



IN SEARCH OF CRITERIA FOR AN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGY OF JOSEPH RATZINGER

- ▣ **First Thesis:** Catholic Theology is an on-going conversation that began about two thousand years ago. It therefore behooves on theological reflections to take cognizance of this on-going conversation, especially as the faith encounters a new culture.
- ▣ **Second Thesis:** Joseph Ratzinger (since 2005 Pope Benedict XVI) identifies the providential encounter between Christian faith and Greco-Roman culture as a reference point in the faith's encounter with a new /changing culture. In this encounter which took place in an intercultural context, the Christian faith was in dialogue with the Greco-Roman culture in a double counter point: it identified with the rationality in Greek culture/philosophy against the myths of ancient religions, and yet continued to express itself as a religion, in contrast to the non-religious 'God of philosophy'. It is in this matrix that the basic dogmatic and canonical forms of our catholic faith were formulated.
- ▣ **Statement of Problem:** 1) What implications does this initial encounter have for Christianity's encounter with African culture as it concerns the content of the faith and as a model for the faith's engagement with new cultures? 2) How can a proper retrieval of African culture in its interculturality identify the unique features of African culture and the universality of the Christian faith in this encounter?
- ▣ **Provisional Hypothesis:** An adequate criteria for Christianity in African today would demand a dual study and a critical retrieval of Christian and African traditions in a critical engagement with the present reality of faith and culture in Africa. A careful attention to the points of continuities and discontinuities in this encounter is vital to the shape of a plausible African Christianity.

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