global.

This should be part of the philosophical and theological formation of future pastors. I shall outline other ones now in the final part of this lecture.

#### 5. Proposals and Prospects for Further Research

What does the debate around "NGE" and global ethics from a Christian (Roman Catholic approach) demand of Today's and tomorrow's missionaries, in a postsecular age with "broken boundaries"

David Carroll Cochran, "Toward a Catholic Understanding of American Multiculturalism," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 3, no. (Winter 2006) 7-8

This thought experiment has been adopted from Laurie Cassidy's experiment on racism during the reign of racist terror in the days of institutional racial segregation. See Laurie Cassidy, "Affirming *Imago Dei*: Implications of the Black Catholic Congress Movement's exception of *Rerum Novarum* no. 32 for Moral Reasoning in Suffering," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 49.

### 5.1. Developing Bilingual Competence: Taking Up Benedict XVI's Challenge

Some moments ago, I said, citing Pope Benedict XVI, that "engagement confrontation" process is "the real, great task of this hour."<sup>31</sup>

The question I want to ask is: 'Are we sufficiently prepared to follow Pope Benedict XVI and the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation?' Are the future pastors in formation here in the Seminary sufficiently prepared for this 'real, great task of this hour'?

I wish to suggest that one way that we can prepare ourselves and those in formation for this task is to develop what I call 'bilingual competence'. It means the competence to speak the language of faith and of postmodernity (or any other "post" words).

The "bilingual approach" that Pope Benedict endorses which balances both worlds of postmodernity and Christian tradition – is crucial if one does not want to impose Christian theological presuppositions on the loci of global responsibility ethic we have been reflecting upon in this lecture. In constitutionally pluralist societies (like Nigeria and most of our missions), bilingual capability offers the possibility for people who do not share elemental passions associated with our "covenantal community/communitarianism" to see and appreciate "the authority of its ethical implications."<sup>32</sup> However, the genius of this approach is that it is able to grasp the contextual ethic in question and allow it to challenge Christian tradition, especially Roman Catholic Church and its current discourse, on the place of global ethics in ecclesial mission.

### 5.2. Rethinking Natural Law and Christian 'Global Ethics'

I come to perhaps the most uneasy part for me, because it takes a critical look at an approach that is so dominant in our Roman Catholic tradition that is unfortunately functioning as "conversation stopper". Of course, I am referring to "Natural Law" thinking. Today, as we have seen clearly from Ms Peeters' interventions and hermeneutics, NL is used to set limits on human actions and activities against that which goes contrary to "natural teleologies of biological necessities."<sup>33</sup> Yet, according to Paulinus Odozor, a Nigerian Cssp priest at Notre Dame University, Aquinas used NL to affirm the "goodness

<sup>31</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Brueggemann, "Law as Response," 103. Compare this with Jürgen Habermas' concept of "deliberative politics", a socially integrative function which does not necessarily take over or impose visions and convictions on legitimate legal institutions in pluralist states in many post-colonial nations. See Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans., William Rehg, Paperback ed. (Cambridge; Oxford: Polity, 1997), 274-288.

<sup>33</sup> Paulinus Odozor, *Moral Theology in An Age of Renewal: A Study of Catholic Traditions Since Vatican II* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 167. This is what Charles Curran, many years ago, referred to as physicalism – "the tendency to identify the moral act with the physical structure of the act," when in fact the physical structure is just a part of the human person. Therefore, to locate the morality of human action in an aspect of the polygonal person is indeed unacceptable. Cf Charles Curran, "Utilitarianism and Contemporary Moral Theology: Situating Debates," *Louvain Studies* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 239-255, p. 249.

of creation and drawing out the social implications of that affirmation,” against those who denied anything good in matter.<sup>34</sup>

So, a missionary institution like NAMISEM, preparing young men for missionary work in any part of the globe, has to equip these young men with tools on how to think through “conversation stoppers” couched as NL in global ethics. Let’s revisit some of those realities usually coupled together in NL discourse: “natural/artificial, contra natura/abnormal vs. Normal/reasonable”. What is natural and what is not? What is normal and what is not?

There was a time when some things were “natural” – not offensive to natural moral order. But today, according to global moral consensus, they are no longer normal; they are even seen as against “natural moral order”. “Slavery” is one notorious example. Slavery was not only permitted by the Roman Catholic Church. At some point, it was regarded as being part of the “natural moral order”. Slavery continued in the Papal States into early nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Fast forward to twentieth century, Pope John Paul II declared that slavery is “intrinsically evil”, i.e. “contra naturam”. How come what was natural/normal then is now contra natura /not normal?

There was a time when humans were not wearing clothes or cooking their food, making us the only mammal that processes its food. In other words, wearing clothes or cooking food are “unnatural”, yet they are “normal” for us. How did we get here i.e. making a distinction between “the unnatural but reasonable and normal”.

There was a time in some places in Nigeria that twin births were “unnatural” and “abnormal”. Hence, twins were killed or abandoned in the sacred forests. Today, twin births still remain exceptions to the rule. Twin births remain in the minority, just as left-handed persons are exceptions to the rule. However, today we recognise that these exceptions (minority occurrences) are every inch natural and normal – not artificial, and they are not against “natural moral order”. How did we get to this level of distinction which is an expression of ethical sophistication and nuance?

There was a time taking interest on loans was mortal sin and contra naturam. But today, it is regarded as “natural”, “normal” such that those who protest against “interest on loans” are considered “unreasonable” or perhaps “non-progressive”, or “fanatics”. Yet, till 1830, taking interest on loans was “intrinsically evil”. How did we get to making this distinction?

We see here three things:

<sup>34</sup> Odoror, *Moral Theology in An Age of Renewal*, 167.

<sup>35</sup> John Noonan Jr.; *A Church that Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), chapters 13, 14, 15.

- a) The critical function of human reasoning.
- b) An openness to the prompting of the Spirit, who relentlessly leads us to the deeper and complete truth, and
- c) The dynamic discernment of the Christian community (*sensus fidelium*) after it might have been cured of its "scotosis" (a blind spot).<sup>36</sup>

What do these say to present and future missionaries?

- I. It is not everything that is "conventional" which is in accord with right reason and faithful to the promptings of the Spirit.
- II. It is not everything that is an exception to the rule (norm) which is unnatural, artificial and against the natural moral order.
- III. We must be careful not to overrate the significance of minority occurrences. They might or will remain minority, though normal and natural. Yet, these equally, or rather more significantly, need constitutional and legal safeguards without accepting to turn them into the normative. We must learn to steer clear of double tyrannies: "tyranny of the majority" and "tyranny of the minority".
- IV. We must as intellectuals discover, name and admit our "scotosis" which can impede us from recognising the prompting of the Spirit and *sensus fidelium*.

### 5.3. Lecture's Topic as a Case Study

Using this debate as a case study, let me offer some indications for further research and academic engagements that we might pursue.

#### 5.3.1. Philosophers and Students of Philosophy

I'll begin with the philosophers and students of philosophy.

##### 5.3.1.1. Following Ongoing Controversies about Postmodernity

To maximally profit from the debate on NGE and Christian vision for Global ethics in a postsecular age, thus preparing us for the missionary challenges of today, there is the need to teach and reflect on postmodernity, its histories and epistemological pillars in Cultural Studies and Philosophy. The debate on the NGE is a manifestation of the ongoing controversies about postmodernity. Our Philosophy Department needs to pay closer and serious attention to these.

<sup>36</sup> Lonergan defines "scotosis", a dramatic bias, as "an aberration of understanding" arising "not in conscious acts, but in censorship that governs the emergence of psychic contents." It consists in "spontaneous exclusion of unwanted insights." There may be times that these unwanted insights are accepted as correct, but they do not last in those who have not yet undergone intellectual conversion and cured of their scotoma because their bias still makes them exclude "relevant further questions." Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, revised ed. (London; New York, NY: Darton; Philosophical Library, 1973), 191-192. Cited also in Jerome Madueke, "Intellectual Formation," in *New Techniques in Formation: Educating Seminarians for Healthy Sexuality and Celibate Living And Materialism and Priestly Life in Nigeria (Proceedings of the National Seminaries Committee Workshops 2002, 2003, 2005)*, ed Charles Hammawa (Ekpoma, Makurdi, Ibadan: National Seminaries Committee, 2007), 49.

### 5.3.1.2. Women Issues, Feminist Theories and Culture Wars

We, especially traditional Roman Catholic academic institutions and scholars (and you can add pastors too), easily point out the culture and gender wars of the sixties which manifested in what Peeters severally referred to as the "erotic revolution". These were the harbingers of the gender, sexual, and epistemological distortions we are fighting against today. But some crucial questions are: As an academic institution committed so much to the culture of life and "evangelium vitae" (gospel of life), have we ever had as much as a seminar or public lectures on women issues and feminist studies, in order to grasp the major issues and contestations which should hermeneutically inform our philosophical contributions on these? Isn't it high time, this institution training people to be missionaries who will work most times with women, paid academic and pedagogic attention to this question: what do women want in and from life? What do they want as biological beings, as human persons, and as believers?

### 5.3.2. Theologians and Students of Theology

Let me now turn to my primary constituency – theology.

#### 5.3.2.1. NGE Debate and Contextual Theologies

The instinct of a Roman Catholic theologian dealing with the "New Global Ethic" is to begin with dogmatic affirmations or "moral theology of sexuality". I had the instinct. As an academic institution forming young men and the not that young for missionary work, its "comparative advantage" at least among Nigerian Catholic seminaries should be Mission Theologies and Contextual Theologies.

Accordingly, we need to ask ourselves this question: How much of the tensions and contestations like the topic of this lecture have consciously and decisively informed and inspired the curriculum and overall pedagogical approaches in the theology department? The contestations and quarrels around the "New Global Ethic" have contextual accents and formulations. For some Christian theologians in the Western hemisphere, the quarrels about NGE can be understood within the context of "the absence/murder of the father-figure – the absence/murder of God". However, in sub-Saharan Africa, the quarrels need to be understood within the context of "too much God – excessive religiosity as opposed to mature faith".

#### 5.3.2.2. The Implication of the Loss of Christian Grandnarratives in Systematic Theology and Biblical Studies

To our dogmatists (or systematic theologians, if you prefer) and the biblical scholars, please consider the following: How you respond to or pedagogically articulate or will incorporate in your reflections to us the hermeneutics of the "absence of the Father – the murder of God" as part of postmodernity's deconstruction of Christian grandnarratives. In other words, the contestations about human existence, choices and lifestyle today cannot

be separated from the loss of Christianity's grandnarratives and truths that are normative and valid for all peoples and contexts. Even among these theologians, there are considerable ideological chasms. Nowhere is this found more than the discussions on what the bible says about same-sex relationship and contraception.<sup>37</sup> We'll profit from these debates to the extent we're open to doing theology in another mode – or including new areas in Dogmatic Theology and Biblical Studies, for instance the theological implication of the irreversible globalisation ethos leading to a "unipolar" world from the perspective of Biblical creation narratives; feminist hermeneutics on the Godhead and biblical exegetical methods; expert seminars anchored by experts in Feminist Studies regarding the pillars and paradigms of the NGE.

### 5.3.2.3. Moral Theology and Moral Reasoning

How can I forget my own discipline – Theological Ethics (or if you wish, "Moral Theology")? In some sense, people see the NGE as a frontal attack on traditional Roman Catholic Sexual/Conjugal ethics. This is correct to some extent. But how do we structure and formulate our interventions – both in class and other public discourses? From the observations and discussions during my fourth movement, you will recall that I have offered sufficient indications for my discipline already.

There is only one thing I want to reiterate: the NGE debate should be moved closer to Catholic Social Thought tradition of enquiry than the Roman Catholic sexual ethics, so that our people will worry less about the disconnection or discrepancy between the methodological approaches in Roman Catholic sexual ethics and CST.

### Concluding Remarks

i. The NGE and its values show us how noble ideals can become sinister and anarchic. Peoples in the South must watch out for double patronising: from advocates of NGE, and from the crusaders against NGE. We must engage in rigorous discernment, using postmodern deconstruction to sift the interventions about NGE. The South is becoming an ideological battleground as in the Cold War era. To be equipped to engage in the debate about the NGE we must become acquainted with postmodernity, viz: Cultural Studies; Postmodern Philosophy; Postmodern Theology. Without this, we will merely be parroting what intellectuals in the North are spewing out.

ii. Within the eschatological approach to global ethics, "broken boundaries" is a metaphor for our present reality that will pass away at the fullness of time. Therefore, we should not be paralysed by brokenness because when the new day fully breaks, what shall remain unbroken in this world? Only two truths: God is love, and We're loved by a Just

<sup>37</sup> James Keenan, "The Open Debate: Moral Theology and the Lives of Gay and Lesbian Persons," *Theological Studies* 63, no. (2002) 127-150.

God irrespective of our differences, diversities and orientations, even if we're not open to that love.

iii. Religion and secularisation need not be played against each other as if we either choose religion or secularisation in constructing a world of equality or at least equity. On the contrary, there is the need for "a more nuanced, less oppositional, understanding" of both.<sup>38</sup> We need to move from the disturbing polemic that characterises the discussion about justice in the globalised world, especially with regard to global issues discussed by social ethicists and commentators, like Peeters. We must move beyond the polemics of Roman Catholic interlocutors like Peeters and some pro-life organisations as well as some militant atheists like Peter Singer and Richard Dawkins, the author of *The God Delusion*.

iv. The polemic between religion and secularisation today came about because the secular theory has been associated with Western Enlightenment hegemony. Hence, religion became in postcolonial, even postmodern, contexts "one of the vehicles for challenging the global distribution of power."<sup>39</sup> However, this polemic creates iron-cast separation between convinced religious actors and convinced secularisation advocates in relation to the theory and practice of government. As a Christian ethicist (or Moral Theologian), I agree with Anne Philips, a professor of Gender and Political Theory, at the London School of Economics, that networking (alliance) and compromise (consensus) are dispositions and praxis that hold better promise in responding to moral dilemmas of how to act politically, and in an organised manner for the sake of effective results and end in view.<sup>40</sup>

v. There might be problems and tensions with networking and compromise in this world of broken boundaries because of the nature of religion and secularisation. Religious actors come into the public space with predetermined principles which make some actors less open to deliberative outcome of the networking. Hence, there is the need for secularity that balances or checks religion especially if it is contributing to depriving lands and peoples some basic existential needs. That is one of the senses I make of my colleague, Sr Dr Winifred Eche's contribution in the seminary's journal, *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, where she enumerates the "five manifestations of gender inequality in Africa", and the complicity of religious traditions in this inequality, thus necessitating "women empowerment".<sup>41</sup> How can we overcome the manifestations of

<sup>38</sup> Anne Philips, "Religion: Ally, Threat or Just Religion?", in *A Debate on the Public Role of Religion and its Social and Gender Implications*, ed. José Casanova and Anne Philips, *Gender and Development Programme Paper* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, September 2009), 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Winifred Eche, "Religion and Gender Inequality in Africa," *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 1, no. (June 2011): 206-214.

gender inequality, for instance, in several places where religion is complicit in producing non-liberal and non-egalitarian outcomes without some good dose of secularity?<sup>42</sup>

vi. Religion, nonetheless, is needed in public because a secularised civil society (i.e. civil society that rejects religions' contributions) cannot be relied upon to exclusively produce egalitarian visions and projects. We must search through our religious traditions and cultures insights and authorities that we can bring into the public discourse for a common ethic of loving justice.

Thanks for your patient attention.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Shahra Razavi, "Foreword," in *A Debate on the Public Role of Religion and its Social and Gender Implications*, ed. José Casanova and Anne Philips (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, September 2009), v.