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## **The Catholic Church on Path of Advocating for Good Governance in Ghana**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper documents significant attempts of the Catholic Church towards the process of promoting good governance in Ghana. The main objective of the study is to articulate and put into perspective the Church's intrinsic interest and commitment to promote good governance. The process of democratization across Africa demands commitment from the state and civil society organizations. In Ghana the period preceding the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution was a turbulent. It was characterized by civil society organizations' criticisms of the military regime's continual stay in power and violations of fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression. Since 1992, the Church has not relented in her efforts at expressing concerns over issues of public interest such as bribery and corruption, accountability and degradation of the environment, which if not adequately addressed could compromise gains made in promoting good governance. The study reviews articles, documents and essays from varied sources on some areas of interest to the research topic. The study concludes that despite challenges involved in good governance advocacy, the Church can make strident efforts at ensuring that Justice and Peace Commissions are functional and dynamic enough to be able to actively collaborate with public and private institutions on issues of good governance.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, civil society organizations, good governance, corruption, public interest

### **Introduction**

Ghana has come quite a long way in her quest for ensuring good governance in the process of democratization. Despite the challenges involved in the process, unique initiatives embarked by the government and civil society organizations are evidences of a clear departure from the old ways of doing things. In describing this refreshing development, which is part and parcel of similar developments evolving across Africa, Prof. S.K.B Asante has noted: "Since the adoption of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a process of transformation in good governance is on the increase in Africa.

There are visible improvements in Africa's governance. Constitutionalism, the rule of law and multi-party elections, though fraught with challenges, are increasingly enjoying wider acceptance than ever before in many African countries, while on the economic front, Africa is experiencing its strongest growth acceleration" (Asante, 2013). The APRM has opened up space for civil society engagement in national dialogue, providing what Asante (2013) described aptly as a niche that progressive Ghanaians could use to create a better understanding of democracy, leading to a society where public opinion cannot be easily disregarded. The Church's dynamism in this space created is evidenced by its active involvement in the Ghana National Peer Review Governing Council (GNAPRM-GC). The Catholic Church membership in GNAPRM-GC has proved useful in the sense that it has been able to add value to some on-going programmes of the Church on good governance in Ghana.

Notably, the terms "governance" and "good governance" are being increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within our societies. Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aid and loans on the condition that reforms that ensure "good governance" are undertaken (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2014).

Since Ghana attained independence in 1957, effective governance of the country has been problematic. Despite promises of democracy and good governance, in many African countries there are manifestations of bad governance ranging from one-party authoritarian governance and dictatorship to military regimes. Rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights were thrown overboard. In Ghana's search for a peaceful,

harmonious and dynamic socio-economic and political environment in which development initiatives can thrive, the Catholic Church has always demonstrated its unflinching commitment to the course for good governance, justice and peace.

The Church sees good governance as a service to the growth and integral development of people. The process of engendering good governance requires effective leadership, guided by moral principles of the social order and in accordance with Divine wisdom and the mandate of the church: “Go into the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation,” (Mk 16: 15) so that all men and women will be enlightened by the Gospel values and be enabled to interpret today’s reality and seek the appropriate paths of action. The mandate given to the Church is enshrined in the New and Old Testament, the Magisterium of the Church and other well thought out utterances coming from Pontifical Councils, Bishops’ Conferences and writers in the Church.

As regards good governance, it is interesting to note that the Book of Wisdom begins its instructions in this manner: “Love justice, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord with uprightness and seek him with sincerity of heart” (Wis 1: 1). What this text seems to bring out is that good governance stems from divine wisdom which in turn gives birth to the justice administered by those who govern. From such justice comes concord, which brings about the harmonious cultivation of virtues that produce the mature fruits of good governance. Catholic Church as used in this paper means both the individual believer and the corporate body of all baptized and the institutional entity, all of which are part and partial of the social community. In this sense, the Church is taken to be “a living, dynamic community which is part of society and which shares in all the challenges society experiences” (Waliggo, 1999). The study covers the following areas:

Basis for the Church's Interest in Good Governance, Principles Underscoring the Church's Approach to Governance, Contributions of the Church on Good Governance in Ghana and Church Advocacy for Good Governance: The Challenges Involved.

### **Basis for the Church's Interest in Good Governance**

The teaching and spreading of the Church's social doctrine on the promotion of an integral and social humanism, like good governance, are part of a genuine pastoral priority. The Church cannot, therefore, tire of proclaiming the Gospel that brings salvation and genuine freedom to the temporal realities. She is mindful of the solemn exhortation given by St. Paul to his disciple Timothy: "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching....." (2 Tim 4:2-5).

Good governance is built on four thematic areas of democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. One can look at the Church's approach to promoting good governance right from the early days of the Church. In the face of a controversy in the Church between Jews and non-Jews, the Apostles called a meeting to discuss the separation of powers leading to the institution of deacons who were not experts but men with good reputation. Gossip, envy and jealousy never lead to concord, to harmony or peace (Acts 6: 1-7). Ecumenical Councils, especially Lateran Council IV and Vatican Council II provide ample material of the Universal Church's approach to good governance. Papal documents related to the concept of good governance include: Pope Leo XIII (1891), Pope Benedict XVI (2009), Pope John XXIII *Mater et Magistra* (1961),

*Pacem in Terris* (1963), Pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) Pope John Paul II *Redemptoris Hominis* (1979), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Familiaris Consortio* (1982) *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), Pope Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) *Africae Munus* (2011), and Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).

It is obvious that the motivation of the church to be involved in issues of governance can be traced to the social teachings of the church as found, taught and recommended in the encyclical letters of the Popes of this and the last century. The papal encyclical letters focuses on how to guide all in the formation of a correct conscience in matters of public life – economic, social, political and cultural. Just as Pope John Paul XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) of 1963 offers the world a program for the achievement of social and universal peace, justice, charity and freedom. On the local front in many countries, based on the sanity of the existing social, cultural, economic and political contexts the hierarchy of the Church may issue pastoral letters, statements, a memoranda and communiqués on important issues of national concern to political leadership of the country. The adoption of such a stance of the Catholic Church in Ghana is confirmed by Jallow (2014:11):

.... in Ghana, the Catholic hierarchy and press has remained consistently engaged with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. From 1968 to date, the Church has addressed issues of social justice not only through the editorial pages of *The Standard*, but also through pastoral letters, memoranda and communiqués occasionally issued by the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The thrust of this paper is to articulate and put into perspective the Church's intrinsic interest on issues of good governance.

### **Principles Underscoring the Church's Approach to Governance**

***Church's Approach: Authority and Governance***

The Social Doctrine of the Church points out: “the social nature of man shows that there is an inter-dependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society. In so far as man by his nature stands completely in need of society, he is and ought to be the beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization. Through his dealings with others, through mutual services, and through fraternal dialogue, man develops all his talents and becomes able to rise to his destiny.” (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* No. 25). From our study of the Social Doctrine of the Church one realizes that among the social ties necessary for man’s development, good governance is needed to achieve the end that without it seems unachievable. The full growth of each member of the body politic calls for a steadfast cooperation of every member with the political authority, provided that the latter exercises authority in a transparent and accountable manner.

Good Governance must aim at the service of authentic human development with due respect for the rights and dignity of every human person. According to Ebelei (2011: 23) critical monitoring and public discussion of governance have long been core elements of civil society activities in Africa. These actors, including the Church are still driving the public discourse about governance.

***The Church's Approach: Principle of Subsidiarity***

Good Governance must also respect the principle of subsidiarity, which alerts those in authority to allow certain decisions to be taken at the lower level. Rather than a



top down approach, a down top one should be preferred. The principle of subsidiarity does not apply simply to the vertical level, it is also valid on the horizontal level with respect to organizations, institutions, community groups and NGOs.

Arguably, it is difficult to see in structural terms how this principle practically operates to benefit those persons at the lower end of the spectrum of governance systems within the church and the state.

### ***The Church's Approach: Common Good***

Another key element of good governance refers to the common good of all people either as groups or individuals. Good governance wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level in order to attain the good of all people and of the whole person (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 165). The government of the day has the specific duty to harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice by fulfilling the needs of not just the majority but especially the needs of the minority.

Above all, the government has to acknowledge that the common good is a means to an end and that the ultimate end is the relationship with God and the universal common good of the whole of creation. The Social Doctrine of the Church urges that the common good involves all members of a given society; no one is exempted from cooperating, according to one's possibilities, in attaining it through the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it were one's own good (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 167).

It is daunting to carry through this principle, considering the diverse nature of the Ghanaian society with its complex socio-cultural and religious dimensions. In seeking the good of others, devoid of any form of discrimination the Church in Ghana has an open door policy in education towards admitting Muslim students into Christian educational establishments. However, on February 20, 2015 Muslims in the Western Region of Ghana took to the streets in a peaceful demonstration to protest what they said was manifest discrimination against them on the basis of religion in the various schools. The aggrieved protestors claimed Muslim girls have been prevented from wearing their *hijab* (veils that cover the head and chests of women beyond the age of puberty). In response to such claims, Archbishop Emeritus Peter K. Sarpong in an article in the Catholic Messenger (2015:24-26) has posed the question: Is the Catholic Church Institutionally Unfair? Sarpong underlines the unbiased open door policy of the Church in education and health in the following way:

The truth of the matter is that the Catholic Church never, whether in Ghana or in other African countries or in Europe and America ever discriminates against non-Catholics seeking admission to their institutions. This applies to health institutions as much as educational institutions. The statistics are there for any unbiased observer to see.

Apparently the Church's open door policy in education is being questioned because of alleged abuses against Muslim on the basis of religion in some basic schools, including mission schools. Consequently, currently in the basic educational front the Church is set on a path towards a re-articulation of her decade-long agenda of promotion of the common good through a national dialogue with relevant stakeholders (Daily Graphic, 2015:43). It is important to underline that our peaceful co-existence as a human family should take precedence over any form of religious expediency.

***The Church's Approach: Integral Humanism***

Human beings are creatures of God-given dignity and each person has equal standing to claim that he or she is to be respected. St. John Paul II believes that the human person is a full person only in relation to the mystery of God who knows his/her rightful place in the order of creation (John Paul II, *Centissimus Annus* 1991; nos. 53, 55). Hence the kind of development that the governments pursue must be for the whole person. Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* says: "Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every person and of the whole person". The government should not be just concerned with "how much is a nation producing" as "how are its people faring"? The citizen should be gauged by the indexes of: satisfaction of material needs, reformed social structures that eliminate oppression, opportunities for learning and appreciating culture, cooperating for the common good, and working for peace, acknowledgement of moral values and their transcendent source, the gift of faith and the deepening of unity and love.

***The Church's Approach: Solidarity***

An important building block of Good Governance is solidarity. Human beings are social beings; and living with others in a community is "an expression of the basic unity of humankind" (Himes, 2008: 275). The creation stories inform us that God created human beings for each other. All human beings live under the loving gaze of the God who is the creator of all humankind. Our Christian faith in the Trinity informs us that communion is at the heart of community life and that "human dignity can be realized and

protected only in community. Building bonds between the individuals and groups helps to foster conditions within which human beings can flourish, precisely because we are social beings” (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* no. 38).

The government of the day needs to ensure that all fellow citizens are interdependent in as much as they are in solidarity. Interdependence is described as “a system determining relationships in contemporary world” and solidarity as the “correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a virtue” (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, no. 38).

Indeed, the affective aspect of solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortune of others but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good of all. Further on John Paul II elaborates that solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’ – whether as a person, a nation – not just as an instrument.....but as our neighbor, a helper (Gen 2: 18-20) to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which we are equally invited by God” (Ibid no. 39).

### ***The Church’s Approach: Justice***

An indispensable building block for Good Governance is Justice. Let us recall that the Book of Wisdom which focuses so much on Good Governance begins with this lead verse: “Love justice, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord with uprightness and seek him with sincerity of heart” (Wis 1: 1). In order to ensure the growth of a truly human community among the citizens of any nation, the government must ensure justice for all. In a nation that subscribes to a free market economy, the teachings of Pope Leo

XIII in *Rerum novarum* calls for natural justice that ensures that the citizens' wages be set at a level that supports "a frugal and well behaved wage-earner" (Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, 1891 no. 45).

In justice, the government is duty-bound to honor the set of rights listed out in the Social Teachings of the Church. St. John Paul II in his Encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* enumerated such human rights as:

The right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and the right to freely establish a family, to have to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person" (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church no 155).

The government is morally bound to honor the human right to religious freedom which is "based on the dignity of the human person and that it must be sanctioned as a civil right in the legal order of society" and "it is a right that concerns not only people as individuals but also the different communities of people" (Vatican II; *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 2).

The right of religious freedom specifies that "all women and men are to be immune from coercion on the part of the individuals or of social groups and any human power, in such ways that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his/her own beliefs with due limits (Vatican II; *Dignitatis Humanae* no. 2). Respect of this right is indicative sign of mankind's "authentic progress in any regime, in any society, system or milieu" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Hominis*, no. 17).

### **The Contribution of the Church to Good Governance in Ghana**

In Ghana the role of the Church as a mediator, civic educator, defender and promoter of human rights, an attentive and impartial listener as well as her partnership role with civil society organisations (CSOs) is documented in the form of Communiqués and Pastoral Letters, which have been collated in two volumes entitled: *Ghana Catholic Bishops Speak*. These communiqués take into consideration all aspects of good governance including, human rights abuses and the care for our environment. Much of what the Church has had the occasion to comment on essentially touch on the major characteristics of good governance: participation, consensus-oriented, rule of law, responsive, equitable and inclusive, effective and efficient, accountable and transparent.

One essential dimension of good governance, which the Church in her advocacy role has never lost sight of, is the need for transparency in conducting business of governance in order to limit if not completely eradicate the incidence of bribery and corruption. The 1997 Advent Pastoral Letter – ‘Message to our nation on bribery and corruption by the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference stated:

In Ghana today, bribery and corruption may be found in our courts and tribunals leading to the perversion of justice at times, behavior abhorred by God and condemned by the prophets (See Amos 8:6; Ex. 23: 6-8; Dt. 16: 18-19). It is bribery and corruption on our roads, resulting in gross disregard for traffic rules and regulations and consequently causing the loss of precious lives through accidents that could have been averted. (Ghana Bishops Speak, 1999: 299-300).

Media revelations on incidence of bribery and corruption in some public offices such as the Driver Vehicle and Licensing Authority (Nyabor, 2014), highlight the attention GCBC has been drawing to all well-meaning Ghanaians over the years to take concrete steps to stop such negative practices. The Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference is relentless in calling for leaders to combine leadership qualities with integrity as well as

showing willingness to place service before reward (Ghana Bishops Speak, 1999: 40-43 & Sarpong, 2015:5). The prophetic witness of the Church is relevant and must be felt across all segments of the society because Church leadership warns people and society at large to do whatever is possible to prevent insecurity and untold hardships to God's people.

In the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province in Ghana, the Church under the auspices of the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference (TEPPCON) has through partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) organized seminars and workshops on good governance. A committee was charged with the development of a manual on the Social Teaching of the Church with particular reference to "Good Democratic and Political Governance." The workshops were targeted at vulnerable groups like women and even certain men who are marginalized in our political and social affairs. Members of the Church are required to stand for Mission, Justice, Peace and Development.

Therefore, Christians must see themselves not just as citizens but also as persons with a mission to transform this world into a better place for everyone to live a decent human life. This awareness could be created through the kind of civic education programmes espoused in the "Manual for Good Governance and Development at Local Level" (TEPPCON, 2006). A wide range of sensitization was carried out in 2008 in the three Northern Regions of Ghana to let all and sundry realize their rights and obligation to actively participate in political activities.

Furthermore in a bid to promote good governance, in conjunction with the National Catholic Secretariat, the Diocese of Wa has been able to monitor and observe presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. The key role played by the Catholic Church in Ghana has been tremendous, especially in the 2008 and 2012 national elections. The membership of the Catholic Church in the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) of Ghana has positively influenced electoral democracy in Ghana (see [www.ideg.org](http://www.ideg.org)). The Catholic Church participated in a campaign CFI launched in 2008 on civic and community actions in support of the cleaning of the voters register for the December 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections. Highlights of the activities included:

- Training Workshops for observers and civic educators (national and regional trainings)
- Convening of the first National Forum of the CFI
- Regional outreach activities and publicity campaigns on cleaning of voters register
- Domestic election observation
- Media engagements (interviews, press statements etc)
- Coordination, documentation and publication

The Most Rev. Paul Bemile, Bishop of Wa Diocese has noted that it is not an exaggeration to state that without the intervention of the Church in negotiation with political parties, Ghana could have been plunged into a civil war following national elections in 2012.

Launched in 2013, it is expected that the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office (CPL0), which is managed by the Directorate of Governance, Justice and Peace when fully accredited would enhance the advocacy role of the Church in Ghana with respect to good governance. According to the Episcopal Chairman for Justice and Peace, Bishop Paul Bemile, the CPL0 would facilitate contact and dialogue between the Catholic



Church in Ghana on the one hand and the country's Legislature and Executive on the other. The CPLO would provide an avenue for the Church as part of civil society to influence public policy for the common good in the areas of politics, economics and social concerns, and shape legislative and policy development. One other function of CPLO would involve the making of formal submissions on legislation before parliament which are supplemented to oral presentation to relevant Parliamentary Committees as well as the making of written responses to policy documents such as government white papers, reports on commissions and inputs into bills. In South Africa, the application of the CPLO approach to governance is quite instructive and productive.

### **Church Advocacy for Good Governance: the Challenges Involved**

The Church in Ghana faces some major challenges in her efforts to champion the course of good governance in Ghana. The Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference's approach to advocacy on issues of good governance, based to a large extent on the preparation and diffusion of communiqués, memoranda and pastoral letters, tend to outshine attempts to devise practical measures in collaboration with other stakeholders to tackle factors inhibiting good governance in Ghana.

The top-down approach<sup>1</sup> the Church applies in voicing out her concerns about problems of good governance in Ghana appears one-sided because arguably the active

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<sup>1</sup> Srampickal (2009: 55-59) has observed that this approach/model was dominant for far too long, with serious effects on the life and mission of the Church. There was more of 'hierarcheology' than ecclesiology. With the over-emphasis on authority, there was a corresponding lack of laity's involvement. Clearly, such an approach does not prefer communication, understood as sharing, participation, creating meaning together etc, but purely as giving information and clarified concepts. A more people-centred approach – a "Secular-Dialogic model" can prove efficacious in facilitating efforts toward advocating for

participation of the lay people in the process is either limited or virtually absent depending on the circumstances. The newly Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana, Most Rev. Jean Marie Speich, highlighted this fact when he called on the laity in the Catholic Church to also speak up on issues affecting the Ghanaian society and not always depend on the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference to do so (Salia, 2014: 33). Tackling issues of good governance in an effective and efficient manner requires broad consultations and consensus-building first within the Church, and secondly collaboratively with state institutions such as the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice.

Furthermore, offices set up to facilitate and promote the Church's efforts in promoting good governance are often challenged in terms of staff and logistics. There is the need for GCBC to strongly support the start-up operations CPLO in Ghana to enable the Office meet the expectations of the Church and the public at large.

## **Conclusion**

Good governance is a practice much needed in Ghana, especially as the country continues to ride over the waves of a political system dominated by two main parties – the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic party. The tendency of polarization in accordance with partisan politics has given rise to a political uncertainty. This is the time to ensure that all citizens are brought on board to stay vigilant and check unguarded political utterances. A healthy competition between the two main parties,

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good governance in line with Pope John Paul II's concept of the modern *Areopagus*, the Church may be seen as the great roundtable where global exchange of information and co-operation takes place.

observing checks and balances, could result in having the good governance that the country yearns for.

The government of Ghana needs to demonstrate greater commitment to fostering harmony and social cohesion by ensuring that the NCCE is well resourced to mount civic education programs, which can enhance solidarity amongst diverse ethnic and political communities. The Directorate of Governance, Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church should collaborate more with CSO in Ghana and beyond such as the CPLO in South Africa to share its experiences and learn best practices from CPLO to improve on its activities and programmes.

The principles of good governance, which drives the Church towards initiating various projects and programs to complement the state in promoting the welfare of people, could have a wider scope and deeper meaning if all persons, especially the marginalized are empowered to actively participate. Therefore, it is important that the various Justice and Peace Commissions at the diocesan and parish levels are re-vitalized to perform their core functions effectively. Orobator (2015) notes:

Justice, Peace, and Development Commissions or JDPCs have become popular as a means of translating Catholic Social Teaching into the public sphere. The signs are hopeful and, perhaps, such initiative might prove to be successful than previous attempts to make Small Christian Communities the locus of political conscientization and social transformation in the Church in Africa. I am of the opinion that the Church in Africa would achieve greater success if more effort were invested in advocacy, in line the proposition of the second African Synod for Episcopal Conferences at all levels to establish advocacy bodies to lobby members of parliament, governments and international institutions, so that the Church can contribute effectively to formulations of just laws and policies for the people's good (Proposition 24)

Providing avenues for greater participation and consultation in the Church is a positive and a more pro-active response to the proclamations and provisions of the Second Vatican Council of 1965, which have been unambiguous about the role of the laity.

As the Church hierarchy calls on the laity in Ghana to be very active and apply its vast potential to the transformation of our society, it is important that professionals, particularly those working in Church Offices such as the Directorate of Good Governance, Justice and Peace are supported and given a free hand to operate in a transparent and responsible manner in order to effectively deliver on their mandates. It should be possible for the CPLO in Ghana to give quick responses to important events or developments in public policy without resorting to a cumbersome approach of seeking clearance from the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference.

As the encyclical, *Christifideles Laici (No. 15)* states: "*Lay people are called in the Church to seek the plan of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God.*" (John Paul II, 1998). It means that whenever standards of good governance stand the danger of being compromised or are blatantly compromised, lay people in partnership with the clergy and religious, CSO and government should take appropriate measures in a timely manner to demand social justice in the interest of the common good.

Indeed, the Church emphasizes that the political community exists for the common good: this is its justification and meaning and the source of its specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and

efficacious fulfillment (Vatican II, 1975: 981). The current dynamics of democracy in Ghana in which concern for the common good seems to be subordinated to parochial and partisan interests requires the Church to devise effective strategies aimed at promoting “multidimensional programs of civic education” and the encouragement of “competent and honest citizens to participate in party politics” (Second African Synod, Proposition No. 25).

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THE EVANGELIZING NAZARETH MAIDEN (LUKE 1, 39-45): PARADIGM FOR  
THE NEW EVAGELIZATION

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**Abstract**

The evolving organic nature of the human community continues to pose challenges in contextualizing the Gospel message for any age. Finding new ways to express the Good News for our epoch appears to be the crux of the new evangelization. Building on previous approaches to evangelization, this paper draws insight from Luke 1:39-45, particularly the character of the maiden from Nazareth, Mary. In the text, the author suggests that the appropriate response to the gift of faith is consistent with proclaiming that same faith in words and deeds. Mary, being evangelized by the God's agent, Gabriel, responds by bearing the good news of the Reign of God to, first her relative Elizabeth in the family household of Zachariah in an unnamed Judean hill country town. With hermeneutics of faith, gender as well as cultural hermeneutics as critical tool, the essay examines evangelization from the grassroots, the domain of women implying that the new evangelization cannot remain a top-down phenomenon. Works from biblical studies and African theologians will further illumine the Lucan text and show that the role of Mary in Luke's Infancy narrative amply suggests a groundswell of faith that can be appropriated as model for the new evangelization.

***Introduction***

Faith, the belief in the God revealed through Jesus Christ and, evangelization, facilitating this revelation to humankind remains the primary objective of the New Testament text. In the infancy narrative of the Gospel according to Luke, the author, through the instrumentality of the maiden from Nazareth, demonstrates clearly the affinity between faith and evangelization. The Nazareth maiden, Mary, having been evangelized by the God-self through the agency of angel Gabriel, offers back to society that which she received by becoming an evangelizer. For Luke, evangelization seems to suggest simultaneously a reception of the gift of the faith and an appropriate response to the gift by proclaiming that same faith in word and deeds. This essay appropriates similar understanding. Written in the characteristic of the Septuagint (LXX), Luke casts his Nazareth maiden in the mode of Israel's matriarchs, heroic women whose faithfulness

assisted in accomplishing the will of God in Israel.<sup>2</sup> In Luke 1, 39-45 the author substitutes his strong interest in Gentiles narratives for a pair of traditional Jewish women, Mary and Elizabeth. Drawing from this same Judaic background, Luke weaves his narrative around Elizabeth, a figure from the Old Testament, to meet Mary,<sup>3</sup> *proto evangelium* of salvation in the New Testament. Luke's interest, however, is not in these women as such. But his interest in them is primarily as vehicles of the Spirit, bearing witness to the good news, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. Historically interpreted from a Christological perspective, however, advocacy criticism<sup>4</sup> offers other readings of this Lukan text (I, 39-45). Reading from the perspective of the Nazareth maiden, hermeneutic of faith, suggests coming to faith as well as proclaiming that faith as primary insights from this Lukan text. Gender hermeneutics as well as cultural hermeneutics enables the rendering of the passage from "below". That is to say, evangelization is not a top-down phenomenon. In the context of their witness to Jesus Christ, early Christian depictions of Mary in writings and tradition, provide the main source for her life. Thus we can appropriate her as a paradigm of faith and evangelization. After considering the coming to faith of the maiden of Nazareth, the essay explores an exegetical survey of

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis C. Duling, *The New Testament: History, Literature, and Social Context*, Fourth Edition (Belmont, California: Thomas Wadsworth, 2003), 383.

<sup>3</sup>With these echoes from the Old Testament Luke ties the story of the beginning of the Jesus movement firmly to the ongoing narrative of God's one redemptive purpose. See, Richard B. Hays and Joel B. Green, "The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers", in Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 236.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Raymond E, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 20-47. Furthermore, advocacy criticism duly acknowledges the Historical-critical methods and goes further to interact with the text from an approach of "the world in front of the text" or a "reader-response approach". This approach allows the reader to "create" her/his encounter with the text. Eisegesis, that is, manipulating the meaning of the text to reflect the opinion of the reader, is one of the dangers associated with "reader-response" interpretative tool. This pitfall is cautiously rejected in this present work.

Luke 1, 39-45. Then it will move to insights drawn from the text to support the Church's new evangelization initiatives.<sup>5</sup>

### **MARY COMES TO FAITH**

The backdrop of Luke 1, 39-45 is the annunciation pericope (Luke 1, 26-38). In this text, Luke through the various layers of relationships establishes Mary's faith, as a faith borne out of a personal relationship with God: *ivdou. h` dou, lh kuri, ou* (Lo! The handmaid of the Lord). The Nazareth maiden perceives herself in relationship with God through God's Word: *ge, noito, moi kata. to. r`h/ma, sou* (be it done unto me according to thy WORD) (1, 38). Through Mary's utterance, the reader comes to perceive and identify relationship with the WORD as fundamental to faith. Grounded in her native religious tradition, which is rooted in fidelity to the covenant, Mary's faithfulness disposes her to trust the message of the angel Gabriel. Stated differently, Mary was already grounded in her own native religious traditions, the good news did not come to her on a *tabula rasa* (empty slate). Mary expressed her profound faith in her *fiat* (Luke 1, 38). Mary's whole being received the WORD. She thus becomes an embodiment of the

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<sup>5</sup> Evangelization as many understand it includes the many ways of bringing the Good News of salvation to the world. What then is the newness of the so-called new evangelization? The position taken in this essay is that New Evangelization begins with the self. It is a journey of faith, a reawakening that originates from the depths of one's being and embraces the immediate environment and extends to all humanity. The paper retrieves insights from Luke's infancy narrative to weave what it considers an evangelizing process of the Mary of Nazareth. First Mary had to be evangelized before she could evangelize others. In other words, evangelization is not only for the world out there. It is always two-fold. The Church and members have to first of all know, experience, and live out in their own lives the gospel as Good News before they can preach it to the world as the Good News of salvation. No one can give what s/he does not have. That was exactly what Mary did. She brought with her to Elizabeth's household everything she had and experienced: the Word made flesh in her womb, the Holy Spirit, the joy and strength of the Lord, and fullness of grace. Mary also experienced the Gospel as Good News in the sense that it lifted her up from the shadows, it was liberative and promoted or enhanced her human dignity as a woman in that ancient Jewish patriarchal culture, among others. She experienced the Good News from the angel as life-giving and life-affirming as she expresses in her *Magnificat*. This is the meaning of evangelization as used in the New Testament to understand the ministry of Jesus as *euangelion* and *euangelizomai*. It was all of these experiences and more that she brought with her to Elizabeth and her household. See, also Teresa Okure, "A New Testament Perspective on Evangelization and Human Promotion," in Justin S. Ukpong et al., *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects* (Port Harcourt, CIWA Press, 1992), 84-94.

new covenant, in which God's word is written not on tablets of stone, but deep within the human heart (Cf. Jer 31, 31-34). Unlike the Jeremiah text, Luke alludes to the planting of the word deep into the heart of Mary through the various movements: fear, listening, hearing, and pondering (vv. 26-38). A close reading of the process demonstrates a progression ultimately climaxing in owning that which was heard: Mary ponders the word in her heart and also treasures it in her heart. Deep down in the heart, is where the word finds room to mature, germinate, and begins to sink roots. Maturation of the word occurs deep within the heart. From here, the word grows and begins to spread. Pondering and treasuring brings forth a new relationship. The new relationship with God, which Mary foreshadows, is rooted in an intimate union with God. One may suggest that Mary brought her cultural hospitality to bear on the gospel as well in the process of her being evangelized. This relationship represents an important aspect of the dynamics of evangelization.

Mary, having come to faith, the divine evangelizer, Gabriel, withdrew and left her on her own (v. 38b) but not without assistance. Verse 38b, "Then the angel departed from her", offers a point of entry into Luke 1, 39-45. The angel left Mary but not without the creative power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1, 8), to assist her. The Spirit plays a connective role between the prophecy of Israel and the prophetic activity surrounding the birth of Jesus of which Mary is a central figure.<sup>6</sup> The transformative power of this same Holy Spirit thrusts Mary forth, she departs with haste to the hill country (v. 39). The suggestion here is that Mary, a Nazareth Jewish maiden, gradually constitutes a product of the new evangelization.

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Church the Apostles left behind* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 65.

***EXEGETICAL SURVEY OF LUKE 1, 39-45***

Luke 1, 39-45

39 During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, 40 where she entered the house of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And how does it happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled (*The Catholic Study Bible*, Second Edition).

Luke 1, 39-40. With an earnest and strong affection, Mary, fresh from her encounter with the angel Gabriel, "set out and traveled to the hill country in haste" to visit her relative, Elizabeth. Akin to the prophet Jeremiah, Mary would not settle down until the word she has received is proclaimed. For like the prophet, the word was like fire burning in her heart, imprisoned in her bones (Jer 20, 9). The word cannot be boxed neither can it be caged; it must be proclaimed. The beauty of this word, the good news, remains in its sharing. Only in sharing does the word becomes life-giving to the many. The prophet Isaiah praises the one who bears good tidings thus: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, Announces peace bearing good news, announcing salvation" (Isa 52, 7). Mary bears good news, a wholesome gift to all who hear them, Elizabeth and her entire household (Zachariah was dumb at the time (1, 20) and perhaps he was also deaf (1, 62).

Privy to a divine disclosure of Elizabeth's advanced pregnancy (1, 36), Mary makes bold to undertake the journey, through the hill country. Although the hills dominate the geographically landscape of Judea, metaphorically, "hill" can mean a

difficult situation. Thus traveling through the hill country reinforces the complexity of the environment evangelizers must navigate in the service of the word. While no instruction was given in the text, the inference was clear: Elizabeth would be an encouragement to Mary. Thus Mary quickly prepares and left with haste to visit this older female relative who at some level elucidate the experience of her divine visitation. Though Mary's immediate designation was the home of Elizabeth and Zachariah, the neighbors were not left out. In the African context, a visit of one's relative in a village setting becomes a visit to the neighbors as well. The assumption here is that Elizabeth's neighbors also shared the good news Mary brought. The reason why this could be is because the then Jewish society was as communalistic as is the situation in Nigerian.

The new evangelization invites a rendering of Mary's speedy visit to Elizabeth privileges the fruit of faith, which connects in a profound manner with good works. Faith does not stand alone; faith must be accompanied by good deeds. The Letter of James puts it clearly: "What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?... In the same way, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2, 14-17). An interpretation of "good works" can also mean proclamation or assertion. Good deeds evoke light, a "light shining in the darkness". This light represents something which moves those who experience it to praise God (Matt 5, 16), as Mary did in her *Magnificat* (1, 46-55). Mary's good works shone before Elizabeth and she proclaims God's greatness (1, 43).

Other scholars proffer, yet another interpretation to the word "haste" as it relates to Mary's journey to the hill country to visit Elizabeth.<sup>7</sup> Raymond Brown (et. al) contends

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<sup>7</sup> Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, John Reumann, eds , *Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 134-135.

that Mary's haste is consistent with an attitude of her total obedience to God. Brown contends that "Luke continues the portrait of Mary as the obedient handmaid of the Lord (1, 38) by having her respond with haste, going to the house of Zechariah to greet Elizabeth".<sup>8</sup>

A further rendering of the urgency to visit Elizabeth may not be unconnected with a confirmation of Mary's faith. The sight of heavily pregnant Elizabeth would confirm a sign Mary was privileged to hear from the angel (v. 36). Elizabeth's pregnancy was to her a proof of God's great works now at hand. In this case, seeing ratified her believing. Unlike Thomas (John 20, 24-29), who said unless I see I will not believe, Mary's seeing only ratified and burgeoned the already existent or perhaps nascent faith at best. The sight of pregnant Elizabeth was critical to understanding the unfolding events that was engulfing Mary's own life. Elizabeth Johnson puts it thus, "Mary . . . has to figure out how to live with a blessing that causes more problems than it solves".<sup>9</sup> Thus, Elizabeth's praise of Mary served as further confirmation of Gabriel's words to the maiden. The two witnesses required for the confirmation of an event in Jewish thought was realized: Elizabeth and the angel.

Luke 1, 41-42. An ordinary greeting from Mary brought significant changes in the life of Elizabeth. Her yet to be born child participated in the aura of the moment as well. By divine inspiration, Mary's greeting educes prophecy in Elizabeth. Although Luke does not give her the title of a prophet, but the phrase "filled with the holy spirit", is suggestive of the action of a prophet (Act 2, 17-18). "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting", the baby in her womb rejoiced and she recognizes Mary's expectant state. In

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<sup>8</sup>.Brown, et al., *Mary in the New Testament*

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson A. *Truly our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 260.



presenting the Spirit-filled and prophesying pregnant Elizabeth, Luke breaks the gender barrier in making a case that women may be limited so far as their public ministry is concerned, but not so far as their spirituality and intimacy with God. At this point, Elizabeth now knows the secret of Gabriel's annunciation to Mary.<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth blesses Mary in a typical Hebraic manner that addresses women of valor.<sup>11</sup> Famous Israelite women, heroines, whose fidelity to the covenant delivered God's people from peril, received appellations such as "blessed". A few examples include: "'Blessed be Jael among women' (Judg 5:24) and 'O daughter [Judith], you are blessed by the Most High God above all women on earth' (Jdt 13, 18; see also Gen 14, 19-20)".<sup>12</sup> This first woman bearer of the WORD and first evangelizer in the New Testament was not only full of faith (*pistis*) but also enjoyed blessedness (*makarios*). Mary's visitation to Elizabeth draws attention to the power of silent witness. The young maiden offers the first Gospel testimony without words in her visit to Elizabeth. Her faith-filled presence is recognized even by the child in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth acknowledges Mary's faith, a faith born out of an encounter with the living God who calls her and reveals his love to her. The love of God is that which, according to Pope Francis, precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfillment and that a vision of the future opens up before us".<sup>13</sup> Mary would proclaim this vision of the future in her *Magnificat* (vv. 46-55).

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, et. al, *Mary*, 135.

<sup>11</sup> Caroline N. Mbonu, *Handmaid: The Power of Names in Theology and Society* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, et. al, *Mary*, 136.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, No. 4.

The text witnesses hearing as a process of Elizabeth coming to faith: “as soon as I heard your greeting”. Hearing and coming to faith was significant in the encounter between Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. One cannot come to faith “unless someone instructs me” (Acts 8, 26-39). Similarly, the Apostle Paul argues persuasively on evangelizing stressing on how anyone can believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? The preacher, the evangelizer is key to aiding people come to faith. Paul sums up his argument using a formula which became classic: *fides ex auditu*, "faith comes from hearing" (Rom 10, 17). In hearing knowledge is connected to the word heard. Knowledge linked to a word is always personal knowledge. Such knowledge recognizes the voice of the one speaking and opens up to that person in freedom and follows the speaker in obedience (1, 38). Paul could thus speak of the "obedience of faith" (cf. Rom 1, 5; 16, 26).<sup>14</sup> The verses that follow speak of this personal knowledge that hearing brings forth.

Luke 1, 43-44. Elizabeth recognizes the power in Mary’s voice. John the Baptist had not yet been born, and Zachariah was still mute. Yet, something as innocuous as a mere greeting made significant impression on the lives of the members of a household. Earlier in the chapter, without a word being spoken by Zachariah, Elizabeth believes the word of the Lord given to him in the temple (vv. 5-20). Elizabeth harnesses a long life of attentiveness to the Spirit to make sense out of her own situation. Attentiveness to the Spirit enables Elizabeth to acknowledge a primordial and radical gift which upholds the lives of humankind. Faith and humility blend together in Elizabeth’s joyous reception of

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<sup>14</sup> *Lumen Fidei*, 29. Actually, the etymological root of the phrase, the “obedience of faith,” connotes “attentive listening, heeding, and doing.” The word obedience is from the term “oboedire” which is a combination of “ob,” and “audire” which connotes to hear, to carry out the instructions or orders of; to heed and to observe.

a younger relative who has been so highly favored: “the mother of my Lord should come to me”. Like Mary who received faith and joy from the God-self, Elizabeth also received faith and joy from God through Mary. I propose that Elizabeth’s fruitfulness is not only in the fruit of her womb but in something much larger: the fruit of her spiritual life, a life filled with joy, which is the clearest sign of faith’s grandeur. Her outburst of praise shows a believer completely taken up into her confession of faith. Elizabeth recognizes Mary’s faith as playing an active role in her receiving the promise: “Blessed is she who believed”. I agree with Johnson that wanting to encourage Mary’s faith, Elizabeth declared to her that there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.<sup>15</sup> The interplay in the texts suggests that God’s promises should never make one passive; rather, God’s assurance is designed to make one passionate, and by faith seize these promises.

Luke 1, 45 makes it clear that physical motherhood is not the only ground of Mary’s blessedness. Rather, believing God remains the prime source of blessedness: “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled”. Faith, therefore, is the key to understanding God’s ways. The first beatitude (*makarios*) in the Gospel of Luke is pronounced on Mary because of her belief in the things spoken to her by the Lord. Elizabeth’s song of Mary draws the reader’s attention to the fact that God has chosen Mary and Mary responded in faith.

Faith is a gift from God. A descending gift from God, faith demands a response. A response of faith is good works, an ascending gift. Thus faith is two dimensional, descending and ascending. Luke confirms the ascending dimension of faith later in his

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*

Gospel (11,27b) in the nameless woman who blesses the womb that carried Jesus.<sup>16</sup> Jesus redirects her thus: “Rather blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it”. Matthew emphasizes the importance of observing or doing the word, “whoever does the will of my father in heaven is brother and sister and mother to me” (Matt 12, 46-50). A blessing on those who hear and keep the word points to the eschatological dimension of Jesus’ fictive family in which those who keep his words take pride of place over his own close relatives. In other words, biological relationship does not bring the blessing that is earned by hearing and keeping the word. Hearing and observing brings about faith. A faithful person is none other than the one who believes in God and God’s promises. God is equally faithful by granting those promises. Elizabeth recognizes this faithfulness, so also does Mary, who treasures all that she heard in her heart. Her treasuring enabled the word take root deep within her heart where the pondering is done. There is an allusion that this honest and good heart, which bears much fruit (Luke 8, 15), portrays in no uncertain terms the faith of Mary. Thus Elizabeth would say: "Blessed is she who believed".

Though not stated in the text, women’s reflection draws out more insights from Mary’s visit with Elizabeth. Given the relationship and the circumstances of the young maiden, the presumption is that the older woman would take in the younger and nurture her, affirm her calling and nourish her confidence. Although Luke left to the imaginations what transpired during the three months of Mary’s visit, it would be safe to state that she was being chaperoned by Elizabeth and Zachariah during the period. Mentoring and spiritual direction may have punctuated her stay in this remote village of Judea.

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<sup>16</sup> Caroline N. Mbonu, “Drawn from the Shadows: The Significance of the Galilean Mary for Women in Igbo Society”, in Robert Lassalle-Klein, ed., *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 141.

Furthermore, dialogue functions significantly in communicating faith. A dialogical process marked the evangelizing encounter between the young Nazareth maiden and the angel Gabriel. Thus an interaction, verbal and/or non-verbal is fundamental in gaining access into the space of the other in order to make an impressionable impact. Luke employs the same evangelizing strategy in the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. Only Mary's greeting and not preaching, causes a stir in Elizabeth. Note that the reader does not hear Mary's voice. Elizabeth voices her presence. Yet, her silent but profound presence spoke all that Elizabeth needed to come to belief (v. 41). The incident supports the assertion that through dialogue the God-seeker gains greater appreciation and understanding of God, a gift that faith offers. In the verses that follow (vv. 46-55), traditionally called the *Magnificat*, Luke shows that Mary finds protection and empowerment from God.<sup>17</sup> She responds to Elizabeth's praises of her by offering her own praise to God (v. 46ff). Both women drew strength from each other. While Mary's presence honored Elizabeth, Elizabeth enables the former articulate her self-understanding. Luke later encapsulates the overall theme of the *Magnificat* in Jesus' evangelizing vision statement (4, 17-18). In essence, the goal of faith is to foster an ambience of freedom that enables God-seekers enter into the Reign of God where "I shall know fully, as I am known" (1Cor 13, 12). For those who draw upon the Bible for guidance towards spiritual growth, this homely interaction between Mary and Elizabeth offers insights that can be appropriated for the new evangelization initiative.

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<sup>17</sup> Vasiliki Limberis, "Mary 1", in Carol Myers, ed, *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 117.

*Insights for the New Evangelization*

A faith that is deeply rooted in the God remains the thrust for the new evangelization. Faith as proper response to the Reign of God has several dimensions of meaning.<sup>18</sup> The biblical word for “faith” refers most basically to faithfulness or fidelity in the sense of putting one’s trust in God.<sup>19</sup>In appropriating insights from Luke 1, 39-45, I borrow as communicative tool Marcus J. Borg’s categories of the three primary dimensions of faith: faith as faithfulness or fidelity, faith as trust, and faith as belief.<sup>20</sup>

i. Faith as faithfulness or fidelity: faith in the sense of fidelity implies relationship. To have faith in God, therefore, is consistent with being in relationship with the God-self. Israel’s patriarchs and matriarchs understood and lived this relationship codified in the first three commandments of the Decalogue (Exod 20, 2-6). The synoptic authors sum up this relationship in the first of the two great commandments: “You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt 22, 37; Mark 12, 30; Luke 10,27a). Observe, therefore, that faith appears as a transpersonal experience. Significantly, a faith experience comes alive in interpersonal relationships. Here the second half of the greatest commandment comes into play: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22, 39; Mark12, 31; Luke 10,27b). The reader observes the love dynamics in Luke 1, 39-45, where the relationships are both active and positive. We

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<sup>18</sup> The proper response to God who is faithful to the covenant then entails, first, that one must accept God’s word or promise as true because God is Truth; and second, that one must show passionate and abiding compliance, that is, an active readiness to comply with the word. The prophets did this by opening themselves up in docility to God’s word and carrying it out unswervingly, and were thus, in that sense, persons of faith. The true Israelite must also be docile to God’s word and steadfast in carrying it out. In this way, the fidelity of the prophet or the true Israelite becomes an earthly replication of God’s own fidelity and abiding love {SEE Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Faith* ( New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of the Early Christianity Teach us Today* (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 27.

<sup>20</sup> Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a more Authentic Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 168-171.

note the positive and active relationships the two women, Mary and Elizabeth, have with God and with each other. Their fidelity to God is also seen in the fidelity between them as persons. Their relationship fosters self-gift. A faith devoid of total self-gift appears hollow. A barometer of our faithfulness is manifest in our relationships with our immediate environment, that is, family, friends, job, community, and the local church. Austin Echema expresses the faith that articulates grassroots evangelization thus: “Specific to the apostolate of the laity is the evangelization of the temporal order, that is, to bring the spirit of Christ into the ordinary arena of life such as the family, the arts and professions, science and culture, trade and commerce, politics and government, mass media and recreation.”<sup>21</sup> In this lies fidelity, a commitment that cannot be separated from fidelity to God (Matt 25, 31-46; 1 John 4, 20). Indeed, faith in the sense of fidelity or relationship points to good deeds, a proof of one’s faithfulness. Good works tend to lubricate the wheels of relationships. Active proclamation of the word is consistent with creating various avenues of relationships that facilitate the cultivating, nurturing, as well as sustaining the faith. In light of the forgoing, the new evangelization must not only promote doctrines, it must question believers’ relationship with family members, colleagues, business associates, the local church, and the local community. Faithfulness to the physical environment cannot be ignored. Being evangelized by the God-self through the instrumentality of the angel Gabriel, Mary bore the good news first to her relative and subsequently to others. Recognize the order in which evangelization

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<sup>21</sup> Austin Echema, “Religious Formation of the Laity: Reinterpreting the Image and Role of the Catechists in our Parishes,” in *The Church in Africa: Witness to Justice, Peace and Reconciliation a Post-Synodal Reflection and Reception*, eds Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu and Agnes I. Acha (Nigeria: CATHAN Publication, 2013), 280.

progresses. Attention to members of one's household is imperative in an attempt to proclaim the good news to outsiders.

ii. Faith as trust: again relationship plays a role in this understanding of faith. To have faith in someone indicates trust in her or him. It follows then that trusting God denotes having faith in God. Mary trusted the One who spoke to her. This trust in the sense of faithful relationship, led Mary on a mission to the hill country of Judea. Trust obliterates doubt and its handmaid, anxiety. The text (1, 39) is silent on anxiety. Luke tells us the Nazareth maiden went with haste to the hill country. One can read that the disposition of haste does not give room for detailed preparations even as she faces a rough and rugged trip ahead. Like the lilies of the field and birds of the air (Matt 6,25-33; Luke 12,22-33), the maiden's trust enabled her fulfill her mission. Possessions and material security appear to put a wedge between us and this kind of trust that faith demands. A critical assessment of our relationship to possessions serves as indicator of the level of trust we possess. Like Mary, believers must trust that the One who has called them forth would not abandon them. Doubt, the opposite of trust, can be crippling. Doubt produces anxiety and anxiety enervates, leaving one hollow and confused. Without passion for the word evangelization would not be possible. Faith as trust can show forth in zeal, passion, and complete trust in Divine Providence.

iii. Faith as belief is consistent with knowing that there is something to which faith leads. In other words, faith as belief stands as a pointer. This sense of faith involves believing enough to respond to a situation. Knowledge of God is implicit in faith as belief. Faith as belief demands a response. Mary's response *ge, noito, moi kata. to. r`h/ma, sou* (1,38), exemplifies this characteristic of faith. Thus Elizabeth could say "Blessed is



she who believes”. Faith as belief is radical, that is to say, it is fundamental. Faith as belief does not have any set doctrinal teaching, but only a sense of confidence in a God who is faithful. Positive thinking encourages one to “believe in one’s self”. The aphorism “believe in yourself”, does not negate a belief in God. Rather the saying challenges one to reach down deep within and call forth the God-energy within; the God-energy can be described as the *imago Dei*. Bénézet Bujo points out that following from the relationship of the “God within”, is the Christian understanding of the human capability deriving from the *imago Dei*, that is, the idea that “a person is ‘capable’ of God (*capax Dei*)”.<sup>22</sup> That capability reinforces the sense of *knowing* that there is something to which it leads. The empowering influence of the Holy Spirit (*imago Dei*) in the life of the believer confirms this expression of faith. A spirit infused person is fired up with passion for the Word and the Reign of God. There is a direct correlation between faith and passion. Lack of faith is manifest in lack of zeal, apathy, lethargy, among others. Faith remains a fundamental virtue that is able to move mountains (Luke 19: 5-10); manifest in God’s word spoken amidst the cacophony of daily life and Jesus’ redemptive presence changed those touched by his word.

Faith is a lively virtue, it is organic and it grows. Since faith grows, it must be nourished and nurtured. A faith that is neglected dies. Cultivated in her tradition, and nurtured by the Holy Spirit, Mary’s faith became solid as rock (see Luke 6, 46-49). Each Christian, therefore, must actively grow her/his faith. Through fidelity to spiritual exercises such as reading as well as works of mercy, the faith can be nourished and

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<sup>22</sup>Bénézet. Bujo, *Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications of Africa, 1998) 146.

sustained. Evangelizing through spiritual directions enables a God-seeker discover God's will and the grace to act on them.

Faith as fidelity, trust, and belief, remain bound up in the will of God. In seeking God's will, God gifts seekers of God's will with the Holy Spirit, who enables them to engage the world fruitfully. Thus a person can go with haste because s/he has been gifted with an extraordinary power. To use the words of Pope Francis in his *Lumen Fidei*: "In God's gift of faith, a supernatural infused virtue, we realize that a great love has been offered us, a good word has been spoken to us, and that when we welcome that word, Jesus Christ the Word made flesh, the Holy Spirit transforms us, lights up our way to the future and enables us joyfully to advance along that way on wings of hope".<sup>23</sup> In other words, haste in responding to God's call becomes a routine for both adults and children who have received the good news of God's grace.

New evangelization is for everyone, children and adults alike. Mary's evangelizing presence sanctified John the Baptist even while still in his mother's womb. John's movement in Elizabeth's womb suggests that evangelizing starts at a very early period of existence. We can no longer continue to wait till children are ready to receive first communion before teaching them the doctrine of the Church. We must teach the children the faith even in light of contemporary advancement in technology. Encouraging children to tell their stories and write their prayers can help them grow in the knowledge of the faith. Mary's mission as evangelizer never ended with infancy narrative, it continued to the foot of the cross (John 19, 25-27). Thus Mary continues her proclamation of the word at the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension. She carries on with the proclamation of the word even after the ascension. Luke locates Mary,

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<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, No 7.

a woman of faith, and a silent witness, who accompanied Jesus all through his life at the Upper Room in Jerusalem in his second volume work (Acts 1, 14). She returns to this place of divine encounter, the Last Supper scene (Matt 26, 26-30; Mark 14, 15-26; Luke 22, 7-20; John 1-30), with the disciples after the Ascension. Brown points out one reference to Mary after the Ascension: “In the Luke-Acts corpus (Acts 1,14), there is one reference to Mary as part of the small group who returned to Jerusalem after Jesus’ ascension, a further hint of her understanding and support of her son’s special identity and mission”.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Johnson reflects the last Lukan depiction of Mary. According to Johnson, Luke “places her in the upper room along the 120 women and men disciples and the brothers of Jesus, all in prayer awaiting the coming of the Spirit”.<sup>25</sup> Mary’s sustained witnessing to the mission of her Son after the ascension together with disciples, who had come over into early Christian life, ensure the continuity Jesus wanted.<sup>26</sup> That continuity remains the mission of all who by baptism have been incorporated into the body of Christ and thus commissioned to go “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28, 19-20).

All four Gospels have significant episodes on Mary as one who proclaims the word. An example from the Gospel of John would suffice. Although Mary featured less in the Gospel according John than in the Lukan tradition, her roles in John were not without significance. Reading through the evangelizing lens, one can attribute Mary’s role at the wedding at Cana to a proclamation (John 2, 1-12). By her instruction to the waiters at the wedding, she demonstrates her faith and an intimate knowledge of the son, the Word made flesh. Thus her intervention serves to point him out to the waiters, who

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<sup>24</sup> Brown, *The Church the Apostles left behind*, 64.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *The Church the Apostles left behind*, 64.

were privy to the water turned wine. Scripture is silent about what happened to the waiters thereafter. By today's reflection, the waiters would become Jesus followers having witnessed the miracle he performed (John 2, 7).

Furthermore, the paradigm of the Nazareth maiden in reflecting the Bible on Faith and evangelization is particularly instructive for Christian women. In the text (1,39-45), Luke allows us to see Mary not only as virgin and mother but also as a woman full of faith and one who proclaims that faith to others (evangelizer). Paul VI reflects this aspect of the Nazareth maiden when he states that "she is an exemplar not in the particular social conditions of the life she led, but in the way in her own life she heard the word of God and kept it".<sup>27</sup> To "keep the word" means more things than one. However, it does not in any way suggest hoarding. Rather to keep the word implies owning it. Owning the word means making the word one's own. Only in owning can one have full possession, a concept that also implies understanding. Thus, owning/having, effects sharing because *nemo dat quod non habet*. The example of Mary of Nazareth challenges all women to be active participants in spreading the Good News of the Reign of God. Established by the sacrament of baptism as members of the covenant, women as well as men share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ. The constant challenge remains to carry on the mission of evangelization entrusted to all Christian people in the Church and in the world. The power of the word impels women to use their generative powers to nurture and build up healthy lives in the social and natural world.<sup>28</sup> Hence, Catholic women can no longer continue to envision themselves at the receiving end of the evangelization program, they must regard themselves *primus* evangelizers in church life. Like Mary who

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<sup>27</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, 286.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, 287.

first thought Jesus the rudiments of Jewish life, which is consistent with the *Tanakh* (Jewish Scriptures).<sup>29</sup>

Reflecting on the Christian vocation to be bearers of Christ, that is, evangelizers, Augustine of Hippo appropriates Mary's role as Christ bearer for all Christians. "We do have the nerve to call ourselves the mother of Christ",<sup>30</sup> "because by being heavy or pregnant (*gravida*) with belief in Christ, by carrying him in our hearts full of love, we bring forth the Savior into the needy world."<sup>31</sup> This expression portrays a profound faith that demands proclamation.

Women, particularly Catholic mothers, remain the undisputable primary teachers of the faith to the children. Women's active participation in cultivating a faith-filled existence cannot but impart the upbringing of offspring. Such mode of existence guarantees that the future generations of Catholics would, without doubt, grow and become strong, filled with wisdom and in favor of God and humankind. Fidelity to the word in all ramifications guarantees that the glory of God will dwell in our land (Psalm 85, 10).

## Conclusion

The Lukan pericope studied offers a paradigm for the new evangelization in Nigeria. Traditionally designated the Visitation, the passage offers a rare glimpse of two Jewish women in the first century Palestine, living together and sharing faith for three months. The Visitation undergirds women's approach to transmitting the Good News. At the beginning of his Gospel, Luke presents a homely scene that depicts women's fidelity

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<sup>29</sup> The name *Tanakh* is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: Torah ("Teaching", also known as the Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* ("Prophets") and *Ketuvim* ("Writings")

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Sermons*, 3:288 (Sermon 72A.8)

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, 119.

to each other, and commitment to their faith tradition. From a Christian perspective, we deduce how the commitment is carried over to the WORD, the essence of the new evangelization. Evangelized and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the maiden of Nazareth demonstrates that those who believe in God become transformed by the love to which they have opened their hearts in faith reflected in fidelity, trust and, belief. And believers manifest this same love by proclaiming to the waiting world. For Catholic women especially, the example of Mary of Nazareth in accepting the WORD and proclaiming same in a familial setting remains a strong paradigm for family evangelization. But Mary, the evangelizer, must first and foremost be grounded in the paschal mystery. She or he must not lose sight of the cross for the cross remains an integral part of the Good News. That is to say, Christianity without the cross, a strong Pentecostal influence on Nigeria Catholicism, cannot be part of the new evangelization. The new evangelization calls us to balance the joys of the spirit with the cross of Christ. Mary of Nazareth, a model of faith and the *primus* evangelizer in the New Testament, remains for all time a paradigm of the new evangelization, which the Church calls us to embrace with passion.

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**“DID YOU SAY HE IS A *FADA*?”:THE IMAGE OF THE PRIEST IN  
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE’S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* AND ITS SOCIO-  
RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIESTS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA**

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**Abstract**

That African Catholicism has witnessed an increase in the number of its members is now an accepted reality. That increase, of course, also involves a corresponding increase in the number of its priests, African priests, that is, who look after this large flock. This article looked at the image of the African Catholic priest presented in the novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, by the Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It pointed out the role that a stress on the humanity of the priest has got to play with that image. And then concluded by pointing out the implications that such an image holds for priests in Africa today as they carry out their ministry as “stewards of the mysteries of God”(1 Cor.4:1).

**Introduction**

While introducing the little work, *The Beauty of Priesthood*, which is actually an anthology of poems, prose and prayers on the powers, dignity and duties of the priest, I had observed thus: “The Catholic priest or rather his priesthood has been in the news for long and, has been, for eons, the object and figment of some writers’ imaginative profundity”<sup>32</sup>. One of such writers who has had something to say about the priest, the Catholic priest, that is, and one that is the object of our preoccupation here is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria, she was educated in Nigeria and the USA. Author of such books as the *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), *A Thing Around Your Neck* (2010) and most recently, *Americanah* (2014), she was the winner of Commonwealth Writers’ Prize in 2005.

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<sup>32</sup> Adolphus Ekedimma Amaefule, *Before anything else...*, in Adolphus Ekedimma Amaefule (ed.), *The beauty of priesthood: An anthology of poems, prose and prayers on the powers, dignity and duties of the priest*, Owerri: Totan Publishers, 2013, 34-50, 34.

Of such aforementioned writings of hers, our attention will focus, as it is already evident from the caption of our essay, on her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, set in Enugu and the University town of Nsukka. “Out of the mouths of children and infants you have perfect praise”, says the Psalmist (Ps. 8: 3, Matt.21:16), and it is out of the mouth of Kambili Achike, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Papa (Eugene Achike) and Mama (Beatrice Achike) and sister of Jaja (Chukwuka Achike), that what Adichie had to say about the priesthood would find perfect expression.

Our intention here, therefore, will be to cast a look at the image that comes out of that expression and what role a stress on the humanity of the priest has got to do with that image and then the lessons and socio-religious implications that such an image could hold for priests in Africa today.

Before moving ahead, however, a question may be asked, even if it is muted: What has a theologian got to do with a piece of creative literature like *Purple Hibiscus*? And that is why it is good to say it right away that our interest here is borne out of our conviction with Graham Ward that, “Theology is profoundly interdisciplinary – drawing upon the work done in all the other sciences (both natural and cultural)”<sup>33</sup> and that there is much that it, theology, that is, stands to gain from being so especially if it wants to be and remain the queen of the sciences, not only by right but also in fact<sup>34</sup>. Ours, therefore, becomes in a way a little exercise in interdisciplinarity, precisely in the interdisciplinarity of Theology and Literature, which is gradually gaining ground in contemporary African theological landscape. And it is believed that what will be said here may, at the end of the day, be found useful in Pastoral theology but, more importantly, in the Theology of the

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<sup>33</sup> Graham Ward, *Theology and contemporary critical theory*, London: Macmillan Press, 2000, 171.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A study of human understanding*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978, 743.

Priesthood, especially when the latter is seen from the African perspective and it is here then that one can apply to our situation the following confession of Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator on his use, in his theology, of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, thus: "What I have found intriguing in reading and rereading this novel is the fact that it contains such profound source of wisdom, narratives, and events that can enrich, structure, and enlighten theological reflection[on the priesthood] from an African perspective. More significantly, this captivating African story provides me with an accessible methodology for giving theological reflection [on the priesthood] a distinctively African flavor"<sup>35</sup>.

On the other hand, ours will also help to bring to light, in the field of African Literature, the Christian religious background of many creative writers in Africa and their "loans of terminology and reference from the reserves of theology[...and]transcendent authority"<sup>36</sup> even as these sometimes appear covered with a veneer of secular humanism. "The African imagination [...]", says Aylward Shorter, "is not merely religious; it also has a strong and specific affinity with Christianity. In spite of their secular preferences, African creative writers bear ample testimony to the religious character of African culture and to the strength of popular Christianity in Africa"<sup>37</sup>.

But then, one cannot but at this juncture remember the German theologian, Karl Rahner. On justifying the inclusion of his essay, "The Task of the Writer in relation to Christian living", in the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of his *Theological Investigations*, he had this to say:

The essay which follows is concerned with the role of the creative writer or author. It is permissible to include a discussion of this

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<sup>35</sup> Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology brewed in an African pot: An introduction to Christian doctrine from an African perspective*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2008, 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> George Steiner, *Real presences*, in George Steiner, *No passion spent, Essays 1978-1996*, London: Faber and Faber, 2010, 51.

<sup>37</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Christianity and the African imagination*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996, 110.

subject in the present volume only to the extent that we are treating of it strictly from the standpoint of the *theologian as such*, for certainly, apart from a specialized knowledge of theology, we have no other qualifications to make judgments in this field.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, we believe that it is “strictly from the standpoint of the *theologian as such*”, that some of our judgments and observations here will be made for even if it is taken for granted, as hinted at above, that theologians must have at least a passing knowledge of many disciplines, they are normally, however, not expected to be expert in any of them other than their own<sup>39</sup>. Hence, while the International Theological Commission would observe that, “The theologian should indeed take up and utilize the data supplied by other disciplines, but in light of theology’s own proper principles and methods”<sup>40</sup>, Anthony Akinwale would maintain that, “whereas God is its subject matter, theological discourse is also about creatures. Yet, it is not to be reduced to a simple discourse on creatures. If the theologian speaks of creatures it must be as a theologian, not as anthropologist nor as scientist. For when theology speaks about creatures it must be in their relatedness to God as their beginning and end”<sup>41</sup>

### **Towards Unveiling the Image**

Be that as it may, to unveil the image of the priest in the novel, we shall have to look briefly at the lives of the three priests mentioned by Kambili, *viz*, Father Benedict, Father Amadi and the priest at Kambili’s hometown parish, St. Paul’s, Abba.

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<sup>38</sup> Karl Rahner, *The task of the writer in relation to Christian living*, in Karl Rahner, *Theological investigations*, vol. VIII, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971, 112- 129, 112.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. James Sawyer, *The survivor’s guide to theology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006, 10.

<sup>40</sup> International Theological Commission, *Theology today: Perspectives, principles and criteria*, Rome, 8 March, 2012, 81.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony A Akinwale, *African theology and dogmatic responsibility for the Christian God*, in Bede Uche Ukwuije (ed.), *God, bible and African traditional religion: Acts of SIST international missiological symposium 2009*, Enugu: Snaap Press, 2010, 212-246, 215.

**a. Father Benedict**

He is an expatriate priest at St. Agnes, Enugu. Indeed, it was Reginald Walker who, telling us in 1933 about the mission of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Africa, had observed, thus: “The natives always maintained the friendliest relations with the missionaries, never molesting them in any way, but on the contrary, showing the greatest eagerness to be on the most cordial relations with them”<sup>42</sup>. And if that could be said in the case of Father Benedict on the one hand, on the other, however, we are told that though he “had been at St. Agnes for seven years, people still referred to him as ‘our new priest’. Perhaps they would not have if he had not been white. He still looked new”<sup>43</sup>. And as to his *modus operandi* at the parish, Kambili tells us:

Father Benedict had changed things in the Parish, such as insisting that the Credo and the Kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was not acceptable. Also hand clapping was to be kept at a minimum, lest the solemnity of Mass be compromised. But he allowed offertory songs in Igbo; he called them native songs, and when he said “native” his straight-line lips turned down at the corners to form an inverted U. During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the pope, Papa, and Jesus – in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospels (4).

Apart from the celebration of the Mass, he was always handy to administer the Sacraments: of extreme unction (preferably called the Anointing of the Sick) at the new wing of St Agnes Hospital(cf. 5) and to Kambili at the same hospital after her father, Papa, had given her the beating of her life for daring to bring the picture of her now dead grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, into their house and for having even the temerity to try to

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<sup>42</sup> R. Walker, *The Holy Ghost Fathers in Africa*, Dublin: Black-Rock College, 1933, 78, cited in Nwachukwu S.S Iwe, *Christianity, culture and colonialism in Africa: Organized religion and factors in developing culture – An analysis*, Port Harcourt: Department of Religious Studies, College of Education, 1985, 76.

<sup>43</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple hibiscus*, Lagos: Farafina, 2004, 4. Henceforth, all citations from this book are to be documented by page number within the text.

gather the pieces after Papa had torn the picture into shreds. “I closed my eyes”, she had begun, “When I opened them again, Father Benedict stood above me. He was making the sign of the cross on my feet with oil; the oil smelled like onions, and even his light touch hurt. Papa was nearby. He, too, was muttering prayers, his hands resting gently on my side. I closed my eyes. ‘It does not mean anything. They give extreme unction to anyone who is seriously ill’, Mama whispered, when Papa and Father Benedict left” (212). He was also there to hear the confession of not only of Papa and Mama but also of Jaja and Kambili (cf. 104-107).

But then it was Antonisamy who tells us that, “A spiritual director is one who guides the other person to act responsibly [...]. A spiritual director is like a coach. A coach does not play the match, but analyzing the strengths and the weaknesses of a player, trains the player and helps him or her to find a unique style that will suit his or her attitudes and capabilities”<sup>44</sup>. And there is a way also that Father Benedict could be said to be such a one, such a spiritual director, such a coach, to Kambili’s father, Papa. For instance, while Kambili’s aunt, Aunty Ifeoma, had convinced Papa of sending Kambili and Jaja to Nsukka on the pretext that they were going to visit Aokpe where there had been an alleged apparition of the Our Lady, Papa had to ask Fr. Benedict about it:

As we drove home, Papa talked loudly, above the ‘Ave Maria’.[...]. He was smiling, his eyes bright, his hand gently drumming the steering wheel. And he was still smiling when he called Aunty Ifeoma soon after we got back home, before he had his tea. ‘I discussed it with Father Benedict, and he says the children can go on pilgrimage to Aokpe but you must make it clear that what is happening there has not been verified by the church’(107).

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<sup>44</sup> F. Antonisamy, *An introduction to Christian spirituality*, Bandra, Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2003, 178-179.

And true to Antonisamy's another observation that, "The director must come forward to stand by the side of the directee during the latter's hours of trials and tribulations[...]when there is need he prays together with the directee"<sup>45</sup>, Father Benedict also was there during Papa's hours of trial following the death of Ade Coker, his editor at the *Standard*, and the subsequent closure of one of his factories by the soldiers, and even praying with him. "Papa", Kambili tells us, "no longer went to the other factories as often as he used to. Some days, Father Benedict came before Jaja and I left for school, and was still in Papa's study when we came home. Mama said they were saying special novenas"(208). Hence, Father Amadi, talking to Kambili, would a kind of summarize what we are up to here, thus: "Your aunt thinks you and Jaja should go to boarding school. I am going to Enugu next week to talk to Father Benedict; I know your father listens to him. I will ask him to convince your father about boarding school so you and Jaja can start next term"(269).

### **Father Amadi**

He works at the St. Peter's Chaplaincy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Before taking up his apostolate there, he had once, on a Pentecost Sunday, and as a visiting priest, celebrated Mass at Kambili's parish of St. Agnes, Enugu. Kambili, who didn't know him then(cf.136), has this to say:

The visiting priest said Mass in a red robe that seemed too short for him. He was young, and he looked up often as he read the gospel, his brown eyes piercing the congregation. He kissed the Bible slowly when he was done. It could have seemed dramatic if someone else had done it, but with him it was not. It seemed real. He was newly ordained, waiting to be assigned a parish, he told us. He and Father Benedict had a close mutual friend, and he was pleased when Father Benedict asked him to visit and say Mass[...]. And halfway through his sermon, he broke into an Igbo song: '*Bulie ya enu...*'. The congregation drew in a collective breath, some sighed, some had their mouths in a big O. They were

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-180.

used to Father Benedict's sparse sermons, to Father Benedict's pinch-your-nose monotone. Slowly they joined in(28).

Already at the Chaplaincy, he is popular. “You will like Father Amadi, Kambili’, Aunty Ifeoma said. ‘He’s new at our chaplaincy, but he is so popular with everybody on campus already. He has invitations to eat in everybody’s house’”(134). And an attestation to that would be seen in what happened when Kambili would later accompany the same Father Amadi to say good-byes to the families on campus before he left for missionary work in Germany and we are told that, “Many of the lecturers’ children clung tightly to him, as if the tighter they held him, the less likely he could break free and leave Nsukka”(275). Actually, if it is accepted, as we pointed out above, that Father Benedict could be said to be Papa’s spiritual director, then, it could be said in a way, that Father Amadi was the spiritual director of Aunty Ifeoma[the sister of Kambili’s father] and her family. Amaka, confessing that though Father Amadi was popular on campus, would not fail to add: “I think he connects with our family the most”(134). He was so much around in the important events in and of the family of Aunty Ifeoma. For instance, he would come visiting when Papa-Nnukwu lay sick at Aunty Ifeoma’s place (cf.163) as well as accompanied Aunty Ifeoma, Amaka and Kambili when they went on a pilgrimage to Aokpe (cf. 273).

And it is through Aunty Ifeoma and her family that Father Amadi would become acquainted with Jaja and Kambili – the latter who would eventually fall in love with him.

Amaka, speaking with Kambili, gives us an idea:

You have become Father’s Amadi’s sweetheart [...]. He was really worried when you were sick. He talked about you so much. And, *amam*, it wasn’t just priestly concern [...]. You have a crush on him, don’t you?[...] Like every other girl on campus[...] Oh, all the girls in the church have crushes on him. Even some



married women. People have crushes on priests all the time, you know. It's exciting to have to deal with God as a rival[...]. You're different. I've never heard him talk about anyone like that. He said you never laugh. How shy you are although he knows there's a lot going on in your head. He insisted on driving Mom to Enugu to see you. I told him he sounded like a person whose wife was sick (219-220).

Father Amadi would take Kambili to Mama's Joe shed at the Ogige market to have her plait the former's hair and on being asked if Father Amadi was Kambili's brother and being told that he was a priest, Mama Joe had responded, thus: "Did you say he is a *fada*?[...] A real Catholic *fada*? [...]. All that maleness wasted.[...]. Do you see the way he looks at you? It means something, I tell you.[...]. A man does not bring a young girl to dress her hair unless he loves that young girl, I am telling you. It does not happen".(237-238). Father Amadi, as hinted at above, would eventually leave for missionary work in Germany(cf. 261, 281) and from there continued to be a great source of encouragement to Kambili who, following the death of her father, Papa(who had been poisoned by Kambili's mother) and Jaja who was in prison (he had declared himself guilty of the crime to spare the mother from imprisonment), was passing through a difficult moment. He wrote her, letters she confessed she carried around not for anything lovey-dovey or if at all a very little of it (cf. 303) but because "they are long and detailed, because they remind me of my worthiness, because they tug at my feelings [...] because they give me grace"(303). And in the last of the letters, Father Amadi had told her that Jaja would come home soon and she said she believed because he, Father Amadi, that is, had said so (cf. 302).

However, in his relationship and friendship with Kambili - the latter who despite her love for Father Amadi never, however, wanted him to leave the priesthood (cf. 281) -

Father Amadi showed himself as one who was not only convinced of but also cherished his vocation which he had confessed came closest to answering the many questions he had growing up (cf. 180), as even his response to Kambili who had told him how she loved him, can demonstrate: “You are almost sixteen, Kambili. You are beautiful. You will find more love than you will need in a life-time”(278).

### **The Parish Priest of St. Paul’s, Abba**

He is the priest at Kambili’s home Parish at Abba. Of the little about him, Kambili tells us what happened when she attended the Christmas Mass at St. Paul’s, thus:

It was even harder to keep my mind on Mass because the priest, who spoke Igbo throughout, did not talk about the gospel during the sermon. Instead he talked about zinc and cement. ‘You people think I ate the money for the zinc, *okwia?*’ he shouted, gesticulating, pointing accusingly at the congregation. ‘After all, how many of you give to this church, *gbo?* How can we build the house if you don’t give? Do you think zinc and cement cost a mere ten *kobo?* Papa wished the priest would talk about something else, something about the birth in the manger, about the shepherds and the guiding star; I knew from the way Papa held his missal too tight, the way he shifted often on the pew”(89-90).

Yes, it was Karl Rahner who, in telling us about his middle-class family, had said that it was “Catholic but not bigoted”<sup>46</sup>. Papa, as events in the novel made clear, while as well a Catholic was, however, a bigoted one, and it is not surprising that he would have one or two things to say about the priest, the priest at St. Paul’s Abba, that is, with whom he never liked to make his confession and a confession which, of course, he would have made in Igbo, which also he didn’t like. According to Kambili, “Papa said that the parish priest in Abba was not spiritual enough. That was the problem with our people, Papa told

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-century Catholic theologians: From Neoscholasticism to nuptial mysticism*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 87.

us, our priorities were wrong; we cared too much about huge church buildings and mighty statues. You would never see white people doing like that”(104).

### **Between Father Benedict and Father Amadi: The Importance of the Humanity of the Priest**

Though, as seen above, Adichie had talked about three priests; Father Benedict, Father Amadi and the parish priest of the St. Paul’s Abba, a consideration of the first two, however, Father Benedict and Father Amadi, that is, would give us a better view of her image of the priest, the Catholic priest. To start with, it was Emeka Nwabueze who had observed that, “In most African novels the missionary priest is credited with such outrageous vices as destabilization of the serene idyllic African society, indoctrination of African converts, deliberate violence and stark hypocrisy [...]. Perhaps, it was the defects of the early missionaries that earned the missionary priest the status of stock character in African fiction [...]. Stock characters, by definition, are ‘character types that recur repeatedly in a particular literary genre and so are recognizable as part of the conventions of the form’”<sup>47</sup>.

And there is a way in which it could be said that in presenting Father Benedict, Adichie had actually drawn from such tradition of stock character representation of missionary priests in African fictions. Is it any wonder that Father Benedict has something more in common with Achebe’s Reverend James Smith than Mr Brown not only in the former’s open condemnation of the policy of compromise and accommodation as regards the indigenous culture but also in his tendency to see things as black and white

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<sup>47</sup> Emeka Nwabueze, *The image of the missionary priest in modern African fiction*, in Emeka Nwabueze, *Visions and re-visions: Selected discourses on literary criticism*, 2nd edition, Enugu: ABIC Books, 2011, 225-237, 225-226.

with black being evil<sup>48</sup>. Though, it must be accepted that Father Benedict's own lack of "compromise and accommodation" was better off than Reverend Smith's since, as we found out before now, even as he insisted that Igbo was not acceptable in the recitation of the *Credo* and the *Kyrie* but only Latin and that hand clapping was to be kept at a minimum, lest the solemnity of Mass be compromised, he, however, allowed that offertory songs could be done in Igbo(cf. 4). Since exploring the motives for this permission, that offertory songs could be rendered in Igbo, that is, may take us beyond the scope of this essay, it suffices here to deem it an act worthy and positive.

However, what should as well be duly acknowledged is that just as Kambili loved her father, Papa, but disapproved of his exaggerated Catholicism that almost bordered on the hypocritical, so also she, in a way, yes, loved Father Benedict but disapproved of his *modus operandi* as a priest. And such disapproval by Kambili of Father Benedict's *modus operandi* as a priest could be said to have been hinged on something more subtle: The fact that she considered Father Benedict to be almost a "Monophysite" priest. In Church History, Monophysitism is a heresy propounded in 448 A.D by the monk Eutyches which says that in Christ there is only one Nature, the Divine Nature. It is sometimes called the one nature theory or even Eutychianism<sup>49</sup>. Applied to the priesthood, therefore, a Monophysite priesthood would be that priesthood in which the divine aspect of the priest is so much emphasized while the human aspect, even if not denied entirely, is, however, so much de-emphasized and downplayed. The priest then would only become a "divine" person with no humanity, with only "divine" and no "human" job specification.

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<sup>48</sup>Cf. Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2008, 147.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. P.C. Thomas, *General councils of the church: A compact history*, Bandra, Mumbai. St. Pauls, 2008, 35.

In this sense, Father Benedict would, of course, with due qualifications, seem to be the younger brother of Fritz Kruppenbach, the older Lutheran pastor in John Updike's 1960 novel, *Rabbit, Run*. In a famous scene involving this Kruppenbach of a pastor and a much younger Episcopal minister, Jack Eccles, the latter, who, yes, with all his limitations, was trying to help a couple, Harry Angstrom, otherwise known as Rabbit, and his wife, Janice Angstrom, make their marriage work again, Kruppenbach, the pastor of Harry's parents, would literally put him, Eccles, that is, himself the pastor of Janice's parents, through the mill. "[D]o you think", he had begun asking Eccles, "this is your job, to meddle in these people's lives? I know what they teach you at seminary now: this psychology and that. But I don't agree with it.[...]. I don't think that's your job [...]. I say you don't know what your role is or you'd be home locked in prayer. *There* is your role: to make yourself an exemplar of faith. *There* is where comfort comes from: faith, not what little finagling a body can do here and there, stirring the bucket. In running back and forth you run away from the duty given you by God, to make your faith powerful, so when the call comes you can go out and tell them, 'Yes, he is dead, but you will see him again in Heaven. Yes, you suffer, but you must love your pain, because it is *Christ's* pain'. When on Sunday morning, then, when you go out before their faces, we must walk up not worn out with misery but full of Christ, *hot* [...] with Christ, on *fire: burn* them with the force of our belief. That is why they come; why else would they pay us? [...]. Now I'm serious. Make no mistake. There is nothing but Christ for us. All the rest, all this decency and busyness, is nothing. It is Devil's work"<sup>50</sup>.

Or, to put it in another way, Bolaji Idowu it was who had pointed out that "a serious theologian is constantly beset by the temptation to over-emphasize the divine factor in

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<sup>50</sup> John Updike, *Rabbit, run*, New York: Random House, 2012, 178-180.

religion to the detriment of the fact of man as the one who holds faith and apart from whom religion has no meaning. This means that a theologian who yields to this temptation is maintaining a half-truth opposite to that held by the humanist or the rationalist”<sup>51</sup>. And the same could be said of Father Benedict in the way Kambili sees him; for her, he was, yes, a serious priest but one beset by the temptation to over-emphasize the divine factor in the priesthood to the detriment of the fact of man as the one who holds faith and apart from whom priesthood has no meaning! To her, he, Father Benedict, that is, was no doubt a good priest, even a holy priest, but one who, unfortunately, was not human enough. In fact, it was Gerald Vann who had made an observation that could be of help to us here. According to him,

One does meet priests and religious who are obviously good, and indeed holy but who are in curious way remote, aloof, ‘detached’; they will gladly expend their last energies on their official duties, they will do anything to help ‘souls’, they will surely have a very bright crown in heaven; if you wanted an expert answer to some technical questions about prayer or piety, you would go to them unhesitatingly – but if you were struggling desperately with some purely human, personal problem you would never dream of approaching them. It means that though they are holy, they are not saints; they are not, humanly speaking, examples of perfect holiness; and they are not saints precisely because there is something *human* lacking to them, their hearts are not fully alive, they have not yet fully realized in themselves the ideal given us under the symbol of the sacred heart of Christ, his *human* love of men<sup>52</sup>.

Hence, Varkey would conclude that, “Holiness, most of us think, is the result of long prayers or severe penances or of being perfect or special. The truth is far from it. Sanctity does not consist in being extraordinary or special but in being human, authentically

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<sup>51</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *African traditional religion: A definition*, London: SCM Press, 1973, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Gerald Vann, *To heaven with Diana!*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1960, 52 cited in Donald B. Cozzens, *The changing face of the priesthood*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000, 37.

human, even ordinarily human. It consists in being capable of dealing forthrightly, courageously and lovingly with the inescapable realities and events of life”<sup>53</sup>.

However, while in his book, *Cry Beloved Africa!*(1996), Eduard Achermann had pointed out that, “We can hardly imagine the difficulties an African priest faces when he is taken out of his own social order and transplanted in another. [...]. One can best understand how the African priest feels if he has ever journeyed to a foreign land where he understood neither the language nor customs, and at the same time, he is not understood by those in the new environment; he would feel completely lost”<sup>54</sup>, Robert Schreiter, on his own part, would observe in his *Constructing Local Theologies*, that, “Anyone who had worked in another culture knows that parts of that culture will always remain mysterious. One can never know that culture as one does one’s own”<sup>55</sup>. Yes, and if one were to replace the African priest with a European priest in the aforementioned Achermann-ian citation and, a la Schreiter above, let Father Benedict be this one to whom parts of another culture would remain mysterious and who would never know that culture as he does his own, then one can understand better how he, Father Benedict, might have felt in his place of apostolate in Enugu.

But then, all that apart, when all is said and done, what actually differentiates Father Benedict from Father Amadi and what makes the heart of Kambili, as seen in the novel, beat for the latter is not only because Father Amadi is an indigenous priest nor because he is much younger which, of course, would ordinarily make most young persons to identify more easily with him, it is, rather, because in Father Amadi she sees someone, a priest,

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<sup>53</sup> C.P. Varkey, *Be human, be holy*, Bandra, Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2005, 21.

<sup>54</sup> Eduard Achermann, *Cry beloved Africa!: A continent needs help*, Munich-Kinshasa: African University Studies, 1996, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing local theologies*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985, 19.

whose humanity is alive, whose humanity is, indeed, resplendent. Is it any surprising then that it was only after she had met Father Amadi that she would confess – in what could equally encapsulate, or better, symbolize this stress of hers on the humanity of the priest – thus: “I did not know a priest could play football. It seemed so ungodly, so common” (148). Yes, for her, Father Amadi is a human being who is a priest. A human being who is struggling in the midst of his weaknesses and frailties to be the best priest he could be. He is a priest whose priesthood does not make less a human being but instead makes him more of it; a priest in whom the grace of the priesthood does not destroy his human nature but rather elevates it and makes it all the more pronounced. Indeed, the American Archbishop and preacher, Fulton Sheen, following St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians (cf. 4:7), had entitled his autobiography *Treasure in Clay*(1982)<sup>56</sup>. In fact, Kambili sees Father Amadi as a priest who carries the treasure of his priesthood in the clay of his humanity!

Yes, Napoleon Bonaparte it was who had once confessed, thus: “It was by making myself a Catholic that I won the war in the Vendee, by making myself a Muslim that I established myself in Egypt, by making myself an Ultramontane that I gained men’s souls in Italy. If I were governing a people of the Jewish race I would rebuild the Temple of Solomon”<sup>57</sup>. Now, take out from that confession all that may appear to be the talk of a “politician”, what is left is the image of someone who was willing to be all things to all people. Before him, St. Paul had actually told us something similar. “So”, he had begun, “feeling free with everybody, I have become everybody’s slave in order to gain a greater number. To save the Jews I became a Jew with the Jews, and because they are under the

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Fulton J. Sheen, *Treasure in clay*, New York: Doubleday, 1980.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. William J. Bausch, *Pilgrim church: A popular history of Catholic christianity*, Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004, 309.



Law, I myself submitted to the Law, although I am free from it. With the pagans, not subject to the Law, I became one of them, although I am not without a law of God, since Christ is my Law. Yet I wanted to gain those strangers to the Law. To the weak I made myself weak, to win the weak. So I made myself all things to all people in order to save, by all possible means, some of them”(I Cor. 9:19-22). And the same thing could be said of Father Amadi. He became all things to win people over: An athlete, footballer(cf. 177), dramatist(cf.239) etc., seeing each instance, to paraphrase Sheen, here, as a means of special sanctification<sup>58</sup>!

And because his humanity did shine out like that, Kambili seemed to have found him more believable and credible. No wonder, John Paul II would advise:

The priest, who is called to be a ‘living image’ of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitudes toward others as we see narrated in the Gospels. The ministry of the priest is, certainly, to proclaim the word, to celebrate the sacraments, to guide the Christian community in charity ‘in the name and in the person of Christ,’ but all this he does dealing always and only with individual human beings[...]. In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity. It is necessary that, following the example of Jesus who ‘knew what was in humanity’ (Jn. 2:25; cf. 8:3-11), the priest should be able to know the depths of the human heart, to perceive difficulties and problems, to make meeting and dialogue easy, to create trust and cooperation, to express serene and objective judgments<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Fulton J. Sheen, *Those mysterious priests*, Bandra, Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2007, 247.

<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Rome, 25 March, 1992, 43.

### **Beyond Father Benedict and Father Amadi: Socio-Religious Implications For Priests in Contemporary Africa**

Of course, there is no way the foregoing would not hold some implications for priests in Africa, today. To start with, the importance placed on the humanity of the priest by Kambili actually challenges priests in Africa to keep theirs aglow as well while not forgetting, at the same time, the divine factor thereof. In fact, it demands of them, as men who dwell in mystery<sup>60</sup> as they are, to carry both in their two hands as they try to be the best priests they can be. No wonder, Sheen would remark, thus: “A priest is mysterious, and he is mysterious because he is amphibious: he lives in two worlds. He is at his best when he leads ‘a double life’, at once both human and divine”<sup>61</sup>.

Again, our analysis presents the fact that every priest, at a particular point in time, has someone who may cherish what he is doing and one who may not. For instance, while Kambili never liked Father Benedict’s way of carrying out his ministry but loved and cherished that of Father Amadi, so her father, Papa, would take the other way round by cherishing Father Benedict’s *modus operandi* and disliking Father Amadi’s. In fact, about Father Amadi after he had celebrated Mass as a visiting priest at St. Agnes, Enugu, and as pointed out above, Kambili’s father, Papa, had said: “That young priest, singing in the sermon like a Godless leader of one of these Pentecostal churches that spring up everywhere like mushrooms. People like him bring trouble to the church. We must pray for him” (29, cf. 136). Hence, no matter the step taken, he, the priest, that is, will be praised and criticized at the same time - something that may plunge him into a state of

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Titus IK. Nnabugwu, *A priest after the mind of Christ (Retreat reflections)*, Nnewi: Catholic Communications, 2006, 15

<sup>61</sup> Sheen, *Those mysterious priests*, 9.

dilemma. And this is a reality which, following Juan Arias, I had tried to point out elsewhere in the following poem of mine, *The Dilemma of the Priest*, thus:

If he goes by car, they accuse him of crass materialism  
If he goes on foot, they accuse him of mad asceticism  
If he says he loves any woman, they call him a womanizer  
If he says he loves any man, they call him a homosexual mixer  
If he says he loves kids, they accuse him of pedophilia  
If he says he loves animals, he becomes suspect of a strange mania  
If he laughs often, they accuse him of feeble mindedness  
If he frowns, they say he's a priest of utmost unhappiness  
If he's the outgoing type, they accuse him of unholy extrovertism  
If he loves being alone, they say he's suffering from neurotic introvertism  
If he gives alms to some people, they accuse him of sectionalism  
If he gives to all, they impute to him an ulterior proselytism  
If he's known for his prayer life, they call him "sancta-sancta", "praying mantis" or "holier-than-thou"  
If he's laggard at this, they dub him, "Our man" "Gee" or "Social thou"  
If he studies hard, they say he's ambitious  
If he's not the reading type, they say he's not serious  
If he has rich friends, they - mostly the poor - accuse him of Nicodemian Upperclassism  
If he has poor friends, they - mostly the rich - say he's a victim of pharisaic Lowerclassism  
If he condemns corruption and protests injustice, they say he's mad and given to clerical opportunism  
If he sees them and keeps quiet, they say he's simply a lad suffering from consecrated infantilism  
If he gives long sermon, they say he's never considerate- always wishing they sleep in the Church here!  
If he gives short sermon, they say he doesn't prepare at all - always rushing to God-knows-where!  
O what must this priest do? What should he do, Lord?  
Maranatha! Quiet soon and deliver him from this dilemmaic cord  
And let him be what you would want him to be in the fullness:  
A priest in your own image and likeness!<sup>62</sup>

Hence, the priest, in view of this and as he tries to carry out his ministry in the image and likeness of Christ's, should endeavour not to alienate any group but as a 'man of communion' should endeavour to carry both along with a heart big enough to welcome

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<sup>62</sup> Adolphus Ekedimma Amaefule, *The mad priest*, Ibadan: Caro'Phem communications Ltd., 2007, 10.

all<sup>63</sup>. Furthermore, it becomes clear from what we have x-rayed above that the people of God, or rather, individual members of the Church, put so much belief in the words of their priests. This is evident in the fact that Kambili's father, Papa, would always seek Father Benedict's advice before carrying out anything and, though in a much lesser degree, in the fact that Aunty Ifeoma and family would always adhere to Father Amadi's words - just as Kambili herself would do later. Thus, there is need for priests to always pray and seek God's help so that they would always remain, as St. John Eudes would call them, the oracles of the Eternal Word<sup>64</sup>.

Again, based on what Kambili tells us, as we did point out before now, concerning the priest at her hometown parish of St. Paul's, Abba, and what happened when she attended the Christmas Mass there and how the priest did not talk about the gospel during the sermon, but instead talked about zinc and cement and how Papa wished the priest would talk about something else, something about the birth in the manger, about the shepherds and the guiding star(cf. 89-90), let's just keep apart the well-known exaggerated and fanatic Catholicism of Kambili's father, Papa, and the fact would still remain that a lot of people would wish to hear, like him, the Word, would wish, that is, that priests, as tenders of the word<sup>65</sup> - and in carrying out what is actually their primary duty as co-workers of bishops<sup>66</sup> - talked about the gospel during the sermon instead of talking about zinc and cement.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Stephen J. Rossetti, *The joy of priesthood*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2005, 120-121.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Charles Lebrun, *The spiritual teaching of St. John Eudes*, London: Sands & Co., 1934, 233.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Cozzens, *The changing face of the priesthood*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Cf. Vatican Council II, Decree, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December, 1965, 4.

## Conclusion

We have endeavoured to look at one of the works of the Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, that is, a work, indeed, of great literary and even theological value. Our interest has been to look at the image she painted of the priest therein. Yes, David Jenkins it was who had observed that, “The dreadful thing about so much theology is that, in relation to the reality of the human situation, it is so superficial. Theological categories (really mere theological formulae) are ‘aimed’ without sufficient depth of understanding at life insensitively misunderstood. Theologians need to stand under the judgments of the insights of literature before they can speak with true theological force of, and to, the world this literature reflects and illuminates”<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, the insights of and from this work really provides the platform - and a strong one at that - for theologians to say something more about the priesthood which she, Adichie, had presented through the eyes of Kambili. Kambili was able to tell us something about Fathers Benedict and Amadi and then a little about the priest in her hometown parish, Abba.

While it was Thomas Lane who had confessed, thus, “As I follow Jesus Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity, I am called to be *more human* and promote whatever is good for health of body, mind and spirit in myself and in others”<sup>68</sup>, when all is said and done, however, this appears to be the same confession that Kambili would

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<sup>67</sup> David Jenkins cited in David Jasper, *The study of literature and religion: An introduction*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Lane, *Priesthood: Changeless and changing*, Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004, 51.

have wished that all priests, especially, those of them in Africa today, make as they endeavour to become, in the words of Henri Nouwen, articulate witnesses of Christ<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The wounded healer: Ministry in contemporary society*, London: Darton, Longman, 2008, 99-100.

**The Catholic Church and Schools in Kenya: A Historical Perspective on Education for Holistic Development. Part II: The 1970s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

By Beatrice W. Churu and Philomena N. Mwaura

***Introduction***

This article is Part II of “A historical overview of the involvement of the Catholic Church in schools in Kenya, from the inception of western education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. The first part of the article dealt with the period from the colonial era right to the immediate post-colonial education dispensation in Kenya. The study that produced the first part of the paper established that the Catholic Church was a part of a very important missionary contribution to literacy in Kenya, leading to the cultivation of an educated elite who played key roles in the struggle for political independence from the British. These same elite also took over crucial leadership positions in independent Kenya. Besides literacy and its accompanying benefits, the moral bar imposed by Catholic education on its beneficiaries resounded in a unanimous acclaim of Catholic schools for their discipline. This is a tribute and reputation that has lasted long into the post-colonial period. The study also established that the manner of evangelization that accompanied the school system contributed greatly to the eminent cultural deracination that has been noted to be characteristic of many African elite. Sometimes deliberately and other times inadvertently, western education led its recipients to abandon the African value of solidarity in favor of competitive education, economics and politics. This competitive approach to life has become one of the key pillars of post-colonial social fragility.

This second part of the paper discusses developments in Education in Kenya since the 1970s paying particular attention to the ways in which the Catholic Church participated in these, and the impact of this participation on the cultivation of a holistic development of young people in the Catholic schools or lack thereof.

### **The Catholic Church and Education: 1970s to 1980s**

As already noted in Part I, the 1968 Education Act introduced the sponsorship arrangement for public schools which had been founded and run by the Churches so far. The churches saw an advantage in passing the schools to the government since the financial and other burden of running them would have been too heavy. But they also regretted the loss of control in these schools which this relief entailed. Legal Notice no. 106/1968 no.5 for example curtailed the sponsor in the control of materials to be used for courses taught in the schools besides religious education. With the 1968 Education Act, many privileges of the churches in the schools they had founded were withdrawn. Most of the decisions that would affect the development of particular schools were to be made by the government through the Ministry of Education (MOE). The churches gave up many of the roles they had previously played in the schools, including the choice of what content would be taught and how learning would be assessed. The way the Church would participate in such decisions was by lobbying in forums in which major decisions were made. Thus began a season of growing into the new role for the churches in schools on a number of fronts, among which are those discussed below – curriculum development, personnel in schools, and national education policy development. The attendant concern of the Catholic Church in schools remained that of ensuring the best formation for the young people, especially assuring a faith formation for those who were Catholic. Many



families continued to choose Catholic schools for their children expecting that quality formation for which these schools were already famous. One of the most important areas in the on-going development in schools was the determination of curricular for these schools.

### **Curriculum development**

In the area of curriculum development, the new dispensation through the Act gave the churches an opportunity to participate by having members on some of the subject panels of the Kenya Institute of Education – the curriculum development arm of the MOE. The impact of such persons in the subject panels, however, would be little.

With regard to Christian Religious Education (CRE) one of the subjects taught in schools, the panels for preparing a joint syllabus for all Christian churches has been hailed as one of the success stories of Ecumenism in East Africa (Baur 1990:228, Smith 1982). However, CRE having been a forum for faith and moral formation of students when the missionaries initiated it in the schools now became an examination subject. In introducing this change, the Education Act had changed the main thrust, purpose and therefore possibilities of the subject. The joint CRE syllabus had become increasingly more of an examination subject rather than an opportunity to teach and learn about the faith (Baur 1990: 208). The change has sometimes been viewed as a mixed blessing. The fact of having CRE as an examination subject made it possible for the Church to use this subject as a forum for teaching much faith content such as Christian Ethics and the Bible. Often CRE is made compulsory in Catholic schools as a measure of ensuring continuity of the Christian tradition of the school. On the other hand, the examination focus of the

subject made the pastoral aspect slip from the grip of the Church because emphasis went to higher grades in the examination. A wide knowledge of the content of the faith teaching and the scriptures may be necessary but is certainly not sufficient for building strong discipleship. Even though the two are not mutually exclusive, it takes a teacher with a profound understanding and experience of pedagogical approaches as well as personal faith commitment to be able to mediate the two roles of the subject with the students. In addition, the churches that made the CRE syllabuses were not in charge of the most fundamental training of the teachers who would handle the subject, therefore they had no way of ensuring that the teachers were adequately prepared to handle the subject to their satisfaction.

To remedy this slippage, the Catholic Church introduced a supplementary subject named Program of Pastoral Instruction (PPI) in Catholic schools. But the germ of examination grades had already polluted the school academic environment that both the parents and the youth saw little value in a non-examinable pastoral program. The program suffered from unpopularity among students and rejection from parents whose main interest was examinations results, leading to white collar and highly salaried jobs (Sifuna and Otiende 1994: 227).

Accordingly, we can say that the curriculum development front of the participation of the Catholic Church in education in Kenyan has not constituted a substantive contribution to the holistic development of young people through formal education. It is to be noted that the Church itself has not had a strong agenda of enabling its curriculum developers to know the particular interest of the Church in the general

curricula of schools. The concern for Religious Education has rather been more consistent, the challenges aforementioned notwithstanding.

### **Engagement of Religious Congregations and Commitment of Catholic Education Personnel**

In the decade just ahead of independence, following the Beecher Commission Report discussed in Part I, very many missionaries from religious orders came to Kenya in response to the expansion for space to participate in schools created by the Beecher Commission and its implementation. The post-independence dispensation however seemed to be back-tracking on this very expansion of freedom for missionaries to run schools in their own way provided that they upheld standards<sup>70</sup>. As a result, many religious congregations previously fully engaged in Catholic schools found it difficult to operate in the emerging new environment (Njoroge 1999: 236). Some of these orders reduced their commitment to schools and redirected their evangelization energies in other ministries. In the assessment of many of them, the schools had ceased to be a primary channel of evangelization. The latter now seemed more viable in other fields such as parish ministry.

The dioceses themselves had to learn what their new role as sponsors was and devise ways of effectively implementing it (Ibid: 235). It is little wonder that there were many hitches in the efforts, up to a point where persons working full-time in the Education offices of the Catholic Church felt the Catholic Church was not committed to its role in the schools (KEC, 1992). The emergent confusion could not but neutralize the formerly concentrated atmosphere and character of Catholic education in the schools.

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<sup>70</sup> See Churu B. and Mwaura, P. Part 1.

Positions formerly filled by the religious in the schools had to make do with committed lay educators. The change was not always greatly appreciated by the parents who were keen on the presence of the religious in the schools. It has taken long for the Catholic Church to articulate what really constitutes a Catholic school in the absence of these persons who had come to symbolize Catholic education. Publications of the Kenya Episcopal Conference in Education<sup>71</sup> have come to bridge this gap. Yet it must be appreciated that it also takes long to move from the written prescriptions to the new embodiment or effective implementation of the documents, and challenges do not wait for clarity, as we shall see in the following sections.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that during those early years of independence in Kenya, many Catholic families and even Christians of other denominations and adherents of other religions tended to prefer Catholic schools for their reputation in good discipline. In particular, those schools which still had religious women or men working in them appealed to the credibility of the parents and students and gave them much needed confidence in the solidness of the formation they or their children were benefitting from.

### **Church Involvement in Education Policy Developments**

Education policy development after the 1968 Education Act has been an exercise in which the Churches have taken great interest going by the frequency of their presence and participation in national deliberations. The Ministry of Education also took care to include the Church in major consultations, even though some of the decisions reached did not always go as the Catholic Bishops would have wanted. A number of Commissions on

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<sup>71</sup> A number of these publications are listed in the reference section of this article. It is noteworthy that the first of these was only published in 1982 – a fourteen year stint after the publication of the Education Act - 1968.

Education were set up in the years following the Education Act 1968. In 1972 a study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) established that Kenya's unemployment problem lay in lack of sufficient basic education (Sifuna1990:159).It recommended a longer primary school period of 8-9 years, all free and with an increase of pre-vocational skills education. In 1975 the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies was appointed to examine education policies and objectives. Popularly known as the Gachathi Report the 1976 "Report of the National Commission on Educational Objectives and Policies" endorsed the ILO recommendations urging their implementation in stages as funds became available (Ibid: 159). In the Gachathi Commission, there was no official representation of the Catholic Church, though Rev. Fr. Joachim Gitonga, the then Principal of Murang'a College of Technology was one of the commissioners. The Commission Report itself makes reference to a joint document entitled "Operation of the Education Act" which the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC) and the Christian Churches Educational Association (CCEA) represented by Right Rev. Bishop Caesar Mary Gatimu of Nyeri and Rev. John Gatu of the PresbitareanChurhc of East Africa (PCEA) respectively, had presented to the Minister for Education in 1976.

These on-going, if sometimes fragmented, interventions in the processes of education policy definition show the interest of the church in ensuring wholesome education, as it is her duty to do throughout society, and especially in her own schools (*GravissimumEducationis* 1, 2, 6).

The 1981 Report of the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya (Mackay Report) recommended an overhaul of the structures of education at all levels leading to the overhaul of the education system, lengthening Primary school

education cycle from seven to eight years, amalgamating the secondary education cycle from two tiers of four and two to one of only four, and extending basic university degree programs from three to four years. Thus the 8-4-4 system – taken from the 8 years of primary school, 4 of secondary school and 4 of university education – was inaugurated in 1983. One of its major thrusts was a skills-oriented upper primary school program (Otiende and Sifuna 1994: 225). This was supposed to contribute to an output of primary school graduates who were self-employable. However, it would appear that the public was not adequately prepared for the change and so the effort met much public resistance and ridicule (Otiende and Sifuna 1994: 227). In the early years of the 8-4-4 system, children were required to acquire technical competencies for self-employment. For their assessment, they were required to produce artifacts to show this technical competency. Focused on examination grades as the people were, some parents were known to assist their children in doing the work so as to fetch higher grades – without enlisting the learning of the student. The effort was all but abandoned in a few years, and its anticipated benefits also lost with it.

Here perhaps the Church might have had an opportunity to cooperate with the government in marketing the technical focus of the 8-4-4 system. It would have been a timely and useful contribution to a more relevant education. With hindsight, the increased decline in technical education has led to major losses for many youth, especially those who do not make it to universities. Subsequent decline and loss of technical high schools has resulted in fewer opportunities to develop skills other than academic for the majority of high school students in the country. Only those young people whose parents are able to send them to special high schools which do not follow the Kenya education system may

be able to develop other skills, and even then, such skills are usually the ‘elite’ kind such as artistic expressions and playing western musical instruments. Few if any secondary schools avail the youth of the ages of fourteen to eighteen an opportunity to visualize a future that is not based in ‘white collar’ jobs. Those whose gifts may be more in the handiworks do not get a chance to explore these gifts and to challenge themselves beyond any recreational engagements they may have with these skills. By the time they complete secondary school studies, they have either lost this opportunity to discover their gifts altogether or must begin at very basic levels in the not enough technical institutions available for post-secondary technical education. Integral personal development of students presents challenges beyond what the system of education provided in the country in the post-colonial era has been able to rise up to. The Catholic Church as an education stakeholder could have been more vigilant regarding such benefits for students as technical and manual skills, but for a variety of reasons, this vigilance may have been wanting.

The very fundamental stance of the Catholic Church vis-à-vis the government of post-colonial Kenya – that of being supportive to a young democracy – may have been one of the reasons that stood in the way of greater vigilance of the Church in educational development matters. In addition, the Church’s education experts are drawn from the very same society, and often lack the high ground from which to contribute a broader perspective to the immediate issues. These two factors may have contributed to the failure of the Church to take a critical distance and impose the benefit of her long historical involvement and leadership in education especially in the western world. This longer range view might have brought the Church to the sense of responsibility to bring

its authority to bear on policy-making in Education in Kenya at a time in the history of the young nation when the society and the government were more open to the view brought by an institution that enjoyed the credibility of both as it did then. That state of advantage would not last long into the first half century of Kenyan independence.

### **Some Difficulties**

The Gachathi Commission Report (1976) identified National Unity as one of the goals that should continue to be pursued vigorously through education (Gachathi Report, 1976: xiv, 4). In addition, there was felt the need to develop a national sense of social, cultural and ethical responsibility. Education was seen as being important in cultivating these (Gachathi Report, 1976: 5-7). While these positions were certainly not controversial, it is the failure of Christian educators to “use the strongly religious and ethical beliefs of African society as a foundation” (Gachathi Report, 1976: 6) for religious and ethical formation in Kenya, that was used as justification for disqualifying the Christian Religious Education (CRE) basis of ethical education of youth. For this reason, the Commission recommended the introduction of a secular subject to enlighten the youth on their social, family and civic responsibilities (Gachathi Report, 1976: 8-9). The new subject, Social Education and Ethics (SEE) would have no direct connection with CRE or any other educational subject based in a foreign religion, such as Islam. The only religious base it was to have, according to the Commission, would be African Religion, and in this way, it would be able to unite Kenyans in developing a common social ethic within the common roots of African culture.



The Catholic Bishops came out strongly against this recommendation. In defense of Christian foundations, they took the position that ethical behavior and values could not be separated from religious values, and therefore, to purport to teach ethics to Christian children, without reference to their faith, was unacceptable. In a memorandum on the Gachathi report (cited in KEC, 1982:90), the bishops insist:

It is our firm conviction that authentic ethical education can only be truly given in the context of a sound religious education. To abandon this approach of teaching ethics is disastrous to the whole structure of our society.

In this context the Bishops also labored the point that the ethical teachings of the Christian faith are not in contradiction to the values of traditional African religions, and thus there was no need to separate Social Education and Ethics from Christian ethics. They underscored the view that religion was essential, and gives reasons and genuine motivation, for working to achieve the six national goals of education (KEC, 1982: 25).

The additional fact that SEE was to be offered as an alternative to CRE for examination purposes at the culmination of secondary education raised great concern that students who chose to study SEE up to for their examination would be denied CRE. While Catholic schools could and did opt to make all their students follow CRE rather than SEE, the Bishops were concerned for the Catholic students in non-Catholic schools who would be lured into this “irreligious” trap and miss out on Religious Education.

The Government went ahead and implemented this recommendation of the Commission, allowing only for the inclusion of representatives of the Church in the development of the curriculum and materials for teaching it. The Catholic Church embraced this opportunity and made efforts to contribute to making the program of SEE

not hostile to Christian ethical values. To do this was a difficult task especially as bodies interested in the promotion of a Family Life Education (FLE) free of the tight religious teachings of the Catholic Church saw the SEE syllabuses as an entry point into the schools<sup>72</sup>. In the SEE subject panel, there was little the Catholic Church representatives could do to influence what had already been outlined ahead of the subject panel meetings<sup>73</sup>.

In this and other difficulties, the Catholic bishops often found that they could not appeal simply to the structures of cooperation with the MOE, but had to resort to seeking the intervention of the President of the Republic. A case in point is in 1981 when the KEC appealed to the President on various matters to do with education (KEC, 1982: 101-105). Clearly the machinery set up by the 1968 Education Act, which should have given the Church the possibility of safeguarding the religious values of its adherents and its schools, was not functioning as it should have. These are the structures through which the Church could hope to contribute to the integral development of the students in the schools, but though in theory they remained in force, on the practical front, they were steadily crumbling.

Other issues on which the Church found itself in a struggle with the MOE regarded the implementation of the rights of the sponsor at lower levels of the education structure, the lowest of which would be the school. In a letter to the President of the Republic of Kenya in November 1979, the KEC complained that the Education Act was

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<sup>72</sup>This view was offered by a respondent who had been involved in the Church's struggle against the implementation of the SEE in the schools, in an interview on June 20, 2007.

<sup>73</sup>The Beatrice Churu here refers to personal experience on a SEE subject panel meeting in KIE in 1992.

not being implemented at the lower levels (KEC, 1982: 97-99). They observed with hindsight that although the 1968 Education Act made provisions for the role of the churches, these lacked “enabling clauses to facilitate implementation because no clear guidelines for implementation were written in the Act”. They also presented the concern that religious education teachers were neither being trained adequately nor disbursed to needy schools efficiently enough.

In 1980, in an audience with the Minister for Higher Education<sup>74</sup>, the Catholic Bishops aired the concern about the quality of teachers in some schools (KEC, 1982: 110). On this occasion, the Bishops were in conjunction with the CCEA. Among other issues that they raised was the lack of respect for the Education Secretaries and Religious Education Advisors chosen by the churches. MOE officials and many Boards of Governors (BOGs) paid little or no regard to these officers of the churches (KEC, 1982: 111 ff.). From another perspective, a respondent in the field research for the current study, (interviewed in Nairobi, June 20, 2007) was of the view that the main reason why these church officers were ignored by the MOE officials is that there was such a high turn-over in the church officers that it was difficult to sustain reasonable cooperation between them and the MOE officials at the local levels. The fact also that some of these church ‘education officers’ were not education professionals made it difficult for the MOE officials to deliberate with them professionally on educational matters. This respondent was of the view that the bishops sometimes appointed education officers in the diocese on the basis of the latter being highly educated without regard to the fact that

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<sup>74</sup> At various times in the political cycles of the country, the Ministry of Education has been split into two government ministries – one for Basic Education and another for Higher Education. In terms of the relationships with other stakeholders, including the Church, the one or two ministries are bound by the agreements arrived at in preceding regimes.

they were not education professionals. The interest for this study that this matter raises is two-fold: (i) Church education officers responsible for ensuring the religious tradition of the school - a substantial part of ensuring the integral personal development of the students in the Catholic Schools - were sometimes sidelined in important decisions regarding the schools; (ii) Church education officers who were not professional educators could hardly be charged with the responsibility of ensuring integral personal development of the students through school programs since they lacked the professional competence to discern appropriate educational policy. Clearly, the Church had some house-keeping work to do to facilitate a more adequate partnership with the government in schools.

Nevertheless, the Catholic Church kept alert to the needs of the people on the ground even though its vigilance of the government systems and their developments may have been slightly wanting. For example, according to Sifuna and Otiende (1991: 227), the Catholic Church continued to increase its investment in technical education, though increasingly this was parallel to, rather than integrated in the regular secondary school education. This must have been a response to the Church's sense of obligation to cater for marginalized youth, some of whom did not make it to the regular secondary schools and universities, and for whom the system did not provide any other options for career development. In this way the Church showed concern for the integral development of the youth, even at a time when the plight of the latter seemed to have taken second place in the concern of the MOE.

### *Catholic Secondary Schools in the 1990s to 2007*

The early 1990s were characterized by widespread and intense expressions of unrest in educational institutions throughout the country, especially in secondary schools. In 1991, when the St. Kizito<sup>75</sup> secondary school fire tragedy occurred (Waihenya and Kariga, 1999), the Catholic Church felt a special call to attend to developments in her schools. The St. Kizito event was not an isolated one among Kenyans secondary schools except in the severity of the damage. The rampant unrest of students in schools prompted the President of the Republic of Kenya to set up the Sagini Commission to investigate the causes of the phenomenon and make recommendations to the Government on the way to resolve the emergent issues. The Sagini Commission went around the country collecting views of diverse members of the Kenyan society. For its part the Catholic Church called its Education officers from all the dioceses of the country to participate in the preparation of a comprehensive report for presentation to the Sagini Commission<sup>76</sup>.

### **Review and Self-criticism for Catholic Education Management**

The then Kenya Catholic Secretariat (KCS) Education Secretary, Charles K. arap Koech, took the opportunity of the preparation of the Catholic report to the Sagini Commission, to recommend a self-review of the Church's own commitment to its mission in the schools. In the publication (KEC 1992) that emerged from this self-

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<sup>75</sup> St. Kizito was a Catholic mixed boarding secondary school in Meru Diocese, Eastern Kenya. On the night of July 13, 1991, the boys left their dormitory and broke into one of the girls', proceeding to rape about 60 of them. The ensuing mayhem as the girls attempted to flee resulted in the deaths of 19 girls and severe injuries to others. A national and international outcry regarding the incident and frequent incidents of unrest in schools preceded the appointing of the Presidential Commission on Unrest in schools headed by Lawrence Sagini later in the same year. The Sagini Commission Report was never made available to the public, neither were its recommendations.

<sup>76</sup> Beatrice Churu was a member of the group set up at the Catholic secretariat to produce a report of the Catholic Church for presentation to the Sagini Commission.

appraisal, the Church admits that the implementation of the provision of the 1968 Education Act with regard to the Catholic Church had met with many obstacles and problems, and that some of these hailed from the failure of the Church itself to be effective. In the introduction, the KEC emphasizes that the role of the Church as sponsor in schools had been greatly eroded, especially in the decade 1981-1991. The document attributes some of the difficulties of maintaining discipline in schools to the fact that Catholic schools' sponsorship was subjected to many frustrations by MOE officials who either failed to understand or chose to ignore the roles and rights of the church; as well as to politicians who chose to infringe on these rights and roles. The KCS publication (1992: 11), addressed to the Catholic Church leadership, poses some questions which are of interest to this study:

- Are we really aware of what our role as sponsors should mean? – Is there enough being done to educate all those involved in carrying out this role?
- Are there enough (church) personnel involved in education work at all levels?
- Are there enough teachers, especially in secondary schools, who are adequately prepared for pastoral work among the students?
- Has the Church (that means everyone: bishops, priests, teachers and parents) been vigilant enough in the matter of education? Do we know what is really happening in schools?
- Has the adoption of a joint syllabus in schools contributed to the watering down of our tradition?

In highlighting difficulties of execution of the Church's role on each level, KEC recognized failure by the Church. For example, the bishops who are expected to create Diocesan Education offices for their diocese "find it difficult to free some of their most competent personnel for the posts of Education Secretary and Religious Education Advisors" (KCS 1992:15). Church personnel who are best qualified for these roles do not

necessarily consider them to be priority ministry, and therefore prefer to avail themselves for other works, such as teaching in one specific school instead of having supervisory and training responsibility for Catholic teachers in a number of schools. The dioceses failed to provide enough staff for the tasks of care of their sponsored schools, and to give the few they had with adequate training and financial support to carry out their roles effectively.

On the school Boards of Governors (BOGs), there were representatives of the sponsor who had so little contact with the diocesan education authorities that they did not understand their roles as sponsor's representatives on school boards (KEC 1992). Some representatives of the sponsor on BOGs were chosen without due vigilance to their commitment to the Catholic cause. Such representatives were difficult to instruct on their roles as sponsor's representatives on the Board and thus failed to carry these out effectively (KEC 1992).

Catholic parents, who are viewed as chief protagonists in the education of their children, did not know their rights. They were so preoccupied with academic achievement for their children that they disregarded all other aspects of bringing up an integrated human person who is adequately prepared for life in society (KEC 1992). In the conclusion, the Catholic Church admits that she had neither properly understood nor adequately implemented her role of sponsor in schools. Consequently the possibilities of fulfilling the obligation of ensuring an education for integral development of the students were considerably jeopardized.

## **Developments in Catholic Public Schools**

The 1990s were characterized by differentiated developments in the functioning of sponsorship in the various Catholic dioceses around the country, as well as increased awareness on the part of Catholic Church Education personnel on their role as sponsor in schools. The Church continued to have difficulties with government interference in the management of schools. Even as late as 1999, Waihenya and Kariga (1999), reported that the chairman of the KEC, then Bishop John Njue, blamed political interference for unrest in schools. According to the bishop, many school principals and members of BOGs were unqualified for the jobs but occupied these positions as political appointees. According to some leading personalities in Catholic Education nationally, differences and difficulties were occasioned by the varying quality of Catholic diocesan vigilance over their schools.

Since a school is a major development project in any locality, political energies tend to rally around control of such an institution, not always to the benefit of the school. In those dioceses where the Catholic Church has been vigilant, there was a strengthening of the practice of sponsorship, including improvement of the support to Principals of Catholic schools in their roles. There was greater vigilance over the Boards of the Schools. According to the Catholic National Education Secretary (O.I. July 20, 2004), the Archdiocese of Nairobi was one of the best in playing this role. There has been vigilance over the appointment of Catholic Principals for the Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese, and efforts at organizing and vitalizing a Catholic Principals' Association.



Various efforts at organizing a Catholic Teachers Association had been made though without lasting success. Some efforts at improving pastoral care of the students have been sustained through the Catholic Pastoral Awareness Program (CAPAP). The big challenge that Pastoral Programmers of Instruction (PPI) meet is that the parents and students do not see much value in putting in time towards learning subjects that do not contribute to their examination success. The Education Secretary of the Archdiocese of Nairobi in 2007 could happily boast of a strong educationalists' team constituting the Archdiocesan Education Board – a consultative body of the Archdiocesan Educational matters – which was in place. Archdiocesan Education Officers for Nairobi were highly qualified educationists (O.I. June 22, 2007), all bearing post graduate qualifications in Education leadership or related studies. Perhaps it is because of this vitality of Catholic Education awareness at the archdiocesan level that some of the schools visited by the researcher bore clear signs of the awareness and vigilance over matters of Catholic faith and religious tradition.

There have been special developments facilitated by the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Nairobi since the 1990s. According to Fr. F. Mburu, former Education Secretary for the Archdiocese, emphasis had been laid on selection and placement of Principals of Catholic schools as their role became increasingly appreciated. The constitution of school boards was followed vigilantly. Some of the members of the Archdiocesan Education Board who are or have been principals of Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese attested to the great value added to Catholic sponsorship of their schools by the close and reliable support given by the Education Secretary and the education advisors at the Archdiocesan Education Office (O.I. July 19, 2007).

## Developments in Catholic Private Schools

Catholic private schools in the Archdiocese, headed by religious or priests fared steadily in the characteristic of the Catholic school, namely the sustenance of the teaching of Religious Education and PPI, worship, and harmony with the traditional values of the Catholic Church. Initially – soon after independence - most private Catholic schools were those run by the religious of the congregations that founded them. These were usually persons who are convinced of the value of this Catholic identity. Since late 1980s there have been establishments of some private ‘Catholic sponsored’ schools some of which have a minimal commitment to the characteristic of Catholic Education<sup>77</sup>. These use the ‘Catholic’ front to attract parents who wish to have their children in schools with academic excellence and disciplinary exemplariness traditionally associated with Catholic schools. These schools are listed in the education office of the Archdiocese as Catholic-sponsored. The very fact that they are recognized by the Archdiocese may be a sign of the wide latitude of what the Catholic Church considers to be Catholic schools. Yet it is also noteworthy that some members of the Catholic education leadership in the Archdiocese are skeptical about the genuineness of the catholic character of some of these schools. The Archdiocesan Strategic Plan for the period 2003 – 2005 did not give these schools any mention. Yet expert opinion in the Archdiocese, recommend that privatization of schools, including the individual enterprises by Christians, is the way to go into the future of education in the country. The author do not purport to stand in

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<sup>77</sup> These are the views of one religious woman involved in leadership of a group of religious private Catholic schools interviewed on August 15 2007, which are also shared by the Religious Education Advisor interviewed around the same time.

judgment over any of these positions but observes that the definition of Catholic private schools in the Archdiocese of Nairobi and in Kenya at large, may appear to be ambiguous. This situation may suggest a need for refinement in the definition as well as other pedagogical aspects of the Catholic school.

### **New Challenges**

The Kenya Episcopal Conference found it necessary to underscore the understanding of Catholic sponsorship of schools by publishing the policy document of the Catholic Church in Education (KEC 2000). As well as restating the specific roles of all involved in Catholic schools the document also appreciates that the Catholic Church has partnered with the Government in implementing education policies and in searching for new approaches in education in Kenya (KEC 2000: 6). In this document, the Catholic Church in Kenya sets new challenges for itself, sharpening the focus on its sponsorship responsibility in schools. The challenge set is no less than the creation of learning communities in each of the schools, involving the local community, parents, Catholic teachers, teachers responsible for CAPAP, Principals, BOG members, Parish leadership and students. The demand of such an enterprise is no mean measure of commitment.

In 2001 the KEC published the *Syllabus for Pastoral Instruction in Secondary Schools* declaring it to be a supplement to the CRE syllabus. It is supposed to be experiential in approach taking the learner's experiences as the starting point. Courses offered on:

...sexuality, marriage and family (which) are aimed at helping learners develop the right attitudes, deepen and strengthen their values in the light of the teaching of the Gospel and the Catholic Church. ... equip the

learners with knowledge, skills and attitudes meant to change behavior that will prevent them from being infected with HIV/AIDS.

The course also has a section on contemporary issues aimed at helping the learners “acquire values so as to be able to lead a full life in a fast changing society” (KEC 2001: 5). A look at the development of materials for pastoral programs manifests the efforts the Church has made to keep these programs up and strong.

There is still a lot of work left to be done in the active development of meaningful and effective Catholic sponsorship of schools, which is ultimately the concern for the holistic development of the students based on the teachings of the gospel as propagated by the Church. The creation of a lively and effective Christian community in each Catholic school is among the challenges whose understanding and implementation are only in their infancy, according to an Archdiocese of Nairobi education Officer (O.I. June 22, 2007). Very few Catholic teachers are willing to teach the PPI even though some have benefited from extra training for the same in the CAPAP programme. The challenge of creating team responsibility between teachers and parents for the education of the youth is far from being fully achieved. These are some of the challenges set by the KEC for its schools (KEC, 2000) and which entail lengthy and on-going creativity and surveillance.

On the larger scale beyond Catholic sponsorship, there is the on-going need for innovation in education and large-scale overhaul of secondary school education in the country (*The Standard*, December 20, 2006. Education Pullout p. 2). Efforts for nationwide overhaul have been made over the years, but there is scope for smaller scale adaptations which have not yet been exploited. These as well as the national level of on-going development present opportunity and challenge for the Catholic Church in Kenya

to bring its contribution to the table. But such a contribution, in order to bear weight, must be considered deeply and widely, including the faith communities in forums that do not isolate the school from other sectors of life in society. In addition, the face of the Catholic Church in the immanent dialogues and bargains has to be a more complete face of the Church, bringing in the laity, men and women as well as religious and clergy. In this way, the stance of the Catholic Church in Kenya vis-à-vis educational concerns will be more credible to the rest of Kenyan society. But in doing this, the genuine views of Catholic Christians of all walks of life need to be listened to. There is need for open conversations ad intra to create genuine and convinced Catholic voice.

### ***Appraisal of the Catholic Church's Interventions in Education for Integral Personal Development***

This two-part article has attempted to trace the understanding and implementation of the charge to facilitate integral development of students through Catholic schools from their foundations in colonial Kenya and subsequent developments in the post-colonial era. It reveals that this understanding and implementation has been subject to various changes influenced by the political and social-economic developments and challenges in the country at different times, as well as by developments and challenges within the Catholic Church itself. There have been many achievements as well as some limitations occasioned by the openness to pluralism in schools in post-colonial Kenya. This pluralism, though challenging, has also been embraced by the Church. Vatican II documents especially *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) represent a Church much more open to the interaction and dialogue with the modern world and its cultures, than had been before. These developments in turn call for a deepened and broadened understanding of the role

of the Church in schools if that role is to contribute substantially to the integral development of students, enabling them become effective citizens of the modern world, charged by the evangelical spirit.

It has been indicated already that in the beginning, the missionaries opened schools in order to use them to increase church membership. Vatican II and subsequent developments in the understanding of the mission of the Church has shifted emphasis to the development of the theology of the Kingdom of God as contrasted to the theology of the Church. With this shift in emphasis, the Church understands herself as an agent of the Kingdom of God which is greater than the Church. There is, accordingly, a change in the understanding of the role of the Catholic school and the Catholic Church's involvement in education. In a pluralistic world of which Kenya today is part, the Church's mission in education is broader than simply to use the school as a means to bring in more members to the Church. Education is now regarded as one tool to enable the Church to carry out its total program of evangelization, in the sense that 'evangelization means bringing the "good news" into all the situations in which humanity is found, so as to renew humanity' (*EvangeliiNuntiandi* 1974, no. 18).

In part one, we appreciated that Christian educators were at the forefront of the repudiation of African culture in the colonial times and continued the same albeit in subtle ways in post-colonial times. African values thus relegated to the backyard were increasingly identified with magic, witchcraft and other forms of abuse. A major blow for African educational value was the loss of the educating role of African elders and of the community. With the transferred loyalty of African youth from the elders of their communities to the missionaries and their agents, the African educating community has

become fragmented. In some cases, even the family has lost its hold on its children. The cumulative impact on African communities and African youth is the sense of a missing link in socialization resulting in lack of a deep sense of identity and authority that springs from having consistent role models. Rossana (2004) has underscored the tragedy of the lack of role models for young people in the world of today. The curative processes for this malign must be embraced also by the Church as an education agent in the country, with a moral sense of responsibility for the damage caused and the making of a different kind of a future for Kenyan youth through cultural and community reconstruction.

The Catholic Church in independent Kenya clearly opted to cooperate with the Government of Kenya in providing education to Kenyan youth (KEC 2000: 10). This deliberate and laudable option fits into the understanding that the duty to educate belongs to the state. It also fits a broadened understanding of evangelization in the Catholic Church since Vatican II and the papal encyclical *EvangeliiNuntiandi* (1974, no. 18), in which Pope Paul VI underscores that evangelization means bringing improvement to all the states of human life. Post Vatican II evangelization is therefore strongly in the light of a pluralistic world. The understanding of pluralism and inter-cultural, inter-religious living is in the process of being further appreciated in the world of today. What is urgent is that pluralism must not be allowed to mean loss of identity. In developing educational personnel who are committed Catholics and professional educators, the Church is increasing its ability to be relevant in the midst of pluralism, specifically enabling itself to be in a position to collaborate better with the Government in the integral development of the student in her schools, with the confidence to contribute her own unique reflections into the national pool of reflection and action. To do this, however, the Church needs to

be more consistent in its planning and implementation so as to heighten professionalism in Church practice.

Concern for the quality of instruction, and indeed the very goals of instruction in the schools in general, does not seem to be evident among the Catholic Church's educational leadership. The interventions of the Catholic Church therein have lacked in the prophetic and expert contribution that might lead to improvement of pedagogical processes in the schools. In Catholic as in other schools "learning techniques ... remain the same: the rote method, the technique of cramming, and once the examination menace is passed, of forgetting all these useless impediments" (Luma, 1990: 97). Even though the Gachathi Report recommended a change of methods of instruction to include many more heuristic ones to personalize and make learning more permanent (Republic of Kenya 1976: 63, 69-70), there is no record of sustained efforts to implement this recommendation in Catholic schools. Nor did the Catholic Church endeavor to contribute seriously to the search for and implementation of these more effective learning methods. Church schools seem to have entered the 'rat-race' of examinations success as the guiding principle of learning throughout the school years. One cannot but regret that a community endowed with so many possibilities as is the Catholic Church, has not more seriously invested itself in these matters. It may be right to say that there has not been enough investment of the energies of Catholic Church in research into the scope and possibilities of Catholic education in the country within its historical context.



### *Conclusion*

Being a major player on the education scene in Kenya places the Catholic Church in a position of great responsibility. While it is clear, from the varied efforts at intervention that the Church made over these years, that the Church understood this basic fact, the quality of intervention seems rather limited. A rather piecemeal and reactionary style seems to predominate the involvement of the Catholic Church in the policy decisions on Education. There was lack of a pro-active approach, perhaps resulting from the transfer of the responsibility for educational management at the national level to the MOE. The Church did not raise fundamental questions regarding the philosophical and pedagogical considerations in the education policy decisions. Yet this is an area that seriously influences the cultures of schools and thus the integral development of the students in them.

The commitment of the Catholic Church to education in schools in post-colonial Kenya has been unwavering; many Catholic schools in the country enjoy a reputation for academic excellence and disciplinary constancy. Yet this history is also punctuated by various understandings of the direction and emphases that the education in Kenyan Catholic schools should take. A clear emphasis with substantive development of Catholic Education positions in a proactive and locally appropriated way could have made the Catholic Church's perspective better understood especially within the Church's schools, thus improving the possibilities of implementation of chosen priorities. In effect this might have translated into a more holistic approach to the integral education of the youth in Catholic schools, and in turn served to make a contribution to the development of holistic approaches to education in Kenya at large.

It is not in doubt that the Catholic Church in Kenya has invested a great deal in education, both formal and non-formal. The multiplicity of ways in which the Catholic Church is engaged in educational concerns in the country include collaboration with the government sectors as well as charting different paths according to the perceived needs. Looking for example at the varieties of the interventions in the non-formal education sector, it is evident that the Catholic Church can be a leader in educational thought and practice in the country, attuned to the needs of the people. These are needs which other institutions, including the government, have yet to apprehend. Informal schools in the city slums, schools for HIV-AIDS affected and infected youth, and a rehabilitation centre for juvenile ex-prisoners, are but some examples of the wide scope of openness to the novelty required in responding to unprecedented social realities. Yet this prophetic spirit has hardly been sustained in the formal education sector in post-colonial Kenya. The sponsorship arrangement enshrined in the Education Act has been far from satisfactory, especially because it has effectively denied the Church the independence to develop her schools as she might have seen fit. Greater license afforded to the Church in her private schools has provided the occasion to demonstrate that collaboration with the MOE is possible with the church maintaining control of the schools.

The exercise of sponsorship of schools by the Catholic Church has been an area of ambiguity and lack of clear lines of responsibility of the Church. This ambiguity in turn has produced laxity in some Catholic public schools. There is also characterization of private 'Catholic' schools whose Catholic character can be difficult to discern, and in which the Catholic Church's authority is unclear. While the Catholic Church policy in Education in Kenya is increasingly being clarified (KEC 2000), the strategies of

implementation, including training, supervision and retention of staff, and overall surveillance and development of the Catholic character, need greater attention since these have a strong bearing on the integral development of the students.

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## Reading *Ebo* as Spirit: The Foundation of Authentic Christian Pneumatology among the Igala Community in Nigeria.

Abstract.

*Ebo* is divine Spirit. The Supreme Being (*Ojo*) creates and re-creates the Igala universe through this creative and sustaining principle. It is through *ebo* as spirit, that *Ojo* reveals God's self through the earth deity (*ane*), the ancestors (*ibegwu*) and other nature spirits. Therefore as spiritual beings *ebo* possesses autonomous iconic existence that cannot be reduced to its physical representation in idols (*ode*). Through symbolic-ritual actions, *ebo* makes *Ojo* accessible and beneficiary to the human and the world through the ministry of healing and charisma. In the 1920s, while recognizing the positive influence of the *ebo* (*ibegwu*) cult among the Igala, the *Ajokodo* Bible translated spirit as *ibegwu*. A translation that was later diminished and demonized. As a result, *ebo* lost its spirit connotation and dangerously become a synonym of idol (*ode*). On account of this pejorative association, the 1970 translation of the Igala Bible resorted to the translated divine spirit as *afu* (wind), instead of *ebo*—*ibegwu*.

The appreciation of *ebo* as spirit has enormous implications for the Igala Christian Pneumatology—science of the spirit and the Holy Spirit. For the conception of any authentic Igala Pneumatology must first confront the reality *ebo* as divine spirits. This article attempts to provide a theological foundation for the understanding of *ebo* as spirit of the divine obtainable only ritual action. This aspect of worship is fundamentally lacking in the concept of *afu* as spirit. In essence, the appropriation of the word *afu* for spirit constitutes not only escapism, but also a monumental hindrance to theological inculturation. Hence, the claim to know what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of the Igala Christian must be preceded by an authentic knowledge of what is spirit within the Igala world.

### *Introduction.*

To the West African Igala, *ebo* means spirit; and *ode* means fetish effigy or idol. *Ebo* is the divine supernatural vital force and the power of the Supreme Being *Ojo* operating in the Igala world through particular and participatory activities of humans collaborating with principal divinities and deities. Ukwedeh meticulously outlines the rule of *ebo* as nature spirits commissioned by the Supreme Being *Ojo*.<sup>78</sup> As divine principle, *ebo* connects the Supreme Being (*Ojo*), the ancestral spirit *ibegwu* through the

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<sup>78</sup> Joseph N. Ukwedeh, *History of the Igala Kingdom c. 1534-1845* (Kaduna: Arewa House Ahmadu Bello University, 2003).

reincarnated human spirit (*ojo*) and the earth deity—*ane*.<sup>79</sup> In the Igala worldview, the Supreme Being *Ojo* has no direct cult and as such *ebọ* serves both an ontological and phenomenological function. As the ontological principle of creation,<sup>80</sup> *ebọ* connects *Ojo* to the world symbolized by earth (*ane*) and the ancestral reincarnate human spirit (*ojo*). In the phenomenological sphere, *ebọ* manifests the divine outpouring of intuition and inspiration of the Supreme Being. It is the basic participatory character of the human in the divine, without which the glimpse into the hallowed and holy becomes an illusion. Simply put, *ebọ* is the gateway to mystical experience and consciousness of the divine presence in the Igala world, creating the pathway for healing and wholeness through destiny (*okai*) and charisma.

Generally, *ebọ* is intrinsically linked to the anthropocentric conception of salvation—salvation from below—meaning that, it denotes the issues of human condition as it unfolds itself in the day-to-day realities and activities of the Igala from birth through death to the here-after. In this sense, *ebọ* performs both a “revelatory and soteriological” function.<sup>81</sup> As mentioned in the words of Sydney R. Seton, “‘Ebbo’ in the case is the household god... is supposed to contain a spirit, specially sent by Ojo to look after that particular man and his family. It corresponds roughly to the idea of a guardian angel and

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<sup>79</sup> John S. Boston, *Medicines and Fetishes in Igala Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Jul., 1971), 200.

<sup>80</sup> See, Elochukwu Uzukwu view on the Primacy of Spirits in the West African Worldview, Elochukwu Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 151ff.

<sup>81</sup> An application John Breck definition of ruach-Yahweh suits the theological description of spirit as *ebọ*. See John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in Orthodox Church* (New York: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2001), 198.

patron saint combined.”<sup>82</sup> As spirit, therefore, *ẹbọ* occupies a higher position above the humans and function as protector and guardian of society.

More to the point, within the context of naming ceremony the Igala people bear the name *ọma-ẹbọ* (child of the spirits), *ad’ẹbọ* (servant of the spirits), *achebọ* (adherent of the spirits), *ọkọ-ẹbọ* (husband of the spirits), *ọya-ẹbọ* (wife of the spirits), and *Iñmi* (Life). Since Igala names evoke and extrapolate reality it is difficult to find adherents who bear names resulting from the dedication to *afu* as spirit. Nowhere among the Igala do people bear *ọma-afu* or *ẹfulefu*—a child that is wayward like the wind; totally outside the rhythm of Life. Among the Igala, Spirits are thought of in anthropomorphic terms. The existence of these names suggests a symbiotic relationship between the spirits-world and the human race. This affinity is constantly renewed through rituals and worship. For this reason, Igala names like other African names are extension of symbolic-ritual actions and not just “tags,” but an important tool to grapple and unravel the mystery of reality.<sup>83</sup>

In the Igala world, *Ẹbọ* as symbolic-ritual action generates group identity and functions as the sole authentic source document for the understanding religion.<sup>84</sup> Through the *ẹbọ* rituals the Igala draws life and wisdom from the ancestral pool. In this essay, for the reason that there exists an intrinsic connection between *ẹbọ* and *ibegwu*, both terms are used as synonyms to convey the Igala sense of the spirit of the Supreme Being that is

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<sup>82</sup> Sydney R. Seton, “Notes on the Igala Tribe, Northern Nigeria. Part II,” in *Journal of the Royal African Society*. Vol. 29, No. 114 (Jan., 1930), 150.

<sup>83</sup> As E. Ifesieh rightly puts it, “these names as religious symbols, evoke and provoke, extrapolate and eternalize, elevate and sustain, permeate and prepare, and finally in an unconstrained and contemporaneous manner, disposes the mind to embrace the meta-physical domain.” Emmanuel I. Ifesieh, *Religion at the Grassroots: Studies in Igbo Religion* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1969), 126.

<sup>84</sup> Elochukwu Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1997), 41.

contextualized and experienced through symbolic-ritual actions and within specific cultic settings.

This article addresses two major concerns in Igala theology of religions. (1) the retrieval and reinstatement of *ebọ* as the veritable Igala translation of ‘spirit.’ (2) laying the foundation of an authentic Igala Pneumatology—Holy Spirit of God—on the operational principles of *ebọ* exacting influence on/through the individual and personal spirit; bearing gifts, healing and destiny. Through inductive reasoning and relying on earlier biblical translations and extra-biblical manuscripts where the word ‘spirit’ was translated both as *ibegwu* and *ebọ* this essay surmises that *ebọ* is the human and divine principle through which *Ojọ* generate life and bestow healing through vocations and destiny—*okai*. With this in mind, I contend that the translation of *afu* as spirit of the divine is incidental to the Igala tradition, in that, among the Igala people, *afu* as a natural phenomenon has no ritual or cultic significance.

### ***Methodology***

The method used in this essay is qualitative research. It is based on descriptive, analytic examination and cross-examination of the subject matter that is both reflexive and active. It is an attempt at theological inculturation—the meeting of the Igala culture and the Christian gospel. For this reason, through the hermeneutical lens of post-colonial discourse, this essay situates theology within the confines of the cultural struggles of the Igala Christians as they wrestle with the phenomenon of the discernment of spirits. As a result of the complex nature of *ebọ* an eclectic approach that transgresses the limit and borders of euro-centrism would be employed to harness the different philosophical and theological presuppositions used in this essay.

First and foremost, this essay is a response to Fidelis E. Egbunu's article titled, *Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal*.<sup>85</sup> Relying heavily on western philosophical categories, Egbunu established a connection between the Igala understanding of person—*one* and the concept of unity—*Udama* as foundational to the apprehending personhood. While agreeing with Egbunu on subject-matter, this essay deviates considerable on methods and substance. Such attempt to build concepts of African traditional religion (ATR) on western categories has received serious criticism among African scholars. Okot p'Bitek accused some African scholars as "Hellenizers of ATR," in that, "they dress up African deities with Hellenistic robes and parade them before the Western world."<sup>86</sup> For the sake of methodological accuracy and consistency this paper distances from commitment to Western linguistic and syllogisms that are opposed to the African language of God-Spirit-talk rooted in signs and symbols.

### ***Translating Spirit as Ebo Ibegwu***

In biblical exegesis, translating Rūach-spirit constitutes one of the most difficult conundrums for biblical experts. As is the case with other central themes of the Bible, the studies of rūach as it relates to Yahweh himself or his activity in creation do not form a coherence. Scholars are not agreed on the semantic and syntactic applications of rūach. However, within the context of biblical cosmogony, there is constant referencing to the spirit of God (rūach-Yahweh) and the spirit of life (rūach -hayim) as the two primordial

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<sup>85</sup> For instance, Fidelis E. Egbunu while attempting to foster an Igala Ontology of being applied the classical Western philosophical concepts to decode the Igala understanding of *afu* as 'vital force.' He asserts further that the "typical Igala person holds the notion that God created the human person; he filled him with *afu* (air, spirit or breath) which is life in itself." Fidelis E. Egbunu, *Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal*, Cross-Cultural Communication, Vol. 9, N0.3, 2013, pp. 30-38.

<sup>86</sup> See p'Bitek criticism of pioneer African scholar like Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti, in Okot p'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), 125.

concepts at creation.<sup>87</sup> Among the Jews the interpretation of *rūach* as wind has never been independent of divine manifestation.

The 1920 *Ajokodo* translation of the Igala bible renders spirit as *ibegu*:  
Mtt 3:16: Ojale mu bi te own, I yu ibegu ei Ojo kbare I gugu ogi wn daba okede...the heaven was opened, he saw the Spirit of God descending, sitting on him like a dove.  
Mtt 12:18: Na d'Ibegu min'Own... I will give my Spirit to him...  
Luke 1:35: Ibegu Desholo...Holy Spirit.<sup>88</sup>

The *Ajokodo* translation of the Holy Spirit as *Ibegu desholo* (ibegwu ̣hiolo Holy ancestral spirit) intends to connect the Igala positive reception of the supportive role of the ancestral spirits and the Christian perception of the Holy Spirit. From the perspective of the *Ajokodo* translators employing the Igala word *ibegwu* even in its controversial form to translate the Spirit, signals continuity with and mutual respect for the source culture. This attitude depicts humility and genuine openness to dialogue with elements of Igala traditional religion. It is attention-grabbing to note that still among the Igala in Delta State, the word *Ibegu* is retained as the authentic translation for both ancestral spirit and the spirit as well. In essence, among these groups, the spirit is translated as *Ibegu* and not *afu*. More astonishing is the fact that these set of Igala migrated to their current geographical location prior to the 1970 translation of the Igala Bible which renders spirit as *afu*.

A similar attempt in translation was carried out by the neighboring Idoma and Igbo ethnicities. Among the Idoma, the Holy Spirit was rendered *alekwu-iho* (Holy ancestral spirits). In the Idoma culture, there is an interesting association between: *alekwu*

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<sup>87</sup> See, Robert W. Jenson, "The Holy Spirit," in Carl E. Breanten, ed., *Church Dogmatics 2* (Philadelphia: First Fortress Press, 2011).

<sup>88</sup> The Gospels and Acts in Igala (England, London: White Friars Press Ltd, 1920). See the 1970 Igala Bible translates Spirit as *afu*. *Otakada Ola Ojo*: The Bible in Igala (Lagos: The Bible Society of Nigeria, 1970), 5.

(spirits), *alekwu* (ancestors) and *ekwu* (incarnate beings/masquerades). Correspondingly, also among the Igbo, *mmou* (spirits), is analogous to *[m]munwu* (incarnate beings of the *ndi ichie*—ancestors). Both the Idoma and Igbo have a distinct expression for the wind as a natural phenomenon; (*ikuku*) for the Igbo and (*owo*) for the Idoma. The Igbo *ikuku* and Idoma *owo* are identical with the Igala *afu*. Yet, among the Igbo and Idoma ethnicities *mmou* and *alekwu* were considered the most appropriate translation for divine spirit. Moreover, the Igala *ibegwu phiolo*, Idoma *alekwu ihọ* and the Igbo *mmuo nsọ* belong to a similar semantic field; all of them referring to the conceptual domain of the Supreme Being in relation to the human sphere. Whereas, among the Idoma and Igbo Christians the translation of the Holy Spirit as *alekwu ihọ* and *mmuo nsọ* is still in use within the cultic and liturgical settings, the Igala Christians dropped *ibegwu phiolo* and adopted *afu ina*.

The question remains: what was the rationale behind the missionary's intent for *afu* as a substitute for *ibegwu-ẹbọ* in translating the Spirit among the Igala? The answer is not farfetched. It relates to the prevalent notion that *ẹbọ* in particular and the entire Igala traditional religion (*Ogwuchekpọ*), has a subtle ontological continuity with animism.<sup>89</sup> Evidence from ethnographic and anthropological studies reveals that the anthropological presuppositions and assertions of most pre-Vatican II missionaries were conditioned by the narrative enclosed in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Cultures*.<sup>90</sup> Kwame Bediako's comparative analysis of the missionaries' understanding of (ATR) as animism in the midst of other world religions is amazing. To quote Bediako:

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<sup>89</sup> For the entire negative characterization of ATR by Christian Missionaries, see, Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* 1999 ed. (Costa Mesa, CA: Regnum Books, 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Arts and Customs. Vol I* (London: John Murray Pub. 1920), 426.



“Animism” therefore, to all intents and purposes, constituted in the missionary understanding, a religious system like the other categories treated: Chinese religions, religions of Japan, Islam, and Hinduism. However, of all of them, Animism was probably the most difficult for the missionary to penetrate since it had neither literature nor scholar to expound its mysteries to the European mind. It is understandable therefore that many missionaries were hesitant to suggest that there exist any “preparation for Christianity” in this form of religion, whist some even concluded that there was “practically no religious content in Animism.”<sup>91</sup>

As a result of this association with animism, *ẹbọ* was diminished and eventually demonized,<sup>92</sup> reducing it to the status of *ode*—the physical effigies and man-made idols associated with the ritual worship. Thus, used interchangeable with *ode* (idols), *ẹbọ* eventually lost its spirit connotation, and then acquired a pejorative meaning, and subsequent appellation for the adherents of Igala traditional religion as *ama chi ichiẹbọ* (those who act like /adhere to the ways of the spirits). The seemingly negative tinge given to *ẹbọ* by the missionaries greatly influenced the later translations of Igala bible and prayer books.

### *Translating Spirit as Afu*

Thus, in order to justify the negative nuance given to *ẹbọ* the missionaries made two important transitions in translation: (a) Denigrating *ẹbọ* as mere *ode* (idol); and (b) Justifying the translating Spirit as *afu* in line with the biblical *rūach* of the Hebrew tradition. Perhaps in a way, the connection between *ẹbọ* and Holy Spirit was occasioned to avoid animism. As if translating the spirit as *afu* will quell the menace of evil spirits *fiat accompli*. In a sense, this belief ignores countable biblical references where the

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<sup>91</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* 1999 ed. (Costa Mesa, CA: Regnum Books, 1992), 231.

<sup>92</sup> See Brigit Meyer, *Translating the Devil-Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

Hebrew word *rūach* and its Greek cognate *pneuma* encompass negative nuances that are complicated and controversial with reference to the Spirit of Yahweh.

Strange as it may seem to the modern reader, the Hebrew word *rūach* like the Igala term *ebɔ* connotes ambiguity and sometimes could be dangerous; it “ranges widely in meaning from breath to breeze to wind to angel to demon to spirit.”<sup>93</sup> In most cases, the ambivalence resulting from the use of *rūach/pneuma* does not convincingly address the issue of theodicy. In the Hebrew scripture for instance *rūach* translates both the Spirit of Yahweh, and also an evil spirit of or from “Yahweh.” The biblical passages of Judges 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:15ff; 18:10, depicts Yahweh as the ontological source of evil spirit. This view was advocated by Walther Eichrodt.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, according to Kirsteen Kim, “...*pneuma* occurs at least 250 times in the New Testament as a reference to the Spirit of God...On about forty other occasions, *pneuma* is applied to evil spirits of some kind. On about forty other occasions, “spirit” is identified as referring to ‘human spirit’ or at least the dimension of the human being that interacts with the divine or ‘breathe of life.’”<sup>95</sup> Consequently, an understanding of the words *rūach* and *pneuma* and their application to other culture must acknowledge these ambiguities and admitting that these terms themselves are the product of a particular culture’s long history of attempting to fathom and penetrate God’s activity in creation. As a result, the biblical understanding of *spirit* cannot be unilaterally implied, applied or

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<sup>93</sup> John R. Levison, *Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Life of Faith* (Michigan: Wm Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2013), 17.

<sup>94</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (SMC Press, 1961).

<sup>95</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 16.

imposed on other cultures without further qualifications or sound exegetical analysis—rigorously interpreting the text in con-text and sub-text.

Although *afu* like other natural phenomenon like rain (*omi*), thunder (*akpabana*) and sun (*olu*), figuratively describes the activity and attribute of the Supreme Being, one must emphasize that the Igala people mostly do not accord these phenomena the cultic and ritual considerations given to the domesticated spirits (*ẹbọ—ane*), and the ancestral spirit (*ẹbọ—ibegwu*). The Igala have no cult for the worship of gods like the Igbo sun god (*anyanwu*) or the Yoruba (*orisha*) or thunder god (*ogun*). This amounts to, as Boston pointed in 1971 that, “... the main emphases of Igala religion are slightly different from those of Yoruba religion... Ancestors and the earth cults play a more direct and central role in Igala than in Yoruba.”<sup>96</sup> In other words, in as much as there are cults and rituals for the earth spirits (*ẹbọ—ane*) for the ancestral spirits (*ẹbọ—ibegwu*), and nature spirits, scarcely do one find erections for non-cultic phenomena like *afu*, *omi*, *akpabana* relating to Yoruba (*orisha*) and Igbo (*anyanwu*).

In the metaphorical sense, *afu* describes the omnipresence attribute for *Ojọ*. From the point of view of rituals, such an indeterminate characteristic of *afu* risks placing the divine outside the realm of humans. Moreover, without rites and rituals (*ucholo-ẹbọ*), *Ojọ* becomes a *deus otiosus*—a God that is idle, hidden and disinterested in the affairs of humans.<sup>97</sup> Uzukwu opines that, ritual studies underline that beliefs, practices and values at their deepest level are revealed through ritual. Rituals are source documents of any

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<sup>96</sup> Boston, “Medicine and Fetish in Igala,” 200.

<sup>97</sup> For Missionary’s’ depiction of African theology as transcendent and in need of divine immanence tailored after European Deism, see, Jesse Nwiga Kanyua Mugambi, *Christianity and African Culture* (Kanya: Auton Publishers, 2002), 76.

society. Through them people express “what moves them most.”<sup>98</sup> The concept of *afu* as spirit lacks the ritual dimension that defines and reveals *Ojọ*'s presence as present in space, time, person or thing.

Ritual actions through sacrifices (*ohidaka*), constitutes the fundamental means of communication between spirits and the Supreme Being. As such, faceless deities or spirits that have no ritual are considered unfriendly and malevolent. Subsequently, the non-cultic characteristic of *afu* as a natural phenomenon presupposes that it can neither be worshipped nor placated through sacrifices. In short, among the Igala, *afu* has no rite (*ucholo*), no priest (*atama*), and no adherents. For the most part, because of its indeterminate characteristic, *afu* is believed to be dangerous and malevolent. As a result of its uncertain, *afu* as natural phenomenon has no relevance in the cosmic re-ordering of the Igala universe. This position is defensible alongside a reconsideration of the role of *ẹbọ* as divine spirit within cultic and ritual settings.

### ***Igala Spirit World: Ojọ, Ane, Ibegwu and Ebo.***

After these preliminary exegetical observations, it is time to address the main crux of this essay, namely, the retrieval and reinstatement of the term *ẹbọ*. According to Tom Miachi's tripartite ordering of the Igala cosmology, God—ancestors—gods—(*Ojọ-ibegwu-ojọ*) assumes central relevance.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, J. S. Boston identifies God—earth—deity—spirits (*Ojọ-Ane-Ebo*) as the three topmost spirits—beings among Igala.<sup>100</sup> In the

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<sup>98</sup> Uzukwu, *Worship As Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation*(Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1997.1997).

<sup>99</sup> Tom Miachi, *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture: Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-central Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books Limited, 2012), 115-117.

<sup>100</sup> John S. Boston, “Ifa Divination in Igala” in *Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. No. 4* (Oct., 1974), 350.

ritual setting *ebọ* intrinsically connects *Ojọ-ibegwu-Ane*, and as such there can be no authentic worship of the divine outside the paraphernalia of the spirit-beings (*ebọ*).

According to the Igbo theologian Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, “the creative and life-giving dimension that defines God as Spirit is structured to ATR.”<sup>101</sup> Uzukwu’s depiction of the West African cosmology as “Spirit-oriented and spirit-embedded,”<sup>102</sup> encapsulates the Igala Spirit-world. The Igala world is a universe that is saturated with Spirits (*ebọ*). There are multiplicities of Spirits (*ebọ*) pervading and parading the Igala universe with the *Ojọ* as their source and fount. Among the Igala, there is the belief of the Supreme Being *Ojọ* who is the creator God and rules the universe—*ane*.

Within the Igala world, *ebọ* are spirits with countenance; a face made manifest through rites, rituals and taboos. *Ebọ* has a locale—a ritual place and time. This locale provides the horizon for participation and individuation. This distinctive characteristic differentiates *ebọ* from other faceless and unknown spirits. Thus through the *humana-pneuma* principle *ebọ* equally serves a relational function. It bridges the divine with particular adherents, groups and communities. For example, the *ebọ Akpidi Iyanma* of Ejule, the *ebọ Okwuta Ijoji*, of Egume and the *ebọ Iyanma Oyibo Ojuh* and *Ayiba* of Agala-Ateh demonstrates how the ministration of a particular *ebọ* draws communities together with a sense of service and identity. The following was an ethnographic note recorded in 1929 from a descendant of *ebọ Akpidi Iyanma*:

The Ebbo is a spirit. Each has a name. My Ebbo is Okiti. It rests in an image made from an iron spear with cloth round it. It lives in the cloth. It came from my ancestors. Akudi, or Akodi Yama, a woman of Ejuli, heard about the Ebbo in Ifa and went there many years ago. She became an Atama and could foretell the future. My grandmother obtained my Ebbo

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<sup>101</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 137.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

from her. Before that there were no Atamas in the land. (Atama = Attah Ma, the father of many things.)<sup>103</sup>

Also, in 1968 according to oral tradition, the *ebọ iye-unyējima* was deployed from the Okolo Ichakolo center at Agbeji to combat smallpox disease in Agala-Ateh.<sup>104</sup>

In the generic sense *ebọ* is the divine manifestations of *Ọjọ* in the world; the ontological and phenomenological vital force behind humans and the deities. In simpler terms, *ebọ* is the greatest supernatural force among the Igala, the condition of the possibility of human deification, and the synergy of the human and divine life. The existence of the transcendent *Ọjọ* is expressed in its dynamic immanence in the company of and through the assistance of other principal divinities, spirits and gods.

Through reincarnation, the personal *ọjọ*, “the personal spirit that embodies individual destiny,”<sup>105</sup> participates in the divine life of the Supreme Being *Ọjọ*. In this sense one can argue that *ebọ* both translates supernatural vitality and also the personal spirit *ọjọ* in its individuation. In Igala anthropology, each individual before birth or fourteen days—*egwẹlẹ* after birth through the process of *ifa* divination is given a personal god called *ọjọ*. This personal deity is always a re-incarnated family member; an ancestor or ancestress.<sup>106</sup> And these personal deities or spirits through the principle of re-incarnation are believed to be mode of God’s “creative and life-giving action in human

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<sup>103</sup> Sydney R. Seton, “Notes on the Igala Tribe, Northern Nigeria. Part I,” in *Journal of the Royal African Society*. Vol. 29, No. 113 (Oct., 1929), 45.

<sup>104</sup> Audu Ejiga, *Custodian of ebọ Iye-unyējima in Agala-Ateh*. Unpublished Interview Notes, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 193.

<sup>106</sup> Miachi, *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture: Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-central Nigeria*, 222-224.

beings.”<sup>107</sup> In the strict sense, the *egwẹlẹ* ritual of identifying the personal *ọjọ* of the individual is the beginning of personhood among the Igala.

In the phenomenological and linguistic sense, *Ọjọ* also means ‘the day’ (today, yesterday and tomorrow). It is exciting to note how the Igala concept of *Ọjọ* as the returning face of the Supreme Being dawns on humanity through the participatory ritual actions of *ẹbọ*. This view relates to Victor Manfredi analysis of the dawning *chi* among the Igbo of Ehugbo Afikpo.<sup>108</sup> That means, in the Igala concept of daybreak (*Ọjọ mu nwa*), God dawns; God unfolds. The Igala people conceive the day as the phenomenological opening of God’s face to humanity through the various activities of the spirits. *Ọjọ*’s presence at daybreak implies the giving of Life through the spirits. And for those who are alive to behold *Ọjọ* (the day), it is an answered prayer to the request of the previous night. The normal response to a goodnight wish in Igala is the short ejaculatory prayer: “*ich’ẹnẹ k’ọjọ buwane*”—if God permits one to rise; literally meaning to behold God’s dawning in the morning. Thus, the supreme God—*Ọjọ* dawns and bestows life—*olaye* in the *ẹbọ*—spirit through the individual personal *ọjọ*.

The Igala land is saturated with spirits—*ẹbọ* as a result of its strategic geographical location as a people surrounded by the great seven rivers—*Ofu, Okura, Ọmala/Bagaji, Yimua/Benue, Maboḷo, Anambra, and Niger*. For this reason, among the Igala there exist a mutual relationship between the earth deity—*anẹ* and the great river spirits—*alijenu*. Customarily, water-*omi/ohimini* has become the greatest symbolic gesture of welcome among the Igala. On one hand, the imagery of the running-waters

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<sup>107</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 193.

<sup>108</sup> Victor Manfredi, “Igbo Initiation: Phallus or Umbilicus?” in *Cahiers d’Etudes africaines*, 145, XXXVII-I, 1997: 174-178.

signal peace, generosity, reciprocity and continuity in the on-going flow of life, and on the other hand, the calm but insurmountable nature of *omi/ohimini* describes the defiance of the Igala to neighboring ethnicities and colonial authorities.

The symbolic position of the city of Idah—the ancestral home of the Igala—bears testimony to this point. The Igala proverb...*olagenyi j'agenyi, una jo kere b'etutu, igba anyi, ijo kere b'ohimimi I mowo da* (the fire that burns the dry wool-grass with delight is curtailed by the waters of the sea), denotes the spiritual potency exuding from the Igala-spirit-world. According to oral traditions, neighboring ethnicities and kingdoms who sought both political and spiritual refuge found relieved at the shores of the Igala waters. Boston made allusion to the “Ibo who send men to Igala Country to be trained in the use of this power.”<sup>109</sup> It is not an understatement to assert that the activities of *ebọ* were among the factors that brought a glare of publicity on the Igala kingdom.

Before moving on, some clarification of the various nuances of the term *ebọ* among the Igala is appropriate. Etymologically, ten different meanings are identified.

- i). *Ebọ* as the principal pervading spirit of the Supreme Being *Ọjọ* in nature.<sup>110</sup> In this sense *ebọ* relates to the personal reincarnated spirit—*ọjọ* as derivative from *Ọjọ*.
- ii). *Ebọ* as nature spirit of individual deities like the earth goddess—*anẹ* and the ancestral spirit—*ibegwu*. In this respect and to a greater degree, the Atta Igala qualifies as *ebọ* with proper rites, rituals and taboos.
- iii). *Ebọ* as the inner voice of conscience in human, explicitly responsible for discretion, discernment and decision-making. It serves as a gauge for morality.

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<sup>109</sup> Boston, “Medicine and Fetish in Igala,” 200.

<sup>110</sup>See, Ukwedeh footnote 2 above.



iv). *Ẹbọ* as security surveillance device; protecting items, goods and services. Through the process of *ẹbọ edu d'ẹnwu*—setting the spirit as guard over items—such goods, be it a piece of land, economic trees and crops etc. The said items automatically become sacred and untouchable. Trespassers and culprits are generally apprehended by the *ẹbọ* in question.

v). *Ẹbọ* as symbol of blood covenant of ‘brotherhood and sisterhood’ among members and across clans and communities. Through the concept of *ẹnẹ-ẹbọ*—spiritual/mutual friendship, people not biologically related become natural family with all rights and privileges accruing from the bonds of consanguinity and affinity. Generally, marriages and acts of war are prohibited between such covenanted families.

(vi). *Ẹbọ* as lie dictator and oath-taking. In the process of *ẹbọ-emo* members of society, especially traditional and religious leaders enter into a contractual relationship involving the responsibility of trust and duty of care. Also the events of dispute and allegations of falsehood and foul play among families and neighbors are generally settled through *ẹbọ-emo*—truth simulation and guilt knowledge test. The *ẹbọ Ẹnyi Ejuh* of Ofakaga and the *ẹbọ Okolo Ichakolo* of Agbeji are typical centers for these rituals.

(vii). The concept of *ẹbọ-ego*—invocation the spirits. It has both positive and negative consequences. Positively, *ẹbọ-ego* within the context of ritual through incantations—*ofor kpai ule-ego* can be a form of prayer. Conversely, *ẹbọ-ego* outside ritual setting carries a negative connotation of curse or ill-wishing.

(viii). *Ẹbọ-edu*—individual participation in particular cultic services...*iyanna, igbogachi, ichekpa, etu, iye-unyẹjima, owalika, akpoli, okwuta-ijoji, egbunu, ikpakachi.etc.*

(ix). *Ẹbọ eta*—spirit self-deployment from place of abode to the destination of ministry.

The resounding alarm of *Ọkaheje* (*Ọkaheje kiya togba ẹbọ onwu aj'ẹbọ n'ejahi*) among the Igala announces the ritual time and space of the particular *ẹbọ*. During this exercise, non-initiates are warned to keep a distance.

x). *Ẹbọ ẹmutula*...as the gauge of the lantern that controls the density of light. The *ẹbọ* of the lantern is considered the life (*ọlaye*) of the lamp.

To put the issue of *ẹbọ* in a more critical perspective, it is informative to highlight the comments of Boston on this subject:

A western observer would tend to rank the various spirits in terms of their order of magnitude or degrees of power. At the top of the hierarchy would come *Ọjọ*, the Supreme Being and creator. Another spirit with wide powers in Igala belief is *Anẹ*, the spirit of the earth. Then there are various oracle spirits known generically as *ẹbọ*, with the function of giving protection against witchcraft. Their congregation may be large or small according to the success of the spirits in unmasking witches by striking them with illness and making them confess to their wrongdoing. Operating within a more restricted range are the Ancestor spirits who are guardians of wellbeing in particular clans, lineages, or lineage segments. Within the complex of ancestor worship falls the dyadic relationship between an individual and his personal *ọjọ* or guardian spirit. The guardian has responsibility for the destiny of its ward. Finally there are fetishes, *ode*, which are made and worshipped by individuals, and which are believed to ensure success in daily life by affording protection against the misfortunes that witchcraft and sorcery can bring.<sup>111</sup>

This connection of *ẹbọ* to the Supreme Being *Ọjọ* and the reincarnated spirit *ọjọ* within the ritual and cultic settings makes *ẹbọ* relevant as a Spirit—deity that is contextualized, identifiable and worshipped by families and communities. However, Boston's functional categorization of *ẹbọ* together with *ode* as a kind of antidote to witchcraft is confusing and misleading. This simplistic association of *ẹbọ* with fetish—*ode* later contributed to the misconception harbored by missionaries and other Igala

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<sup>111</sup> Boston, "Ifa Divination in Igala," 350.

Christians, that depicts *ẹbọ* as idol-*ode*—man made idols—the work of human hands...with mouths but cannot speak, and eyes that cannot see, (Ps. 135:16).

But *ẹbọ* is Spirit. And as Spirit *ẹbọ* has a wider *modus operandi* within the Igala worldview than the mere policing of witches and wizards. *Ẹbọ* is the creative and sustaining principle with which *Ọjọ* creates and re-creates the universe. It is through *ẹbọ* as spirit, that *Ọjọ* reveals God's self through the earth deity *anẹ*, and the ancestors-*ibegwu* and other oracle spirits. Therefore, as spiritual beings *ẹbọ* have autonomous iconic existence apart from the physical representation in *ode*—Idols, effigies and artifacts.

From the colonial time to date, *ẹbọ* has been dangerously associated with *ode* and in some cases used interchangeably. This has done grave harm to the practice of inculturation. Similarly, Sydney R. Seton's symbolic description of Ebbo [*ẹbọ*] is fascinating. Seton asserts that *ẹbọ* is a spirit sent by *Ọjọ*:

The "Ebbo" in the case is the household god and is generally represented by a piece of wood with a cloth round it. It may be roughly carved in the semblance of a man or woman. Aches from the white iroko are put in a hole in the chest of the figure. Everything given to the "Ebbo" must touch this iron, and when any prayer is made to it the iron is struck to drive the prayer home. There are cowries tied round the figure and the red feathers of a parrot are tied to the head to represent red eyes. Thread is wound round the figure, and the spirit animating it is asked to bring all sickness and prevent its coming to the house, even as itself is bound. The figure is put in an open hole near the compound, and a small hut is built over it. It is supposed to contain a spirit, specially sent by *Ojo* to look after that particular man and his family. It corresponds roughly to the idea of a guardian angel and patron saint combined.<sup>112</sup>

Seton's treatment is coherent with the Igala worldview; namely that *ẹbọ* is the divine spirit, the presence of *Ọjọ* radiating forth from the effigy (*ode*). Although, Seton's analysis of 'ebbo' closely associates it with fetish—*ode* object; it nonetheless distances itself from such notion. His graphic description of *ẹbọ* shows that it is spirit...a spirit with

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<sup>112</sup>Seton, "Notes on the Igala Tribe, Northern Nigeria. Part II," 150.

an image-*ode*. In a loose but figurative sense, the image of the *ẹbọ* can loosely identified with the *ẹbọ* itself. The Igala legendry *agale* musician Paul Yahaya Onalo (aka Odih), provides a more anthropomorphic representation of *ẹbọ* in the following instances: 1) *oje ẹbọ t'ẹbọ le, ya d'ẹbọ dachi n'anẹ* (the oracle will tumble and fall if outweighed by the food that is placed on it). 2) *ẹbọ unyi f'ẹnẹ ki n'unyi kpa, ekwu f'ujẹ* (the oracle that kills the owner will be eaten by the termites.)<sup>113</sup>

In general, there are two major categories of spirits in Igala cosmology: *ẹbọ unyi* (domesticated spirits) and *ẹbọ oko* (forest spirits). Principal among the domesticated Spirits (*ẹbounyi*) are the earth goddess (*anẹ*), the ancestral spirits (*ibegwu*) and the reincarnated personal spirit (*ojọ*). The forest Spirits (*ẹbọ oko*), have their domicile far away from home. They include the spirit of the divinities and deities taking abode in natural phenomena like the rivers, caves, rocks, forest, and shrines that are further remote from human settlement. Examples are the most elusive beings in Igala folklore, *ichekpa* (*a.k.a ogebe*) and *egwubi* (*a.k.a okagoli*). The *ichekpa* spirits are the most prominent and affable.

According to the description from oral tradition, *ichekpa* is a hairy anthropoid about two-three feet in height with crooked legs and feet turned backwards on the ankle.<sup>114</sup> As the hero (*oga*) of the both the dead and the living (*oga-egwu kpai oga-ile*), the *ẹbọ ichekpa* is endowed with phenomenal knowledge of herbs and plants... and mastery of arts and crafts. It is believed that *Ichekpa (ogebe)* is the starting point of all human wisdom, talents and charisma. In the words of Boston, “from time to time they abduct human children and bring them up as their own offspring. They pass on to the

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<sup>113</sup> Paul Yahaya Onalo, *Igala Agale Music*, Recorded 1979.

<sup>114</sup> Boston, “Medicine and Fetish in Igala,” 200.

children their own knowledge of medicines which far exceeds any skill that a man could acquire by normal means. The abducted children are eventually set free to return home.”<sup>115</sup> Generally, dreadlock hair style worn by adherents of the *ichekpa* cult connotes a symbolic covenantal agreement and mutual relationship.

In the cosmology of the Igala Traditional Religion humans are integral part of the created universe, co-existing and sharing the same sacred space with other vital forces and spirits (*ebọ*). Most of the *ebọ* especially the ancestral spirits function as a pillar and foundation members of societies. Because of this fundamental linkage between ancestral spirits as founding fathers/mothers of societies, *ebọ* cannot be expelled by its adherents for supposedly lack of performance. Comparatively, the incident recorded in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* in which the people of *Umuaro* deserted and subsequently declared the deity—*Ulu*,<sup>116</sup> a *persona non grata* for failing to meet the general wellbeing of the people will be considered outrageous among the Igala. Unlike the Igbo, the Igala people do not practice the strict contractual relationship with the spirits. Human beings occupy the lower status with respect to the spirits and deities. And since nature itself is saturated with the spiritual presence of the divine, all natural phenomena like the rivers, forest, and land are all pervaded by the Spirits: no land or water is a no man’s territory among the Igala.

The Spirits are rightful owners of nature and its resources. As such through the *Ifa*<sup>117</sup> divination process permission is sought from the specific spirit to share portions of such sacred space. The ecological import of such a worldview is immense; namely that

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964), 207-216.

<sup>117</sup> Divine Revelation is always done through the Oracle. (*ifa m’abọ mali enwu, m’abọ enwu omune ali ifa’n*).

humans are the steward or custodian of nature. Thus, through ritual actions, individuals and society respect the sacredness of the abode “places,” of these spirits while at the same time observing their “times,” through ceremonies and festivals. For instance, during the ritual of *ẹbọ eta*—spirit self-deployment from place of abode to the destination of ministry—children and young adults who are non-initiates are generally warned to stay off the path of the spirit.

Various taboos and prohibitions are laid down by society to respect the sacredness and dignity of the *atama* –priests and priestess; the [*ayibọ*] sacrificial items and shrine objects. All these restrictions and prohibitions around the sacred places, time, persons and objects/items are prescribed according to custom and traditions for the sole purpose of maintaining cosmic balance—but not dominion—over nature and to avert the wrath of the *ẹbọ*.

### ***Ẹbọ: The Philosophical basis for Life***

*Ẹbọ* is like life; it functions as the hermeneutical key for understanding the Igala world. Closely related to *ẹbọ* in meaning are the words breath (*inmi*), life (*ọlaye*) and shadow (*ojiji*). According to Uzukwu, “shadow is the being or person as invisible, as spiritual being...the principle of empowerment for self-deployment beyond the body, enabling the person to act beyond corporeal spatial constriction...”<sup>118</sup> As a philosophical concept, the human shadow (*ojiji onẹ*) forms the basis for the Igala belief in ‘appearance and disappearance’—the possibility of conceptualizing reality outside or beyond the physical realm (meta-physics). Consequently, the phenomenon of witchcraft and sorcery—*ochu* and *inacha* are made possible through this process of capturing and

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<sup>118</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 155.

manipulating the human shadow (*emu ojiji one*). Miachi would expand *ojiji*, beyond the philosophical perception to the Igala belief in re-incarnation.<sup>119</sup>

On the supra-mundane level, *ebọ* as spirit, *imñi* as breath, *olaye* as life and *ojiji* as psyche/soul translates the meta-physical dimension of person (*one*); whereas on the mundane sphere, blood (*ebiẹ*) and body (*angọla*) or flesh (*orọela*) represents the physical reality. What constitutes the human person (*one*) among the Igala is the above combination of the physical and meta-physical dimension. The Igala sense of duality between the physical and the metaphysical realities is relational and so distances itself from the western concept of dualism with emphasis on absolute principles that are opposites and at times impositional.

In the moral sphere, *ebọ* also functions as the source and seat of wisdom. Together with the human head/brain (*oji/okoto*) and the heart (*edọ*), *ebọ* is stressed as the physical seat of rationality and decision making. The Igala name *edogbo* which literally means the virtue of courage or spiritedness shows the psychological connection that exists between the human heart and *ebọ* as the driving force behind human activities. In an integral sense, *oji*, *edọ* and *ebọ* function together in dictating the inner voice of conscience that prompts decision making. For instance, an Igala can suddenly decide to cancel an already planned journey, a project or discontinue negotiations for the simple reason that the heart (*edọ*), the head (*oji*) or the spirit (*ebọ*) no longer consent to such an endeavor, (*edọ mi gban, oji mi dun, ebọ mi dun*).<sup>120</sup>

In the event of death, the breath is let go, the soul wanders away/around, the blood unites with the body, and only *ebọ* as spirit persists after death, thus forming the

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<sup>119</sup> Miachi, *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture: Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-central Nigeria*, 116.

<sup>120</sup> See, Egbunu, *Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal*, 30.

ontological basis for continuity between the human and the divine realm. In this sense, *ẹbọ* becomes the surviving and the persisting principle of the dead (*okwu onẹ*) incarnated into the incarnate-being (*egwu*).<sup>121</sup> In brief, *ẹbọ* constitutes the invisible manifestation of *Ọjọ* (alive and active) in the living and the living-dead.

In general, all incarnate-beings (*egwu*) are *ẹbọ* in the fullest sense. Incarnate-beings have their respective rites and rituals depending on the degree of the required ritual items (*ucholo kpai ayibọ*). For Miachi, the incarnate-being *Amuda-Idedeba* qualifies both *egwu* and *ẹbọ*.<sup>122</sup> In a similar fashion, Boston referred to the incarnate being *Obaje adaka* as nature spirits—*ẹbọ*.<sup>123</sup> Although both positions are consistent with the Igala conceptual framework, however, one still question Miachi's rationale for the singling of *Amuda-Idedeba* and not the totality of the incarnate-beings. Since *ẹbọ* is the spirit of *egwu* any distinction between the latter and the formal nonetheless seems superfluous if not unnecessary.

### ***Ẹbọ and the Problem of Evil***

The phenomenon of evil spirits exists in two different ways among the Igala: (a) in the events of manipulating the spirits and (b) in cases of indeterminate spirits.<sup>124</sup> The concepts of perverted Spirit (*ẹbọ-bibi* or *afu-bibi*) translate either manipulated Spirit or the Spirit behind of some natural disaster that is beyond any human placating through sacrifice. For instance, occasional the goddess, *ẹbọ iye-unyẹjima* a protective deity of a particular community can be termed a dangerous spirit if the priest (*atama*) manipulates

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<sup>121</sup> Miachi, *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture: Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-central Nigeria*, 116.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>123</sup> Boston, *The Igala Kingdom* (Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1960), 223f.

<sup>124</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 62.



the *ẹbọ* to cause harm. Sometimes, the *ẹbọ* can equally inflict a just but merciless punishment upon culprits of crimes committed against the mores and ethos of the land.

Joseph Abu the most celebrated Igala folklorist dedicates a tract of his *Alọ* music to the phenomenon of manipulative *ẹbọ* who stole and consumed what was kept in its custody by the Tortoise:

<i>Oji j'ẹnẹ....tije</i>	If somebody is a victim of theft
<i>Enẹmemag'ẹbọ....tije</i>	normally one invokes or consults the <i>spirit</i> ...
<i>Ebgeleegbele.....tije</i>	Right from the olden days...
<i>Oji j'ẹnẹ...tije</i>	If somebody is a victim of theft...
<i>Enẹmemag'ẹbọ...tije</i>	normally one invokes or consults the <i>spirit</i> ...
<i>Ama ẹbọ la j'oji</i>	But the <i>Spirit</i> itself has stolen
<i>Enwu ma gọke?</i>	What else can be consulted? <sup>125</sup>

In this particular incident, the *ẹbọ* ended up entering a deal with the Tortoise to avoid public scandal. This folklore is a good example of a perverted and manipulative *ẹbọ*. In most cases since *ẹbọ* is spirit, the blame is normally put on the *atama* (priests and priestess). The lesson learnt from the folklore remains, that accountability is demanded from those who uphold the law and secondly, that the Spirits in anthropomorphic sense are negotiable beings. In a sense, *ẹbọ* can be manipulated and in the process become perverted. Yet, these spirits are open to reconciliation through sacrifices.

The case is not always the same with the second category of evil spirits—the indeterminate spirits. They are dangerous and violent because they do not allow themselves to be known. Therefore, these spirits offer no opportunity to be placated or appeased. These categories of spirit have no cult, ritual, time or priest or priestess. Among the Igala an example of such indeterminate spirit is the occult practice of witchcraft.

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<sup>125</sup> Joseph Abuh, *Igala Folklore Music tilted Oma Alọ*, Recorded (1979).

In this perspective, *ẹbọ* has no metaphysical connection with moral evil. By the same token, one cannot ignore the existence of perverted spirits. More important, however, is the distinction between the Igala conception of perverted spirit and the western understanding of evil spirit—properly personified devil. Evidently, there is no Igala word that translates a metaphysical being—such as the devil or Satan—responsible for evil prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity. The Igala word devil (*ebili*) is a borrowed entity from the Arabic Islamic word *Iblis*.

This brings us to the very important question of the existence of witchcraft and the function of *ẹbo* in the Igala society. The Igala proverb: *ochu ali'kpadala ẹbọn* (witches do not travel the path of the Spirit) shows that *ẹbọ* does not tolerate the activities witches among the Igala people. Generally, the Igala *Ocho* festival takes care of the purgation and prevention of the land from the menaces and attacks of witches. The main function of the *Obaje adaka* nature spirits (*ẹbọ*) is to identify witches and make them confess and repent.<sup>126</sup>

The question of theodicy is normally addressed by positing a worldview that is in support of the existence of a hierarchy of Spirit and spirit-beings. The phenomenon of evil spirits has to do also with the level of familiarity with a particular *ẹbọ*. The cultic Spirits more often than not are placated through rituals and sacrifice to reduce their potency and propensity to do evil. Thus, the concept of evil in this sense connotes occult practices, magic and ill-gotten wealth. For this reason, repentant witches and sorcerers will lose their possessions to the *ẹbọ* that hunts them down. In some cases, the entire family of culprits becomes dedicated cultic servants to the *ẹbọ*. These restored items are

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<sup>126</sup> John S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom* (Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1960), 223-232.

displayed for public view to show the vanity that accompanied ill-gotten wealth through sorcery and magic.

The process of the discernment of Spirits in the Igala culture begins first and foremost with the identification of the particular kind of spirit that is behind an utterance, possession, obsession, dance or other gestures. This is normally done by the *Ifa*—diviner priest/priestess. The process of discernment yields dual results. In the first place, the outcome of spirit possession for instance, can result in the discernment of good and positive spirit which bears gifts and charismas to the society. There are no strict methods for discernment. It varies according to the different questionnaires followed by the *ifa* priest. These may include questions about (a) place and location of the patient prior to attack, (in the forest, by the stream); (b) the time the attack occurred (ritual time like during the festival, or ordinary time—mid-day or mid-night); (c) and person, being or objects that the patient was in contact with prior to attack (contact with some masquerade, touching or staring at forbidding objects in the shrine).

Answers to these questions will aid the *ifa* priest decipher whether the patient was possessed by either the domestic (*ẹbọ unyi*) or forest spirits (*ẹbọ oko*). The discernment process begins among the Igala with the identification of the spirit. The second step after identification of particular spirit is the attempt to enter into a dialogic covenant with the *ẹbọ* in question to depart in peace through the offering of sacrifice. Some *ẹbọ* compromise and depart, but in other cases, they remain. This leads to the third stage of discernment; exorcism. Note that exorcism is recommended as the last resort and never as the starter of the discernment process. Thus, any spirit that cannot be identified is

normally considered dangerous, wild and evil. It is in this sense that the indeterminate and un-cultic nature of *afu* runs the risk of being identified with evil.

***Ebọ: The Foundation of Authentic Christian Pneumatology***

I will now return to the central question of this essay; namely how does human *ebọ* (spirit), serve as the basis for understanding the supernatural *ebọ* (spirit) of the Supreme Being *Ọjọ*? In a purely theological term, how does the human spirit relate or participate in the creative and redemptive act of God in creation? In answering this question, references will be made to the pneumatological presuppositions of Elochukwu Uzukwu (Africa), Paul Tillich (Western) and Gregory Palamas (Eastern). In the final analysis, I will relate the Igala principle of—reincarnated ancestor (*ọjọ*) as the condition of possibility of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human. Thus cementing the argument, that, in the cultic and ritual sense there can be no essential difference between *Ebọ*—Spirit and *Iñmi*—Life; “For it is the Spirit that gives Life,” (Jn 6:63).

Kirsteen Kim raised the questions whether, “the theology of the Holy Spirit is a study of God’s involvement with the world?”<sup>127</sup> Correspondingly, how can the Igala Christian see the activities of *ebọ* as the handiwork of *Ọjọ* in creation? In the realm of Christian theology, can a theology be termed orthodox and authentic when its pneumatology acknowledges the existence of evil spirits and understanding them as that part of the Spirit’s activity and energy in the world that is still unknown?

The appreciation of *ebọ* as spirit has enormous implication for Igala Christian Pneumatology—science of the spirit and the Holy Spirit. My take in this essay can be stated as follows: unless we know what spirit is, we cannot claim to know what the Holy

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<sup>127</sup> KirsteenKim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll, N.Y : Orbis Books, 2007).

Spirit is doing in the lives of the Igala Christian.<sup>128</sup> The conception of any authentic Igala pneumatology must first confront the reality of the Igala Spirits-world. In essence, the appropriation of the word *afu* for spirit constitutes not only escapism, but a monumental hindrance to such in-depth endeavor.

Thus, providing an answer to the question of the role of *ebọ* in the personal life of the Igala Christian is a prerequisite for understanding what the Holy Spirit is doing in the Igala cosmos. For this purpose, I submit that the characteristics of *ebọ* as divine-human agent opens an interpretative framework for understanding, discerning and appreciating the gifts of the Holy Spirit—healing and wholeness—in creation.<sup>129</sup> Thus, one can argue that because of the inherent spirit (*ebọ*) which constitutes the ontological condition of *one*, the human *ebọ* is open to the transcendent realm of the Spirit.

Elochukwu Uzukwu's pneumatological position solidly affirms God as mystery and Spirit. As a mystery, Uzukwu surmise that no one human culture, language and logical category can lay claim and authority to full mastery of God. In the same way, as Spirit, God's activity in the universe is carried out in a participatory fashion through the medium of and in collaboration with other spirits, deities and divinity. In his appropriation of Gnuse's<sup>130</sup> thesis of the mutual coexistence of gods and the heavenly beings in pre-exilic Israel and the becoming of monotheistic Elohim, Uzukwu distanced himself from "the militancy of Deuteronomistic history."<sup>131</sup> He further asserts that the

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<sup>128</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. Vol. I-III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

<sup>129</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 88.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>131</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*, 131.

conception of an absolute mono-Yahweh that is based on the “rhetoric of exclusion” and intolerance is both Life-threatening and “Life-denying.”<sup>132</sup>

Heavily influenced by Origen’s pneumatological principle of individuation Uzukwu develops a principle of Relationality in which the human spirit participates in the Divine Spirit. The concreteness of this relationality is brought to bear on the principle of individuation of spirits as the giver of gifts and charisma; all for the purpose and in the service of human Life. Uzukwu endorses Origen’s pneumatology as the methodological reference point for his discourse on the Trinity and the economy of spirits. He argues further that the concept of deities in the West African universe is hinged on the dual principles of relationality and individuation. Uzukwu agrees with Teresa Okure’s interpretation of the Johannine definition of God’s Spirit meaning not His nature “as such, but the mode of his creativity, life-giving actions in human beings.”<sup>133</sup> This mode of thinking resonates and aligns with the West African conception of the transformative and dynamic power of the Spirit in the world. Uzukwu then relates Origen’s pneumatological principle of individuation to West African *humana-pneuma* manifested in personal spirits as bearer of destiny.<sup>134</sup>

In the Igala world, *Ojō* created all—the spirits, the deities and the humans—to be in communion for the propagation and protection of Life. Life is generated through the reincarnated *ẹbọ*/spirits of the ancestors and it is the same Spirit that brings forth life that equally saves it. Uzukwu’s description of the primacy of the human Spirit and its desires

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>133</sup> Teresa Okure, “The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42,” in Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

<sup>134</sup> Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness: Appropriating Faith and Culture in West African Style*.

for divine participation through the principle of relationality serves a dual function for the retrieval of the Igala understanding of *ẹbọ*. First, it grounds and solidifies *ẹbọ* as the divine desire of the Supreme Being *Ojọ* to give Life and secondly, through the principle of reincarnation, it also captures the ontological reality of *ẹbọ* as the human principle for Life. Uzukwu maintains that:

The spirit dimension of the person linking the individual from pre-existence into life in this world is strategic to the notion of person. This spirit carries or reflects individual destiny providentially assigned by God, the origin of origins, and/or democratically chosen by each pre-existent. It constitutes the acknowledged and unacknowledged link with God in the evolving destiny of the individual or in questions asked about the fortunes and misfortunes by the individual and community. One should not underestimate the cosmological and anthropological positions of this structural determinant of destiny, the embedded spirit, the original gift and guardian from God that humanizes the person. The description of the human *pneuma* by Origen as life coming from God puts the West African principle on the same pedestal as the Greek *pneuma*—both are humanizing principles that come and return to God: God is Spirit, “breath of Life.”<sup>135</sup>

In the Igala worldview, although, *ọlaye* translates Life in its biological form, the word *iñmi*—breathe—gives an anthropological and ontological reason for which humans are alive or living. For the most part, the crimes of suicide or homicide rank uppermost among the prohibitions against life or shed blood on the earth. This is so because among the Igala, the issue of life is the prerogative of the supreme deity, and the proverb—*iñmi d’ọwọ Ojọ* translates this reality.

In the West, it is an incontestable fact that Paul Tillich’s ‘correlative method’ in theological investigation forms one of the pillars of theological methodologies in modern and post-modern times. At its core, the correlative method draws insights from theology to address philosophical and cultural issues facing man/woman. In his critique of Cartesian dichotomy between body and spirit, Tillich posited a fundamental question that

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid, 190.

guided his entire work: can the word “spirit” designating the particular human dimension of life, be reinstated?<sup>136</sup>

The necessity for the reinstatement “spirit” in the day-to-day affairs of the society for Tillich serve a practical epistemological purpose, that is; “without knowing what spirit is one cannot know what Spirit is.”<sup>137</sup> The concept of ‘Spiritual Presence’ in this sense is the correlative of life as spirit. The understanding of one leads to a better understanding of the other. So, for Tillich, the philosophical, existential and ontological questions posed by the various ambiguities surrounding the human quest for meaning of life and death are best addressed in the understanding of ‘life’ as spirit undetached from its source i.e. Spiritual Presence. Life as such becomes the grounding and vital force for living in the Spirit. Furthermore, Tillich’s explanation of the relationship of ‘Spirit to spirit’ draws out the ontological connection that exists between them. The Divine Spirit “breaks into the human spirit; this does not mean that it rest there, but that it drives the human spirit out of itself.”<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, Kirsteen Kim distinguishes between Western and Eastern epistemological presupposition to the subject of the Trinity: “Western Trinitarian doctrine, as developed by Augustine and the scholastics, aimed to solve metaphysical questions about the nature of God in God’s self, *ad intra*. Eastern concern, on the other hand, had been mainly with explaining the way in which the members of the Trinity work together *ad extra* to bring about the salvation of the world.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. Vol. I-III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>139</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, 42. This essay for sake of space and the obscurity of the subject matter of the Trinity debate cannot fully address the various contributions



According to Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Palamas’s thought is characterized as the culmination of Eastern patristic thought.”<sup>140</sup> This assessment is plausible in that, “the councils held in Constantinople in 1341, 1351 and 1368 all affirmed the Palamite distinction between the invisible essence and the self-revealing energies.”<sup>141</sup>

My interest in the Palamite synthesis is simply to argue for the humanizing principle of *εβρ* as divine energies of *Οjρ* who bestows gifts and charisma for the service of the community. Palamas’ greatest achievement in Orthodox theology was his synthesis of the problem concerning the knowable and unknowable God. His elaborate citation of the preceding Greek Patristic fully demonstrates that the theology of the unknown God and the issue of the divine attributes of such God was altogether not a new phenomenon in the Orthodox tradition. Palamas’ elaborate citation of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa proves this point better:

As Basil the great says, the guarantee of the existence of every essence is its natural energy which leads the mind to the nature. According to St. Gregory Nyssa and all the other fathers, the natural energy is the power which manifests every essence and only nonbeing is deprived of this power; for the being which participates in an essence will also surely participate in the power which manifests that essence. But since God is entirely present in each of the divine energies we name Him from each of them, although it is clear that He transcends all of them.<sup>142</sup>

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of the Orthodox theologians to the pneumatological debate. By and large, a claim that the Eastern Orthodox Pneumatology begins and revolves around the concept of the “Economy Trinity” is defensible. For the time being, I will only focus on one of the outstanding Orthodox thinker: Gregory Palamas, stating briefly the central thesis of his *Triad*. For the different concerns of the East and West on the theology of the Trinity, see, Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar Press, 1997).

<sup>140</sup> Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Reasonable Faith and a Trinitarian Logic,” in *Restoring Faith in Reason*, eds. Laurence Paul Hemmings and Susan Frank Parsons (London, UK: SCM Press, 2002), 239.

<sup>141</sup> Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Theology*, 51.

<sup>142</sup> John Meyendorff, ed. *Gregory Palamas, The Triads*. (New York: Paulist, 1983) 95-96.

Palamas agrees with the fathers that God’s essence—the somethingness of God—in its inner structure is unknown to human, but humans can know God through the manifestation of God’s energies, “since energy can be participated in...we have a proof that the eternal glory of God *is* participable for that which in God is visible in some way, is also participable.”<sup>143</sup> It is this principle of participation of energies in essences that makes enhypostatic—deification a possibility. Since “according to the fathers, deification is an essential energy of God,” Palamas argues that “the deified received energy identical to that of the deifying essence.”<sup>144</sup>

### *Conclusion*

All along, this essay subscribes to and intends to contribute to the research of Elochukwu Uzukwu—The Pierre Schouver endowed Chair on Mission, at the Duquesne University. This essay fundamentally agrees with Uzukwu stance, that we can know God through rituals and participate in God’s spirit through worship. And that God is “alive and active” in the African universe through the actions of benevolent spirits...bearing gifts, healing and charisma. From the outset, this essay argues, for a translation of spirit as *ebọ* instead of *afu*. Here I will summarize the findings that contributed to the development of the thesis, that, *Ebọ* resonates well with the ritual and cultic setting of the reincarnated Igala ancestors—*ibegwu*.

The *Ajokodo* Biblical translation of the Holy Spirit as *ibegu desholo* properly demonstrates this connection. Accordingly, through *ebọ* the Igala principle of reincarnation serves a dual pneumatological function. (a) *ebọ* ushers the Divine Spirit

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 97-99.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 86-89.

into the realm of the human *pneuma*. Borrowing from Tillich's phrase, the divine Spirit of *Ojọ* "... breaks forth into the human spirit." (b) *ẹbọ* as the source of the human spirit once leavened by the divine energy is thus opened to transcendence.

In order to clear the ground for the above argument, I proposed that an understanding of *ẹbọ* as the divine principle connecting the Supreme Being *Ojọ* and the reincarnated human spirit (*ojọ*) as can be the starting point of Pneumatology. In this association, the relationship between *ẹbọ* as personal spirits participating in the divine spirits can be compared to the Palamitan principle of spirits as energies proceeding from the divine essence of God. Therefore, *ẹbọ* becomes the principle of particularization and individuation with which the Supreme Being—*Ojọ* creates and constantly re-creates the Igala universe. Thus, in light of all the above, the present pejorative reference to *ẹbọ* as man-made and devilish and the scornful appellation given to adherents of Igala traditionalist—*ogwuchekpo* as *ama chi ich'ẹbọ* needs further re-evaluation.

*Martin Ahiaba, hails from Agala-Ateh. The grandson of Ahiaba→Idoko→Okunu→Attah Ako Ijaja→Ohiemi Agbaji→Itodo Aduga→Onuh Akwumabi→Ayegba→Idoko→Aganapoje→Abutu Ejeh, the primogenitor of the Igala Kingdom. He holds a B.Th. (Hons) from the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Nigeria and STL in Biblical Studies from Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium. Currently, he is a Ph.D. (cand), in Systematic Theology, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. [ahiabam@duq.edu](mailto:ahiabam@duq.edu)*

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**Existence of Ghosts, a Confirmation of Life after death: A Case Study of  
Apparitional Haunted Places in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract**

In this essay, I argue that indigenous Zimbabweans have shown a belief in some physical apparitional forms of survival of deceased Zimbabweans after the physical death of the body. I also debate that indigenous Zimbabweans support the hypothesis that spirits of the perished (apparitions of the dead) could remain in the realm between the living world and the afterlife if they choose, through which they could affect the life of the living for personal reasons. I further maintain that indigenous Zimbabweans experientially substantiate the belief of a life after death through their conviction in the physical-spiritual dual existence of apparitions. I am examining some current evidence produced from interviewees who experienced apparitional and haunting phenomena in their lives. Research findings are that the physical- spiritual dual survival and manifestation of phantoms is a popular occurrence among Zimbabwean African Indigenous Religion (AIR) devotees which has contributed to them to accept that there are some varieties of physical existence after death. The conclusion is that the physical- spiritual dual existence of wraiths proves the notion that a life after death is attainable.

**Key words:** ghosts, apparition, death, life, spirit

**Introduction**

The phenomena of apparitions of the dead are fascinating, and there is a new growth in scholarly interest in ghosts, which turns on questions of life after death, the affective traces of the past, experience and how they are related to memory, kinship and so on. I argue that the ability of ghosts to exist in a physical- spiritual duality is a confirmation by Zimbabwean African Indigenous Religion (AIR) devotees that there is a life after death. I again attest that indigenous Zimbabweans believe in the physical-spiritual dual existence of ghosts- that is they are both physical and spiritual beings. I also debate that indigenous Zimbabweans hold the idea that phantoms could remain in the realm between the living world and the afterlife if they choose, through which they could affect the life of the living for personal reasons. Lastly I also assert that ghosts are

harmless and an encounter with such spirits may be disturbing and frightening, but is unlikely to be physically harmful.

The aim is to investigate how AIR adherents in Zimbabwe understand ghosts, and where they fit in the very complex spiritual repertoires that people refer to, and live amongst. This would be a far from simple exercise, because there are many changing dynamic repertoires in play, overlapping and entangled with each other. Using ghosts as the central hook, such an investigation would tell us a lot about changing notions of belief, memory and experience of AIR devotees. Because wraiths are at once about kinship, personhood and morality, and about memory/the past, but also linked often in uncertain ways to things, houses, fields, places and objects, there is a lot that this wealth of empirical material could be used to say about the changing relationships that exist between people, places and time. And about how the present is constantly interrupted by the unexpected re-emergence of the past in the form of specters.

To clarify where apparitions fit in, in these very complex spiritual repertoires that AIR devotees refer to, I argue that avenging spirits (*ngozi*) may not be deemed to be ghosts from my interviewees' point of view, although I am aware that there is a lot of debate about that. For example, I defended my doctorate thesis which had some sections on propitiating *ngozi* (albeit only *inter alia*) at the University of Zimbabwe in 1999, and the very lively debate that followed consisted almost entirely of academics and students disagreeing with each other about the nature and role of *ngozi*. The debate spilled into the nature and role of *zvidhoma* and ghosts (*zvipoko*) and still there was no agreement about the differences among avenging spirits (*ngozi*), ghosts (*zvipoko/magoritoto*) and *zvidhoma*. Part of the problem, I suppose, is the issue of translation. The meaning of the



word ‘ghosts’ is not clear even in English, and becomes even more fluid when translated from Shona language which is one of Zimbabwean vernaculars. I can see that apparitions (*zvipoko/magoritoto*) and *zvidhoma* are subjected to the same problems of translation as we saw in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century around ‘spirit’, ‘Holy Spirit’, ‘Holy Ghost’ and ‘ancestral spirit’. The matter was never satisfactorily resolved because the English-speakers making the dictionaries were not truly interested in African understandings of these phenomena. For the Shona people, a *ngozi* is not the same as a ghost (*chipoko/goritoto*) and not the same as *chidhoma* for the three are totally different in both their natures and roles. There seems to be no English word which is equivalent to *chidhoma* (singular) *zvidhoma* (plural). Interviewee Zororo Matamba said, “Ghosts are not *zvidhoma*. *Zvidhoma* are familiars of witches and wizards (*varoyi*) which are hairy small creatures that look like human beings. They are mischievous and lascivious familiars of witches and wizards and are believed to be sent by witches and wizards to attack people and to cause mischief, pain and deaths to people. Often one hears the indigenous Shona people say, “He/she is ill because he/she was attacked by *zvidoma*.” Ghosts do not attack and kill people, they only frighten people. Interviewee Machembere Kungurayi a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church says “For the Zimbabweans, the apparition of Jesus which was seen by his disciples (Lk. 24:36-49, Jn.20: 19-29, 21:1-19) by Mary Magdalene (Jn.20:10-17) and the Road to Emmaus appearance (Lk.24: 13-32) was not a *ngozi* and was not a *chidhoma* but was a wraith (*chipoko*).”

Avenging spirits (*ngozi*) are spirits of people who are foreigners (*vatorwa*) who died while angry or had a violent death and they seek revenge to people who are not their relatives. The people who caused the grief or death are not relatives of the *ngozi*. Married

women are regarded as foreigners in the families into which they are married and hence if their husbands or children make them to die while angry with them or had a violent death caused by their husbands, children or husband's relatives the women become *ngozi* to their husbands, children and the husband's family. Zimbabweans have an adage which says, "A wife is a foreigner for she does not have the same totem as her husband and children." Interviewee Manyonda Mutauto attested, "A wife who becomes a phantom after her death is not a *ngozi* for she does not cause illnesses and deaths in the husband's family. She only wants her grievances to be ritually addressed." A family member does not become a *ngozi* to his/her own kins-people even if they cause him/her to die angry or have a violent death, but becomes an angry ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) who does not seek revenge but worship by the living members of the family. His/her spirit does not kill as the *ngozi* does it only causes illnesses and disasters like loss of a job within the family members. Zimbabweans have an axiom that says, "Ancestors do not kill but avenging spirits do. (*Midzimu haiuyayi chinouraya ingozi*)." After being worshipped by family members, the ancestral spirits will make the illnesses and calamities in the family to stop.

Interviewee Muchochomi Tapfumaneyi debated, "A *ngozi* does not appear physically like a ghost, is not seen or heard speaking like a phantom. A *ngozi* is a spirit of a deceased person which seeks revenge for the wrong done to it. An avenging spirit is a terrifying spirit which attacked suddenly and very harshly without warning. It causes some illnesses and death in the family of the murderer or wrong doer. *Ngozi* cause fights and quarrels within families of the murderers for the *ngozi* can cause illnesses and kill relatives of the murderer. The cause of the deaths and calamities among the family members is figured out by a diviner (*n'anga*) who names the spirit and the need for

compensation. Often *ngozi* possesses one of the family members of the murderer whom it makes to speak about his/her violent death by the murderer. The *ngozi* spirit reveals herself/himself- who she/he is, why she/he is angry and what she/he wants as compensation before she/he is pacified”. Avenging spirits functioned as authorization of excellent ethical deportment, made people to behave towards others courteously so that they won’t infuriate someone when she/he dies to come back as an avenging spirit (Bourdillon 1987: 271). That sanction made it that people treat their wives and foreigners kindly, pay their debts and distributed the property of their deceased wives fairly and justly for fear of an avenging spirit. Trepidation of avenging spirits was the origin for not ill-treating and murdering foreigners (Bourdillon 1987: 271). In the instance of a deceased wife who was disparaged or killed by her husband, the kinsmen/women of the upbraided wife would request her spirit to retaliate the maltreatment she experienced at the hands of her husband. (Bourdillon 1987: 273). The *ngozi* of the deceased wife would make the husband not to remarry, not to get a job, would make him to be confronted by disaster after disaster in life. The avenging spirit would request the widower to dwell in her hut, keeping it hygienic and carrying out the responsibilities of a wife which she used to perform (Bourdillon 1987: 272). According to my interviewees, there are three reasons why deceased people become wraiths, which are firstly being angry about something which was done to them while alive or after their death, secondly, a person who was intensely attached to this material world and does not want to leave this world after his/her death and thirdly, a person who was very evil in this world, who had a medicine horn (*gona/makona*) which made some people ill or kill some people for no apparent reason and the spirits of such evil people have been rejected residence in the spirit world

(*nyikadzimu*). Interviewee Masese Muchaiwa defined ghost (*chipoko/goritoto*) as the physical appearances of a person who died angry or their spirits became angry because something was done after their deaths which did not please them like if they were not buried the way they liked, or if their property was distributed the way they did not like or if their surviving wives or husbands remarry somebody whom they do not like. A *chipoko/goritoto* does not wish to revenge any wrong done to the deceased person. It simply wants to publicly show that the deceased person is not happy. The apparition of a relative who died angry or had a violent death at the hands of his/her relatives or whose burial was not done properly is often confused by some people as a *ngozi*. The spirits of such people become ancestral spirits after some indigenous rituals are performed and they never become *ngozi* which applies to the angry spirit of a foreigner who seeks revenge.

A ghost can also be the physical appearance of a person who died and was intensely attached to the material things of this world like fondly attached to his/her house/ field, wife/husband or his/her profession like teaching, farming, soccer, building etc, A ghost seeks no revenge but only to publicly show his/her displeasure or love for something. Interviewee Sakurai Gutaguru said, “Ghosts are physical appearances of angry deceased people but they do not seek any vengeance on somebody like an avenging spirit. Ghosts can also be the spirits of people who are still intensely attached to this material world for example during their life- time, they built very beautiful houses, which they liked very much, or they fondly loved their husbands or wives to the extent that they did not want to die and leave them or they intensely liked to do something in life like farming, being a prostitute, playing soccer etc. The person did not like to die and leave the material things they fondly wanted to do while they were alive. Apparitions of these

people will hound their houses, fields, friends, wives or husbands and seen doing the things they loved doing when they were alive”.

A ghost can be defined as an apparition of a deceased person's likeness and is experienced in association with the person's former habitats and activities. Interviewee Muchadura Dzingireni whose house was haunted by his deceased husband's specter defined a ghost saying “Wraiths are physically deceased people who are unable to physically detach themselves from this physical world. They are so attached to this world so that they do not want to leave it. They want to enjoy the fruits of this world whilst they are physically dead. Ghosts do not realize that their bodies are no longer physically alive or they are of the opinion that they have unfinished business on earth”. Karlis Osis (1997:146) attested that a phantom observation is a consciousness of the existence of a personal being whose corporeal body is not in the place of the familiarity, on condition that the observer is not mentally deranged and in a conventional waking condition of apprehension. In contrast to extrasensory perception (ESP) of a distant event, the ghost is felt to be in the immediate vicinity of the experiencer. Dissimilar to fantasy, wraiths are experienced as part of the instant actual world and cannot be quickly originated, changed or ended at will, except by corporal deeds like closing eyes, fleeing away or hiding under bedcovers (Osis, 1997:164).

Interviewee Kumunda Kokanayi asserted, “Ghosts are the physical appearances of deceased people who have been rejected in the spirit world (*nyikadzimu*) because they were so evil during their life- time that they did not qualify to be ancestors (*midzimu*) or to dwell in the spirit world for example somebody who before his/her death had a medicine horn (*gona/makona*) which made people to be ill or killed people or had a type

of witchcraft called *chikwambo* which do all sorts of evil to people and kill them. When this person dies without destroying or giving his/her medicine horn or *chikwambo* to somebody to take care of them and continue his/her evil deeds the *gona/makona* and *chikwambo* call him/her back from the dead to come and feed them and work with them in their evil deeds. The dead person comes back in a physical form as a *chipoko*. A person with such an evil medicine horn is said to be a person who has *gona/makona* or *akaromba*. *Kuromba* is the art of having evil paraphernalia which cause harm or kill others.

Indigenous Zimbabweans accepted that a person had two shadows- black and white shadows (Bourdillon 1976: 232). At death, the black shadow which was a reflection of the physical stature remained and was seen after death. The white shadow was the vital force or soul or person (*munhu*) which became a genealogical spirit (*mudzimu*) after decease (Bourdillon 1987: 232). The white shadow should disappear after death. If a white shadow lingered after death on the floor or walls of the hut in which the body lay in state, it was believed to be a sign that the deceased person was angry with some members of the family. It may have been that the deceased person had an evil medicine horn or *zvikwambo*. In such a situation, no one touched the corpse until the shadow disappeared after consulting diviners and rituals to appease the deceased person were done. In the case that the shadow's appearance was because the dead person was evil, the shadow did not disappear after the ritual and was buried with the white shadow lingering around. The shadow was seen in the grave before the grave was covered with rocks and soil. A few days after burial, a white, bright, dazzling light like that produced by a fire-fly (*chitaitai*) believed to be emitted by the ghost

(*chipoko/goritoto*) of the deceased person could be seen moving around his/her grave and moving around the neighborhoods at night.

My interviewees did not tell me of instances of ghosts physically attacking people. If ghosts are able to exist without material form, then it must be confirmation that there is surely life after death. My main focus is not comparative with other cultures, spiritualities and religiosities. I believe that cases of apparitions should be studied and analyzed within their unique Zimbabwean indigenous cultural, spiritual and religious contexts. This research produced some evidence that support the indigenous Zimbabwean belief that ghost is another type life after death

Seeing an apparition of a deceased known person or hearing his voice, or being possessed by the spirit of a dead grandparent or parent are not ambiguous phenomena in as far as AIR is concerned. Wraiths can be taken as extraordinary, strong, and often not controversial forms of indigenous religiosity. As supernatural phenomena or spiritual experiences, usually subjectively intense and personally significant, phantoms seem to be relatively common and not difficult to be shared with or accepted by the other indigenous Zimbabweans. Visions, voices and actions of ghosts are believed with great interest in the community with no doubts and skepticism. Apparitional experiences are not viewed as symptoms of mental illnesses or other pathologies but as some forms of spiritual reality.

Devotees of AIR have shown strong belief in the human soul surviving as a spirit after death because they believe in the spiritual possession of an individual by ancestral family spirits (*midzimu*) of deceased grandparents and parent, alien spirits (*mashave*) of non-consanguinity deceased people, avenging spirits (*ngozi*) of a deceased non-relative

who died a grieved person or was murdered and the existence of apparitions. They believe that it is possible for their spirits which is some part of their human consciousness to be able to exist independently of their bodies and survive after death.

### **Problem**

The predicament is that there is a multiplying number of places and houses which are being haunted by wraiths in Zimbabwe and the owners of those places and houses either desert them or seek for exorcism to be performed at the haunted place or house by a diviner or Christian priest/pastor who asks to be paid a lot of money or to be paid in kind. There is also an increasing number of incidences of Zimbabweans frightened by ghosts when they help them believing that they were helping real human beings – like giving an apparition a ride in one's vehicle in the belief that one is helping a real human being in need of a ride, giving food to a ghost in the belief that one is helping a real hungry human being, giving money to a phantom in the belief that one is helping a real destitute person, hiring a specter or being hired by a ghost for a sexual encounter in the belief that one is hiring or is being hired by a real prostitute for a sexual encounter only to discover that one had hired or was hired by an apparition after the sexual intercourse. There are examples in which wraiths asked for love from some Zimbabweans as was proclaimed when a dreadlocked apparition giving itself the name Bongani frightened Magwegwe inhabitants in Bulawayo, asked for love from women then vanishing (Staff Reporter, 2014), female phantoms intimidating motorists (Staff Reporter, 2012) . Tourists to Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans are terrorized by the ghost of a white man, George Sheppard which frequents a motel which he built in the 1930s and where he was



entombed near Great Zimbabwe National Monument also not far from Lake Mutirikwi (Fontein, 2011:707).

### **Methodology**

I interviewed a total of one hundred people which comprised twenty diviners (*n'anga*), chiefs, priests, Christians and AIR devotees. This research was done from January 1991 to February 2004 when I was a full-time Anglican parish priest in the towns of Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Kadoma and Kariba and in the rural districts of Hurungwe, Mhondoro, Sanyati and Zvimba. Participant observation approach was utilized for I was invited to exorcise apparitions from haunted cattle kraals, goat and sheep pens, fowl runs, fields, houses, stores, offices and water wells during my full-time priesthood in the Diocese of Harare. I used the participatory methodology in this paper in order to give a voice to people who saw and experienced apparitions. All interviews were carried out in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are kept secret by reciprocal concurrence. Contemporary research in the field of phantoms is producing some observable verification that upholds the indigenous Zimbabwean belief of a life after death in the form of apparitions. In this paper, I draw such evidence from apparitional and haunting occurrences of wraiths- examples that are suggestive of reincarnation. Many of the reported examples which were disclosed by my interviewees are not conclusive but they do demonstrate that there could be an aspect of human survival that we do not yet fully comprehend when it comes to the phenomenon of apparitions.

I utilized interviews to reckon what type of knowledge, understanding, involvement and familiarity my interlocutors' report, and what signs of accuracy and

truthfulness do they have. My interviewees have signs of authenticity which comprise the spectres furnishing detailed information and facts hitherto concealed and unspecified to the receiver, the ghost influencing and changing the external world, the phantom showing up to various people within the same neighbourhood concurrently and the ghost seen by many people. Interviews were required to bestow the research paper socio-cultural grounding. The approach used also incorporated a considerable and comprehensive literary search and examination of obtainable and contemporary readings on apparitions. The amalgamation of literary research, conversations, and observations showed that wraiths are truly part of Zimbabwean indigenous spirituality.

## Results

### Number of People who Experienced and Believed in Ghosts in Urban Areas

Interviewees	Saw or experienced ghosts	Believed in ghosts	Heard about ghosts	Harmed by ghosts	Exorcised ghosts
Diviners	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	19 = 95%
Chiefs	0 = 0%	0 = 0%	0 = 0%	0 = 0%	0= 0%
Priests	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	19 = 95%
Christians	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	0= 0%
AIR devotees	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	0= 0%
Total	80 = 800%	80 = 80%	80 = 80%	0 = 0%	38 = 38%

In the urban areas 100% of diviners, priests, Christians and AIR adherents saw, experienced, believed in ghosts and, heard about ghosts. There are no chiefs in urban areas because they are not under the jurisdiction of chiefs but of city or town municipal

councils. Ninety five percent of diviners and priests exorcised apparitions in urban areas which show that diviners and Christian priests/pastors are at par when it comes to being consulted to exorcize specters. Thirty eight percent of the interviewees exorcised ghosts in towns and cities.

**Number of People who Experienced and Believed in Ghosts in Rural Areas**

Interviewees	Saw or experienced ghosts	Believed in ghosts	Heard about ghosts	Harmed by ghosts	Exorcised ghosts
Diviners	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	18 = 90%
Chiefs	20 =100%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	0 = 0%
Priests	16 = 80%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	19 = 95%
Christians	18 = 90%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	0 = 0%
AIR devotees	19 = 95%	20 =100%	20 =100%	0 = 0%	0 = 0%
Total	93 = 93%	100 =100%	100 =100%	0 = 0%	37 = 37%

In the rural areas 93% reported seeing or experiencing apparitions, 100% believed in ghosts and heard about ghosts and 37% exorcised ghost. More diviners and priests (38%) exorcize apparitions in urban areas than in rural areas because there are many haunted houses, offices, shops, factories in cities and towns than in the rural areas. Domestic violence and stressful lives are more common in cities and towns than in rural areas. There are more people who die and become ghosts in urban areas than in rural areas because of economic and social difficulties when they die. More people die angry in cities because of stress due urban economic and social hardships. Zero percent gave an account of being harmed by ghosts in both the urban and rural areas.

### **Apparitional Haunting Instances and Phenomena**

Indigenous Zimbabweans accept that wraiths do live and that there is more than one variety of apparitions. Erlendur Haraldsson (1991:2-3) argued “Visual apparitions comprised 69% of ghost cases, 29% are auditory, 58% human voices, 48% were noises of various human activities judged typical for a particular person and 4% olfactory”.

There are various kinds of apparitional encounters and episodes like auditory, sensational of touch, or olfactory and feelings. Most of my interlocutors recounted visual observation of ghosts. Interviewee Mugumo Mutoro said, “My dead husband is still living in the form of an apparition. The ghost of my deceased husband visits me in my bed-room every night and sleeps with me. When I first saw the phantom, I was extremely frightened but now I am accustomed to it. If I invite my boyfriend home the wraith appears and takes off the mattress, blankets, bed-sheets and pillows from the bed. The boyfriend is pushed off the bed and dragged out of the bed-room and house. Each time I try to sleep with another man on the bed in my bed-room, the ghost approaches and aggressively keeps me apart from my boyfriend. Nowadays, I have acknowledged and recognized the ghost as my husband who pays me a visit every night to keep me company for the night. I no longer desire to have a boyfriend or to be remarried to another man in my life.” Mutoro’s sexual experiences with apparitions concurs with that of Nyasha Shoko who maintained that she was impregnated by the wraith of her deceased husband after the husband’s bringing back home (*kurova guva/chenura*) ceremony (Ncube, 2015). Randy Liebeck argued that there are two types of phantoms – “hauntings and apparitions” (Williams, 2000:13).

Andy Coghlan (1998:44-45) interpreted hauntings as “Phenomena which appear without interacting with people or the environment, like the playback of video recording and he defined apparitions as ghosts which seem to have “intelligence” and can interact with

humans. A haunting is like a prerecorded videotape whereas an apparition is more like a videoconference. Apparitions react to what people are saying and doing and behave like they did when they were alive, and do things to people and for people”.

Some of my respondents liked visual wraiths for they cause them to continue the association which they used to have with their dead husbands/wives. I call them protecting phantoms for they safeguard their wives. Some of my interlocutors did not like safeguarding ghosts; they yearned to live a contemporary life with a current husband /wife or boyfriend/girlfriend. My interviewees associated the spectres of the deceased to the dead person’s mind, awareness and apprehension living after his/her demise. Ian Stevenson (1995) asserted that the dead person’s consciousness staying existing after his/her expiration illustrates why a ghost could seem identical to a specific dead person and repeatedly make known the characteristics of the deceased person. Karlis Osis (1997:164) maintained that huge numbers of ghostly acquaintanceships and awareness last for a very short duration- largely less than a minute. My interlocutors reported observing truly real-looking and full- bodied dead people whom they knew were deceased, wearing on clothes which they used to put on, performing some certain duties which they used to execute when they were alive or walking around a particular place or along a specific road. The respondents also argued that they observed the apparitions during the day for a spell of less than twenty minutes. Fifty-two percent of apparitional sightings occurred in either daylight or in total electrical light and solely 10% materialized in total darkness (Haraldsson, (1991:3). Osis (1997:1640) attested that seeing is the most continuous method of observing ghosts.

Raradzayi Chipuriro said, “My father committed self- murder because he was denounced by his kinsmen/women to be a magician, sorcerer, occultist and wizard who precipitated a lot of un-elucidated and un-resolved deaths in the family. We inhumed him on a hill which was one kilometer away from our home as that was one of his burial wishes. Three days after his entombment, the entire village and the surrounding communities began observing his ghost every night from 8: 00 PM- 12:00 mid-night. The apparition came into view in the configuration of a bright light like that of a fire-fly (*chitaitai*) walking from his tomb around the adjacent areas. The light of the ghost was 30-50 metres high. It scared and terrorized most people who walk in that neighbourhood at night but inflicts no injury, damage and harm to them. My father’s spectre was observed by the majority of people in the neighbourhood whose explanation of the wraith is that, my father is still existing as an apparition because he likes to openly reveal his rage and exasperation to his kinsmen/women who made him to commit self- immolation by accusing him as a wizard. My father’s spirit was not a *ngozi* for he did not like to retaliate to his brothers. He simply liked to disclose his anger to his relatives for alleging him as a wizard. My father’ relatives sought the services of a diviner to exorcise the apparition. The ghost vanished soon after the cleansing ceremony”.

Annoyed ghosts are not avenging spirits. Respondent Zvamaida Nyoka said, “Wraiths which transmit light at night and move in the adjoining area are vexed and ‘hot’ spirits but they do not go in pursuit of retribution. They crave to disclose to the community that they are not pleased. Infuriated ghosts gleam at night radiating their own light source because their spirits are ‘hot’ with rage. Light is emitted because of the ‘hotness’ of the spirit. The light is a roaming spirit of the deceased. The light is the

ghostly fire that begins the 'hotness'. The light is a communal demonstration to the entire society to reveal that the dead person is not contented precisely analogous to a white silhouette of a carcass is a community exhibition to the mourners that the dead person is dejected and dispirited. The kinsmen/women are anticipated to maintain the spirit 'cool' by worshipping it and the phantom and the light would vanish". Coolness carried the undertones of serene and composed and hotness conveyed connotations of rage and indignation (Bourdillon 1987: 236). Equanimity was craved on the part of the spirit of the dead for the spirit had left the world of the living and is obliged to enter the spirit world (*nyikadzimu*) in a "cool" state.

George Nugent Merle Tyrrell has three classifications of wraiths observations which are: crisis, postmortem and recurrent spectres. Harvey Irwin (1994:57) quotes Tyrrell as attesting that a crisis ghost is repeatedly seen by people who were very well connected to the deceased person who is in a crisis. Crisis apparitions are affiliated to clairvoyance and extrasensory perception communication and association between the person observing the phantom and the deceased person. Crisis ghosts are acknowledged to be phantoms that predominantly come into view once to someone distinguished who may be many kilometres away at the time of the demise of a loved one. The phenomenon may also reveal in the semblance of a voice tone of the kinsman/woman or friend with some messages or warnings or reprimand or counsel while the person talking will not be visible (Irwin, 1994:57). There are intense, fervent and emotional associations between the two. Communication causes the person seeing the spectre to dispatch it out of his/her mind to where it can be recognizably visualized (Williams 2000: 213). The deceased

person transmits his/her likeness to a place where a kinsman/woman or a friend can visualize it.

Interviewee Machururu Bedza debated, “My granddaughter Zvogoodini Zinyemba perished an unexpected death due to cerebral malaria. I saw her wraith a day after her interment. I accepted that Zvogoodini was alive as an apparition and was still inseparably connected to me as she used to be when she was physically alive”.

Postmortem phantom is the variety of a dead person who has passed on for about twelve hours or longer that is very often seen by people passionately and emotionally connected to the dead person (Williams, 2000: 213). The ghost comes as a testimony of goodbye or to acquaint the person seeing the wraith the tidings which she /he was unknowledgeable and unaware of (Irwin, 1994:57). Akin to crisis ghosts, this always occurs surprisingly and unpredictably and once.

Tangidzirai Chomujoho said, “I saw an apparition of my deceased grandfather Mwoyosviba Ngorimamushava which gave me information about a cave on a mountain in which he hid his money for he did not like to bank his money with commercial banks because he lived 350 kilometers away from the nearest town from his home where there was a bank. Each time he sold his cattle at the cattle sales he hid his money in that cave. I went to the cave and did as I was instructed by the ghost and I founded a big, black metal box containing thirty thousand dollars in it which I used to start my driving school business”. The recurrent apparitions were the most prevalent which were recounted by my respondents. Recurrent ghost is a spectre that is observed in the same place on various times and as divulging less apprehension and awareness of the onlookers and their immediate neighbourhood (Irwin, 1994:58). Phillip Mataranyika (2010) names periodic



wraiths recording phantoms. Recording is said to be the ghost, which resurface at the same site time after time. Mataranyika, (2010) argued that the phenomenon is, in reality, an authentic recording of past escapades. The recurrent wraiths are noticed by people who are romantically and nostalgically connected to the dead person and also by those who are not temperamentally associated to him (Williams, 2000: 213). They can also be visualized by people who hugely mourn and wail the deceased person before he/she died or who created his /her demise. Repeatedly the ghost is not aware of the spectator's vicinity and it goes about performing its personal work that it repeats each time it is experienced (Williams, 2000: 213). Recurring phantoms re-emerge many times and are the ones commonly observed in haunting occurrences.

Machakache Gondo reported, "I observe the spectre of my dead wife always in the kitchen of my house either cooking food, or washing dishes or cleaning the floor. I began noticing the ghost soon after wedding my second wife whom I am living with in the ghostly house. I have a sensation of coldness each time I see the ghost. I once left the eerie house and constructed a another one with my second wife but still the wraith of my first wife frequented the new house for we used to observe her phantom sitting on sofas or chairs knitting". Sentient wraiths are said to be rare and are largely of people who experienced some strong sentiment (irritability and unreciprocated love, etc.) at their time of death (Mataranyika, 2010). Sentient ghosts call to mind their past existences, and can connect with other wraiths (Mataranyika, 2010).

Interviewee Svusvurai Nhopi said, "I am a prostitute who frequents pubs very often and gets a man to sleep with for a fee in my apartment. One day I left the pub without getting a man to go with to my apartment. As I was walking to my apartment on

foot I met a smartly dressed man on the way who proposed me and I agreed to spend the night with him in my apartment. We went into my apartment and locked the door. At 2:30 in the morning, I woke up feeling hot and sweating, trembling for the room was warmer than it used to be and I in great fear for I found myself alone with nobody in the bed and in the apartment. The doors were locked and I had all my keys in my wallet. Nothing was missing in my apartment. I only realized that I had taken a ghost for a boyfriend. I told my friends and they told me that they also took the same ghost into their apartment believing that he was a real human being and the same things which happened to me also happened to them". As I asserted before, a dreadlocked wraith putting on a white T-shirt giving himself the name Bongani intimidated Magwegwe inhabitants in Bulawayo, asking for love from women then abruptly disappeared after the women got irritated and screamed at him (Staff Reporter ,March 29, 2014). One hundred percent of all my interviewees in both the rural and urban areas acknowledged that phantoms are not detrimental and not hurtful. An experience with a ghost may be startling and perturbing, but is doubtful to be physically hazardous.

Commemoration or anniversary wraiths are phantoms which are seen on or about a precise date once a year (Mataranyika, 2010). They are accepted to have their own individual justifications for coming back like a noteworthy occasion in life like becoming irritated for not doing correct and established indigenous entombment ceremonies during their interment, like not consigning them to the grave together with a pot filled with traditional beer at their head which they believe have not been done. The improper burial makes spirit of the deceased person angry and restless and he/she comes back as wrathful ghosts, to show his/her irritation and displeasure for being buried without performing

proper traditional rituals. The anniversary wraiths are usually present at a yearly ritual, at which a diviner or shaman possessed by the healing spirit of the deceased person who has become ghost expresses gratitude and appreciation for deceased person's healing spirit. As our calendar alters with leap years so do the various days in the year, this may result for the tiny alterations in the date when anniversary phantoms are observed. Equivalent to recording type, anniversary wraiths are reliably and continuously experienced in the same location, do not alter in their movements, gestures and operations and do not answer to attempts and undertakings of communication and be in association and in touch with human beings and do contrast recording spectres, anniversary apparitions seem to be aware of our proximity, as when we come very near to them they will vanish (Mataranyika, 2010).

Mandirozva Muchaiwa attested, "I hired a herd-man to look after my cattle, goats and sheep. He collapsed and died suddenly of a heart- attack while he was ploughing in my field. I see his apparition every day working in my field during the month of January, the month which he died. My neighbours have told me that they usually see his wraith working in my field. Each time I see him, I go to him with the hope of talking to him but his apparition disappears." *Poltergeists* — German for "noisy ghost" does physical phenomena and episodes such as knocks on doors and raps and things being moved, relocated, rearranged or vanishing and are observed placed at some other place (Irwin, 1994:33). Osis (1997: 166) attested that in two- thirds of *poltergeist* sightings, a surviving agent has been confirmed for the *poltergeist* episodes are associated to individuals who must be present for the results to occur. Noisy apparitions are always regarded to be linked with people who pass on whilst still having some unresolved problems with their

kinsmen/women or community or deceased people whose intentions and wishes after their demise have not been followed.

Tachiona Manzwei recounted, “My aunt Chandasarira Munodeyi died in 2003 at the age of 28 years and left three children, two boys and one girl. During her married life, she worked very hard together with her husband Tonderai Bwakura. They became very rich business people who had a very magnificent house in Borrowdale Brook in Harare and lots of companies and properties in most big cities and towns in Zimbabwe. Her will was that when she dies her husband would marry somebody from her lineage family so that she can look after her children and enjoy the wealth which she had worked for. Initially the husband refused to marry her deceased wife’s lineage relative. He remarried a foreigner (*mutorwa*) and lived in the house in Borrowdale Brook. That angered the spirit of his deceased wife who became a noisy ghost which made plates, cups, knives, spoons, forks and some property in the house to fall down from the cupboards and shelves making a lot of noisy. The husband built a new house using the wealth which he accumulated with his deceased wife but still the apparition of my sister haunted the house causing it to be cold and making a lot of noise. The new wife left because of the noisy ghosts which were shouting and yearling at her telling her to leave the house. My sister’s husband came and talked to my parents and he then married me. The noisy ghosts stopped appearing as soon as I was married”. Phantoms may also affiliate with individuals, which means, that it is not perpetually practicable to run away from ghostly deeds just by changing residence like moving from one house to another (Mataranyika 2010). Apparitions can haunt through exhibiting a knowledge and consciousness of their location and environments. These ghosts have been accepted and confirmed to

communicate, relate and talk to human beings and to collaborate with their environments and surroundings (Mataranyika, 2010). In this kind of haunting objects are shifted and relocated.

My interlocutors disclosed that they had observed wraiths making noises, such as rapping or banging on walls, slamming doors, or making footsteps, moving and rearranging utensils in the kitchen, sweeping rooms, washing cooking utensils and doing or undoing beds in the bedrooms. They also affirmed visualizing apparitions turning light switches on and off, walking things around, or even to concealing objects. The ghosts always displayed the characteristic and temperaments of someone known to be deceased. My respondents informed me that the ghosts vanished after some religious exorcisms and rituals were performed by AIR or Christian priests/pastors.

### **The Physical- Spiritual Dual Existence of Ghosts**

How do traditional Zimbabweans authenticate the physical survival of apparitions? They utilized the senses of sight, touch, hearing and feeling to ascertain the physical survival of phantoms. Zimbabweans accept and trust in the physical- spiritual dual survival of apparitions- that is they regard ghosts as both physical and spiritual beings. Interlocutor Njenjerai Masvosva argued, “Wraiths (*zvipoko*) are earthly, fleshly, mortal, incarnate and unspiritual because one can physically observe and see their bodies and in some instances see the light which they transmit at night, touch them, have a sensation of their presence, see their silhouettes and can hear their voices and utterances. They are spiritual beings due to the reality that they are spirits of people who are physically dead but for whatever cause and motive are incapable to enter the spiritual

dominion- the *nyikadzimu*. Ghosts do not comprehend and become aware that their bodies are no longer alive, or it could be because they have a sensation that they have unaccomplished business and responsibilities on earth”. Wraiths can haunt through displaying knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of their location, neighbourhoods and environments and have been acknowledged to associate and communicate with humans and to interact with their surroundings. My respondents argued that they sensed smells and odours that were customarily and frequently present with the dead person, such as tobacco, perfume, or flowers, repeatedly happen in occurrences of haunting. A worst instance might be “blankets being pulled off your bed at night” (Mataranyika 2010).

Interlocutor Zungurayi Deredzayi debated, “Apparitions are indeed a life variety from another facet with the potentiality of entering and exiting life form. This would demonstrate and elucidate the momentarily and ephemeral character of phantoms. Wraiths are made up of a material and essence we do not comprehend and may never find out and ascertain because it’s not part of our material and natural world, but another world that permits for intermittent arbitrary and haphazard filtration through our world, giving us short-lived communication and, association. Ghosts pertain to the spiritual dominion. Still, if we can sometimes visualize, touch and hear them—they are capable to influence and manoeuvre in our physical dominion so there should be a time when they can be physical and ensnared in this world for examination and investigation.” Shintoism also accept and espouse the apprehension that spirits of the deceased could persist to exist in the realm between the terrestrial and celestial worlds if they accept and desire, through which they could have an impact on the life of the surviving for personal intentions

(Time-Life, 1988). On the authority of my interviewees, the majority ghostly observations and familiarities are sensory and visual. The authentication of wraiths has been personal, biased and idiosyncratic sentiments and visions of interlocutors who had observed and experienced ghosts.

The majority of my respondents reported, “Each time the ghost haunts the house; the house becomes either warmer or colder than before the patronizing. Once the wraith departs from the house the house temperature come back to normal atmospheric temperature. Also throughout the time of patronizing, all electrical gadgets like the televisions, refrigerators, radios, videos, stoves, microwaves, computers, telephones and cellphones stop to work. They begin working as soon as the ghost withdraws from the house. At times the apparition turns off the electric lights and the entire house is pitched into darkness in the course of the haunting operation. The lights return immediately after the phantom departs. The ghosts give out penumbras and we observed and experienced their mirror reflections in the bed- room dressing table mirrors”. Those were a *poltergeist* kind of apparitions. The changes in the room temperatures were influenced by the temper and disposition of the ghost. When the wraith was incensed, its spirit was “hot” and the room temperature goes up and when the phantom was sociable, affectionate and amiable its spirit was “cool” and the room temperature goes down. Shadows and images of spectres in mirrors demonstrate that the apparitions have taken on an evanescent physical characteristic so that it can be observed and visualized by humans. The posture and demeanour of some ghosts intimates their awareness of their location and environments for an illustration if the spectator walks around the room, the ghost’s head may be said to have turned to see the movements and activities (Irwin, 1994: 58).

What confirmation of the survival and actuality of wraiths do we have except beyond that of our senses? My interlocutors reported to me that they observed and experienced phantoms which they accepted to be an omnipresent happening. Global notion and belief are rooted in substantiation. Temperature does not alter unless “something” is impacting it one way or the other. In various ghost observation experiences, my respondents recounted feeling a cold spot. Welcoming and affable apparitions make the experience friendly and relaxed and the spirit of the wraith is “cool” and this cools the location and surroundings. There are also hot sites reported and recorded, which could be just the reverse effect happening.

According to my interviewees, ghosts and haunting experiences ceased after religious exorcism and cleansing rituals were performed. Religious exorcism has an aftermath on haunting experiences for after exorcism of the patronized houses, fields, offices, stores, cattle kraals and sheep and goat pens the respondents reported no hauntings. Interviewee Mberi Paradzayi said, “Hauntings stopped after exorcisms because exorcism rituals usher the phantom into the spirit world of ancestors (*nyikadzimu*). The specter which was rejected into the spirit world because of its anger or intense attachment to this world was cleansed by the rituals and is now clean and acceptable into the *nyikadzimu*”.

The question to be asked and responded to be: what is it that is in divine and sanctified exorcisms that decreases the force and intensity of heat at haunted locations? This then means that religious exorcisms make wraiths to be accepted as ancestral spirits (*midzimu*) in the spirit world of ancestors.



## Conclusion

The conclusion is that the physical existence of phantoms proves that there is a life after death. The physical existence of apparitions is supported by the fact that ghosts can be physically seen, touched, felt and heard and their shadows can be seen and their reflections can be seen in mirrors. Wraiths are also spiritual because of their existence in discarnate forms.

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*Mission for Diversity: Exploring Christian Mission in the Contemporary World.*  
Edited by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, Zürich: LIT Verlag GmbH Co. KG Wien, 2015, 246 pp., ISBN 978-3-643-90641-0, CDN \$30.74 (paper).

The Second Vatican Council signaled a paradigmatic shift in the theology of mission for the Roman Catholic Church. A significant insight was the recognition of mission within diverse contexts. This meant that the Church could not ignore the contemporary contexts of culture, religious tradition and growing secularity. Fifty years after the council, the theology of mission, in a multicultural and multi-religious context, remains a significant trajectory for current theological discourse. This book evinces succinct theological dexterity and clarity, as fifteen scholars from varying cultural contexts and theological backgrounds reflect on mission in the contemporary world. Their essays originated at a colloquium on the Second Vatican Council and the Church in Africa, under the auspices of Father Pierre Schouver, who is the Endowed Chair in Mission at Duquesne University. The book is divided into four thematic parts, featuring selected dimensions of mission theology.

In an introductory essay, editor Elochukwu Uzukwu presents the underlining thrust of the symposium, recounting the mission commitment of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (the Spiritans), and the insights of Schouver as its former superior general. Schouver dreamt of a Spiritan order that would continuously reexamine its history and tradition, toward missiological transformation. Given this background, in a second essay Cardinal Peter Turkson situates Schouver's thesis in an African perspective, highlighting contemporary challenges germane for mission among churches and religions.

Part one focuses on hermeneutical and methodological questions in missiology, with reference to interculturality and coloniality. It features an essay by Robert Schreiter on the unique contributions of missiology to intercultural studies. Schreiter exposes how missiological understanding occurs across multiple cultural boundaries, and proposes a renewed missiology based on intercultural studies and hermeneutics. As it describes a relatively new approach to doing missiology, the essay has not fully accounted for how the function of power and the disposition of human agents [for example, theologians or missionaries] can mar the process of interculturalization. However, the succeeding essays seem to highlight such constraints in different contexts. Using examples from the United

States, Victor Anderson analyzes the way in which the present technological empire, grounded on a neoliberal globalization of capitalism, mimics the prior Christian colonial ethos for sovereignty. Gerald Boodoo examines the past, present and future of Roman Catholic mission endeavors in the Caribbean, through the lens of coloniality. The essays in part one collectively serves to legitimize the relevancy of intercultural hermeneutics for contemporary mission engagements.

Part two examines the significance of Vatican II theology for the Church, and its mission in different contexts. While Laurenti Magesa reflects on the reception of Vatican II by the Church in Africa, Felix Wilfred examines the reception of Vatican II by the local churches in Asia. Although Magesa's article acknowledges a self-ministering Church in Africa, it does not expose the lingering straps of clericalism that still adorn ecclesial leadership five decades after Vatican II. Neither does he address the possibility of African missionaries exporting this same clericalism into the mission fields. Michael Driscoll reassesses the impact of Vatican II's renewal of liturgical instruction, and calls for active participation in liturgy in the Church. The final essay in this part is by Kenneth Himes, on the legacy and relevance for contemporary society of John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. Himes' essay successfully demonstrates that *Pacem in Terris* remains a 'magna carta' for peace in the world.

Part three deals with Vatican II's teaching on dialogue as an aspect of the theology of mission. Peter Phan reflects on the hermeneutical question of the *where, why and wherefore* of mission from an Asian perspective. Michel Elias Andraos explores emerging trends in Eastern Catholicism, and how they could affect the future of Middle-Eastern churches. Michael McCabe highlights the significance, achievements and challenges arising from interreligious dialogue in the present-day Africa. The grafting of this essay with examples from Missionary Societies and pastoral experiences brings a rich perspective to the realities of interfaith dialogue in Africa. However, the essay prioritizes dialogue among three faith traditions [Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion], without exploring incorporating dialogue with other religions in Africa, such as the Bahá'í and Hinduism. Although some of these latter faith traditions are minorities, the time is ripe for the Church in Africa to include them in their reach.

Part four offers essays on mission and pastoral ministry. Bénézet Bujo explores how Vatican II propelled an African insight into sacramental marriage that is somewhat different from the Western understanding of family and sexuality. In response to Bujo's presentation, David Ngong critiques the notion of fertility that defines certain aspects of African Christianity, calling for a pastoral theology that is responsive to marital concerns in the African context. James Chukwuma Okoye presents a synopsis of the mission priorities of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, drawing from the Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Africae Munus*. Lastly, Maureen O'Brien focuses on the implications of 'relational theologies' of ministry for mission, from an American perspective. O'Brien discusses using relational theology to nourish a missiology grounded on the Trinity, objectivizing the communion that envelopes the source of Christian mission. This theological method has the potentiality of leading missional praxis to embody communion and dialogue amidst diversity.

This volume of essays is a significant contribution to the ongoing research on the impact of Vatican II theology of mission in diverse contexts and locales. The authors' diversity exposes the reader to wide-ranging methodology and theological perspective in reexamining the past, present and future of missiology after Vatican II. In particular, the articles on interculturality, coloniality and relational theologies are insightful for mission studies. Given that this book arose from a colloquium, a drawback is the seeming exclusion of the voices of female theologians (only one essay) and lay missionaries. Recognizing the broadness of those contexts and locales in pursuing missiology, the voices of women theologians and the laity must be incorporated, since they continue to shape and transform missiological discourse. In the same vein, an essay on the present-day ecological crisis vis-à-vis missiology would have benefited readers.

Overall, this volume offers new trajectories for further research on the emerging issues for Christian mission in the contemporary world. This collection of essays is most suitable for theological and seminary libraries.

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